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Becoming art: some relationships between Pacific art and Western culture

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BECOMING ART:
SOME RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PACIFIC ART
AND WESTERN CULTURE

VOL II

by

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CHAPTER 8: ART AND ABORIGINALITY

Tyerabarrbowaryaou
(I shall never become a white man)

Pemulwuy

The circumstances of urban Aboriginal artists and the nature of their art, discussed in this chapter, make some interesting contrasts with those of urban-based Papua New Guinea artists. But the chapter's main objective is to identify how individual artists, displaced from their cultural traditions, have undertaken the search for their own Aboriginal identity through art.

'Aboriginality' is explored in a number of ways. As well as identifying an individual's desire to unite with their Aboriginal background and culture, Aboriginality has also come to mean the power to influence others to recognise the effects

1 Sections of this chapter were published as 'Strong Ai Bilong Em' in Dark and Rose (eds) 1993.

2 Pemulwuy was a leader of the Eora people (Aboriginal tribe of the Port Jackson area) who led the resistance against the first colonisers in the 1770s-1780s (Willmot 1987). The phrase, tyerrabarbowaryaou, is attributed to him and was also the title of a major exhibition of 'a constitution of images that record the experience of history by a minority' curated by Djon Mundine and Fiona Foley for the Museum of Contemporary Art 1992 (Mundine 1992:7).

3 Without seeking to categorise all marginalised and dispossessed Aboriginal artists as urban dwellers, this term merely reflects the fact that most artists discussed here live in cities or towns and have grown up in urban environments.
of dispossession and reveal the 'black history of Australia'. As Jennifer Isaacs writes

their power to direct attitudes and reoccupy and re-control their country
and thus their collective lives depends largely on their power to influence
- and in this art plays a major role, particularly for dispossessed
Aborigines of the eastern and southern states: Murris of Queensland,
Koories of New South Wales and Victoria, Nungas of South Australia and
Nyoongahs of Western Australia (Isaacs 1989:9).

Death, dispersal and dispossession resulted from the
impact of European colonisation, particularly on the Aboriginal
peoples of eastern and southern Australia. Anger and grief at
these injustices are still felt by the descendents of the
Aboriginal tribes worst affected, and their lost heritage is a
subject for many of urban and rural artists today. 'We have
survived' is another essential message, as Aboriginal artists
who have shared the history of dispossession continue to fight
inequalities and social injustice. This art has a political
purpose; as Ruth and Vincent Megaw put it, 'to teach whites
about Aboriginal society and history, to demand justice, and to
preserve past traditions, while adapting to current
circumstances' (Megaw and Megaw 1988:10). Therefore, for
many urban Aboriginal artists, Aboriginality is a matter of
pride in identity; in terms of their art it carries a conscious
social purpose which cannot be ignored. This is demonstrated
below in the discussion of some individual artist's works and
the Sydney urban Aboriginal artists' collective, Boomalli.

Some of the chapters in this thesis have discussed
traditional art forms which are an integral part of life and
practised or shared by a high percentage of communities in remote areas. It has also given instances where, following the introduction of new materials and some degree of instruction in processes and techniques, exciting new artforms have arisen from peoples' knowledge of their own art and their creativity with new materials. In contrast, for the urban Aboriginal artists discussed in this chapter, Western materials and art training have often been the only means available to them. This has not prevented them from asserting their Aboriginality, challenging the status quo of the art world and asserting their place in Australia's history. Many urban Aboriginal artists, including Fiona Foley, Gordon Bennett, Judy Watson, Bronwyn Bancroft, Kerry Giles and Richard Bell, have successfully completed tertiary arts courses and, using the skills they have acquired, are making a calculated response to the dominant Australian visual culture, challenging it on its own grounds. In style and subject material, the unique character of contemporary urban Aboriginal art draws on the artists' Aboriginality and deliberate appropriations from Western art to suit the artists' own ends.

The work of urban Aboriginal artists is supported by a growing network of Aboriginal curators, including Djon Mundine, Hetti Perkins, Brenda Croft, Fiona Foley, Lin Onus, Avril Quaill, Daphne Wallace and Francesca Alberts, whose skilful curatorship and insightful writings have added to the penetrating critique of Australian attitudes in the political and artistic debates surrounding art and Aboriginality (some
examples are Quaill 1989, Onus 1993, Perkins 1991 & 1993, Croft 1994).\footnote{A number of Aboriginal curators are also artists, writers or arts administrators: Djon Mundine was part-time curator of Aboriginal Art at Art Gallery of NSW (1983-1990), Arts Adviser at Ramingining and widely published writer. With Fiona Foley (artist) Mundine curated the exhibitions Tyerrabarrbowaryaou I (1992) and II (1994) for the MCA; Hetti Perkins, curator at Boomallli and guest curator of the Aboriginal Women's Exhibition AGNSW (1991), also has an established reputation as a writer on Aboriginal art; Brenda Croft, arts administrator for Boomallli is a writer and art critic; Avril Quaill (artist) curated the Aboriginal satellite exhibition for Perspecta 1991.}

Appropriation is a central concern of the present theoretical debate in Australia about Aboriginal art, in particular the appropriation of Aboriginal images by white Australian artists. This chapter explores what some Aboriginal people, from different regions and living in various circumstances, have appropriated from Western art and ideas about art, and what their intentions are in doing so. I identify in some circumstances the existence of \textit{abrogation}, a move beyond appropriation. Abrogation is defined and exemplified here by the work of several Koori, Murri and Nunga artists, including Trevor Nickolls, Gordon Bennett, Fiona Foley, Kerry Giles and Richard Bell.

\textbf{ABORIGINALITY}

Some of the reasons for the leaders and visionaries of emerging South Pacific nations seeking to formulate a modern cultural identity have been previously mentioned (see Chapters 7 and 9). But in most cases in this thesis where cultural identity has been discussed, the indigenous people making or
re-making it are majority populations in their own countries. Aboriginality is also a marker of identity, used by those who identify themselves as Aboriginal despite the discontinuous history of their communities. Following the insights given by Ian Anderson and Kerry Giles on the importance of Aboriginal identity to a dispossessed and marginalised people, this section focuses on some aspects of Koori identity and culture.

No-one can claim to be an Aboriginal artist who is not Aboriginal. The Aboriginal community determines who is accepted as being Aboriginal by virtue of their known relationships and personal commitment to their Aboriginality. There have been a couple of incidents (known to the writer but not revealed here and elsewhere unpublicised to protect the persons' identity) where artists have faked an Aboriginal identity and the falsity of it has been discovered. Such persons are no longer accepted by the Aboriginal community.

Ian Anderson, a Tasmanian Aboriginal doctor, activist and writer, explains why his Aboriginality is essential to his being:

Being the children of TRU-GAN-NAN-NER we were the children of the vanquished and the gone: hybrids, half-castes, touched by the tar brush, with a bit of the splash, of the descent, coloured, dis-coloured. But it was never 'your history is black' . . . .

The construction of the 'authentic' Aborigine mobilised essential notions of race and culture. Certain biological or cultural features were seen to be necessary features, or the essence of, Aboriginal people . . . .

I am no hybrid. I am a muttonbird Koori . . . people of the coast and the mountains . . . The women of these mobs were taken, along with the women of the south-eastern mainland, by the Bass Strait sealers. Abducted, these
women lived as captive labourers, their ongoing rape producing another generation of workers . . . .

When I talk of my community I refer to an experience of Koori people though time. This is an encounter with other Kooris, who have nurtured me, fought with me or otherwise made me who I am.

It is my Koori subjectivity, as a historicised commitment to my family and community, which provides the framework to any intellectual endeavour or symbolic acts . . . .

Recently I was on a panel at a conference and one audience member (a history teacher) railed: 'Why do you people deny your white ancestry?' 'White' in this context usually does not imply a colour but a colonial cultural tradition. Our families have been born out of horrific violence. Some of our white ancestors were direct perpetrators of that . . . I fail to feel positive about my British cultural tradition. I simply acknowledge its impact (Anderson 1994:10-12).

Aboriginal identity is a key issue for those who survived the massacres, diseases, dispossession and institutionalisation which followed in the wake of white settlement. Aboriginal persons of inter-racial descent were discriminated against by white Australian society, and many led the life of urban fringe-dwellers (Morgan 1987). The resurgence of Aboriginal identity is a celebration of survival and artists have recognised that the history of their people provides many valid and meaningful sources for their inspiration (Mundine 1990, Lee 1993, Bennett 1993).

Much urban Aboriginal art is motivated by nontraditional concerns and does not necessarily have references to tribal origins. It is a response to the need to find ways for Aboriginal
culture to survive the pervasive infiltration of white society's mores and its invasive popular culture. As well, for Aboriginal artists based in Australian cities and towns, their art expresses the unwritten history of their people and their experiences of life as Aboriginal people in marginalised communities. In exhibitions such as *Koori Art '84* (1984), *Urban Kooris* (1986), *Tyerrabarbowaryaou 1* (1992) and *Wiyana/Perisferia [Periphery]* (1993), their art targets public consciousness of the racial history of this country and therefore carries an important agenda beyond its commercial or aesthetic appeal.

Most traditional Aboriginal art grew out of communal activities and serves a group function, and this art is no exception. The uncompromising images of artists such as Les Griggs' paintings of prison life, Giles' installation of the wasted environment of the Murray River, Gordon Bennett's 'history paintings' about the Aboriginal death toll since the European invasion of Australia and Robert Campbell Jr.'s images of racial discrimination in country towns, are clear statements about the social concerns of Aboriginal people across Australia. In particular they highlight the tensions in black/white relationships of the past and the present. The artists' images represent the collective knowledge of their communities and evoke the distress caused to their people by assimilation policies, enforced separation and racial discrimination. As Giles asserts

(s)ince the arrival of the First Fleet our Aboriginal history has been full of martyrdom. We have been deliberately killed with arsenic in our flour
and poison in our waterholes. In Tasmania our people were hunted like animals. Our land and our children have been stolen from us. Our culture has been called inferior to that of the white invaders. Today things are a very little better than they were a few decades ago. There is some recognition of our Land Rights, although it has not gone far enough. There is education, though it is still very much non-Aboriginal education. This year the most publicised tragedy has been the question of the terrible number of black deaths in custody . . . . Too often we are still the victims of prejudice and intolerance in our own land.

Yet there is hope for the future. Our art is now widely recognised in Australia and overseas. It is one area where we can have freedom of speech and a platform to teach the ignorant and prejudiced in Australia about the past and our hopes for the future (Giles 1988:6-7).

Koori artists have explored many ways of expressing their Aboriginality and experiences of Western culture. For some, like Bronwyn Bancroft and Jeffrey Samuels, finding out about their Aboriginality has been an important journey of self-discovery. Lin Onus reflects on the inner nature of his art, which he calls 'finding the core':

My mind wanders down dark corridors of strange images, always at the end of those corridors is an entrance to the core, my people, my family, myself. Whilst other Australians prepare for their great birthday party who will remember our fallen? As the champagne and the beer flows who

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will think of the chains and poison, of guns and the lash, the dreaded 'Native Inspector' come to take the children away to be servants of the Gubbah. Will they think of living on the road and under the bridges, of dispossession, of fences and the 'Keep out' signs, of pass laws and of that cruel joke of 1967 'Citizenship'? (Onus 1987:no page number) ¹ 

Many Aboriginal artists from urban and country centres have been through the Australian education system, including graduating from tertiary art schools. The media and techniques they use for their art work are learnt at art schools where Western modernism and avant-gardism are the primary models. In response to challenges that it is not 'real' Aboriginal art 'you know, dots and barks', Croft argues

1. that any work of art created by an Aboriginal person is by definition Aboriginal art; 2. that quality is not linked to the geographical origin of the work; 3. that Aboriginal art and culture is as diverse and vast as the length and breadth of the continent (Croft 1994:47).

In answer to a question from Isaacs, 'What features of your work would you call Aboriginal? Can one even talk in these terms', Fiona Foley responded,

(n)ot really. I see myself as an Aboriginal person; it doesn't matter what techniques I incorporate. All the art at the end of the day is Aboriginal .... I don't distinguish between what doesn't look Aboriginal and what does (Isaacs 1990:10).

The history of disposessed Aboriginal people is part of the Aboriginal history of Australia in some of its most

¹ From Art and Aboriginality 1987, an exhibition catalogue for the Portsmouth (UK) Festival on the eve of Australia's Bicentennary. Gubbah is an Aboriginal term for white Australians.
disturbing aspects, and their art is a defence, a rallying point from which to step into the future. Kooris, Murris, Nungas and Nyoongahs are individualistic artists and each has to find his or her own way to self expression. Their links to kin and clan, ancestors and land have been broken but new ones are being forged. Aboriginal artists who have grown up on missions or in towns are wary of using designs from the repertoire of traditional Aboriginal art because they might transgress the laws of traditional ownership. A number of Koori artists have sought permission and travelled to remote areas, living for a while with tradition-oriented communities and learnt from these encounters. Lawrence Leslie, Quaill, Foley, Onus, Campbell Jr. and Michael Riley have all visited Yolngu people in the Ramingining - Maningrida area. Jeffrey Samuels and Arone Raymond Meeks have been to Mornington Island, also to learn different aspects and experiences of Aboriginal life.

Recounting what the Koori-Yolngu exchange mean to him, Onus relates that he originally developed as landscape painter, learning his techniques from two noted Aboriginal artists who worked in this tradition, Ronald Bull and Revel Cooper.1 He had anguished for several years about how to incorporate his Aboriginality into his work, but this was resolved following a visit to Gamerdi outstation, near Maningrida in Central Arnhem Land. Onus writes of his experiences at Gamerdi:

1 Ronald Bull had been a student of Hans Heysen and Revel Cooper, a Nyoongah (WA) artist started his career in the 1950s as one of the ‘Child Artists of the Australian Bush’ from Carrolup Mission School, a group who gained some notoriety for their landscape painting when it was widely promoted in the mid-1950s (Durak 1954).
the involvement with Jack Wunuwan led to a spiritual and linguistic revival that greatly assisted with the rediscovery of those lost things. Artistically, the relationship was no less profound. . . . After spending time with Jack I found that I no longer looked at landscape in the panoramic sense. . . . I discovered that there had been a change in perception - a change of vision . . . I also noticed that I developed a sense of humour (Onus 1990:19).

The exchange is not only one way. When artists from remote areas visit capital cities they are often hosted by urban artists, or events are arranged within their itinerary for interaction with the local community. Following Foley's visit to Maningrida, a group from there visited her family and their homeland at Hervey Bay, Queensland, to experience the present lifestyle of the Batjala people. The Batjala had been dispossessed of Fraser Island, but are seeking to regain their language and former culture.

Aborigines gained citizenship in 1967, the result of a long struggle for the recognition of basic human rights. Among urban Aborigines it stimulated the urge to write or make images on subjects which had previously been repressed and energised a creative. As with other post-colonial indigenous cultures some of the writing and image-making that has resulted is deliberately confronting to a white audience. It has made public, in spaces previously reserved for the art of the dominant culture, portrayals of attitudes and actual events in Aboriginal history which have not yet been written into the histories of Australia. Before the exhibition *Tyerabarrbowaryau I* at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) in Sydney in 1992, polemic exhibitions by urban
Aboriginal artists were confined to marginal venues, commencing with *Koori Art '84* at Artspace, *Urban Kooris* in 1986 and, following its establishment in 1987, a sequence of exhibitions at Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative in Chippendale. These latter exhibitions attracted only small public interest but were seminal in establishing a base for, and giving recognition to the viewpoints of, urban and rural Aboriginal artists who had been marginalised by the Australian mainstream arts establishment.

The first comprehensive exhibition of Koori art in Sydney was *Koori Art '84*. Avril Quail described Koori artists as

Aboriginal artists who now live and work in the rural and urban areas of the east coast, whose heritage stems from the traditions of those Aboriginal cultures who bore the onslaught of first settlement. Koori art is produced by Urban Aborigines who are often trained in Western traditions but who have 'one foot firmly in each world' ... . The work produced by these artists has its sources, aesthetics, subject matter and inspiration firmly in an art heritage outside the mainstream influences of other Australian artists (Quail 1989:103).

*Koori Art '84* came at a time when Koori community leaders were encouraging urban Aborigines to identify themselves proudly as Kooris and become part of an expanding Koori culture. Koori culture recognises a person's

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Aboriginality, however removed he or she may have become from it through generations of racial persecution, dispossession and separation forced on clans and family groups by the dominant Anglo-Australian society. To redress the past, it aims to create solidarity among the Aboriginal community, not only to support pan-Aboriginal political aims, but to draw together and strengthen local communities. In Sydney in recent years Koori culture has manifested itself in a number of innovative ways, creating awareness among the wider community of the local Aborigines' talents and goals.¹

In the 1970s to the 1980s a number of Aborigines were emerging as artists who had grown up and been educated in an urban setting, in several instances without much knowledge of their tribal antecedents or contact with Aboriginal communities. However, as Mundine notes

(m)any urban Koori artists living in the major capital cities also come from country areas or missions quite a distance away, sometimes from interstate . . . . Urban Aboriginal art therefore does not necessarily come from people who have lived many generations in cities. It can come from those who have just arrived (Mundine 1990:7).

Now many urban artists are gaining recognition for their ability to express the individual discovery of their own Aboriginal heritage. One example is Jim Simon whose work was included in the 1986 Sydney Biennale, Origins, Originality and Beyond. Since Giles and other Nunga artists agitated about their

¹ In Sydney, Radio Redfern broadcasts daily and some programs produced and directed by Aborigines are screened on ABC and SBS television. The Aboriginal and Islander Dance company and Boomali Aboriginal Artists Co-operative are showplaces for Koori artist's achievements.
non-inclusion in *Dreamings: the Art of Aboriginal Australia* (SAM 1988),¹ major survey exhibitions of Aboriginal art have included works by urban artists: some of these are *Windows on the Dreaming* (ANG 1989), *Flash Art* (ANG 1991); *Aboriginal Womens' Exhibition* (AGNSW 1991), *Aratjara* (Cologne, London, Copenhagen 1993). Fiona Foley protested that the 1988 *Sydney Biennale* entirely overlooked Aboriginal art: subsequent *Biennale* and *Australian Perspecta* exhibitions at the Art Gallery of New South Wales have included them.²

Many Koori artists have had successful solo exhibitions in leading commercial galleries and their work has been purchased by the National Gallery and State galleries and private collectors. Arone Raymond Meeks received a grant from the Australia Council for use of their Paris studio in 1989 and Judy Watson has participated in projects in Norway, the Netherlands, Canada, undertaken a residency in Bhophal, India, and was represented in the Queensland Art Gallery's *First Asia-Pacific Triennale*. Their art is highly individual yet distinctly Aboriginal. Mundine commented that the recent acclaim accorded to urban artists was ‘another slow breakthrough, the

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¹ Urban Aboriginal art was not included in the selection of artworks for the *Dreamings* exhibition (1988). But following strong representations by Giles and other Nunga artists, the curatorial team headed by Peter Sutton, included a chapter about urban artists in the exhibition catalogue (Sutton 1988) and invited Giles to join the team of curators and artists who accompanied the exhibition to New York.

² For example, Richard Bell, Destiny Deacon and Brenda Croft were included in the *Australian Perspecta* 1993. *Australian Perspecta* is the Art Gallery of NSW’s bi-annual showing of contemporary Australian art and the *Sydney Biennale* its review of international contemporary (including Australian) art.
breaking down of stereotypes in 'traditional/classical' Aboriginal art forms' (Mundine 1990:7).

By the late 1980s the mainstream art world was beginning to have to recognise the legitimacy and power of expression of this group of artists. With the impetus generated from several successful exhibitions and the need to position urban Aboriginal art more firmly, Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative (referred to as Boomalli) was formed.

BOOMALLI

Boomalli was set up in 1987 to assist the collective goals of a group of Sydney-based Koori artists.1 Although Boomalli was actually founded in 1987, it had been discussed, debated and dreamed about for several years beforehand. As Brenda Croft recollects

(w)e were painters, print-makers, photographers, sculptors, fabric-designers, film-makers. And we still are. We were also committed, dedicated, enthusiastic, outrageous, sombre, naive, unaware and hungry for it all to start happening (Croft 1991, no page number).2

Initially Boomalli ‘shacked up’ in a small warehouse in Chippendale and the artist members were rostered to operate

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1 The members had come to Sydney, mostly from different parts of NSW, at different times in their life, but had all reached the stage where they were determined to gain better recognition for themselves and what their art was trying to achieve. Founding members included Bronwyn Bancroft, Fiona Foley, Arone Raymond Meeks, Tracey Moffatt, Michael Riley, Brenda Croft and Jeffrey Samuels.

(while doing their own work in) the studio/workshop; exhibitions were curated by the members and no role was considered specialised. The co-operative structure was chosen precisely because it allowed the artists ultimate control over an arts organisation they founded to suit their own distinctive purposes.

As the personal profile of almost every member demonstrates\(^1\) it was, with very few exceptions,\(^2\) only in the 1970s that Aboriginal people began to have access to tertiary education. Most Boomalli members are visual arts graduates from recognised tertiary institutions, but all have at least some bitter recollections of the lack of respect art teachers gave to their creative expressions of Aboriginality and the refusal of teachers, galleries and other white art spaces to acknowledge their integrity as Aboriginal artists. As Croft puts it

> being urban Kooris we found ourselves continually misunderstood and marginalised through ignorance and prejudice . . . . It was constantly being put to us by academics and students alike, that we were not 'real' Aboriginals, therefore our art was not 'real' Aboriginal art . . . . We refused to accept stereotypes and conditions on our artwork and on us as Aboriginal people (Croft 1990:108).

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1 Expressed in the forums *Aboriginal Art in Australian Society* (1990) and *Aboriginal Art in New South Wales* (1991), organised for the Power Institute of Fine Arts, Sydney University, by Bronwyn Bancroft (then President of Boomalli) and the writer. The series included artist’s talks by Boomalli members Bronwyn Bancroft, Euphemia Bostock, Fiona Foley, Jeffrey Samuels and Michael Riley.

2 Charles Perkins was the first Aborigine to graduate from a tertiary institution, completing his education in the 1960s.
The word ‘Boomalli’ means ‘to strike, to make a mark, to fight back’. This is essentially the organisation’s manifesto. For the artists involved it meant that, ‘as urban Koori artists we could/can best determine how/where and why we wanted our work and culture to be marketed, promoted and ultimately controlled’ (Croft 1990:108). Since 1987 this co-operative project of determined artists has become an inspiration to the self-determination process of Aboriginal people across Australia. From the desire to see the marketing and promotion of Aboriginal art determined by Aboriginal people as much as possible, has come a series of exhibitions reaching out from the cities, to the country, to the remoter areas of Australia, linking Aboriginal people in their common cause: the assertion of the validity of their living culture.

But Boomalli has had to struggle continually for survival. In common with many small arts organisations in Australia it is under-resourced and faces the endless round of seeking adequate, or even essential funding from arts bureaucracies whose policies and strategies do not necessarily recognise the same priorities. Following the withdrawal of funding by the Aboriginal Arts Unit of the Australia Council in December, 1991, causing the Co-operative to announce its closure, a rescue operation was undertaken in an unusual joint meeting of Federal and State funding agencies. It seems they finally realised the validity of Brenda Croft’s statement, circulated as a final document announcing the end of Boomalli:

Our worth and validation cannot be measured in terms of monetary profit but in terms of awareness, of helping to raise the profile of not only urban
Aboriginal art/culture but all Aboriginal art/culture (Croft 1991 no page number).

Validation of the Boomalli artists and their work has been achieved within the past five years (1989-1994). 'Urban Aboriginal art' has now been exhibited in Australia's most prestigious public galleries, and been included in international tours.1 Individual Boomalli members have been invited to have solo shows at leading commercial galleries in Sydney and interstate. Fiona Foley has undertaken an internship as a curator at the new Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney and in 1991 co-curated (with Mundine) a major exhibition, Tyerrabarbowarrayaou I, in which five urban artists commented on the 'black history of Australia' and social justice issues. Tyerrabarbowarrayaou II, also curated by Mundine and Foley, was exhibited at the Havana Biennale in Cuba and subsequently at the MCA in Sydney in 1994. Michael Riley and Tracey Moffatt are recognised as daring and innovative filmmakers/ photographers and have participated in local and international film festivals and photographic exhibitions.

Because of their commitment to their people, some Boomalli artists have become outstanding spokespersons for urban Aboriginal people in general, and creative Aboriginal people in particular. Bronwyn Bancroft has presented Koori

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concerns to conferences and seminars and quickly developed a reputation as the most wanted guest lecturer at the Department of Fine Arts, Sydney University, when she was working there as a consultant on Aboriginal art. Euphemia Bostock takes a similar role, speaking to community networks.

Since its restructuring in 1992, Boomalli has employed three full-time staff, an Executive Officer/Business Manager, a Secretary/Receptionist and a Curator. These positions are funded by National and State arts funding agencies. It was recognised that, as Boomalli grew, it was increasingly difficult for the Full Members to maintain their responsibilities to the organisation, work in their professions and keep up their arts practise.¹ The present (1993 to 1994) Executive Officer, Brenda Croft, and Curator, Hetti Perkins, are also members of Boomalli.

The situation has changed since Koori Art '84. Then the situation was, as Quaill explains, one where definitions of Aboriginal people and their cultures were in the hands of the dominant culture. The inclusion of urban based Aboriginal artists and their work within major shows shows such as Perspecta was so problematic as to lead some curators to refer to this issue as “too difficult” resulting in complete exclusion or at best simple tokenism (Quaill 1989:103).

The success Boomalli has achieved in a few short years as a spearhead group reflecting Aboriginal ideology has been

¹ Some Members work full or part time in arts education, arts administration, etc for mainstream organisations such as the Sydney College of the Arts and the Australia Council.
acknowledged and commented on by a few Australian art historians. By 1990 Terry Smith (1990:13) was convinced that "Aboriginality" has entered the art discourse as a quality held in common by Aboriginal artists, whatever the diversity of their backgrounds, and expressed in their art, despite its variety of form and content. In 1990, the Power Institute of Fine Arts at Sydney University, recognised that Boomalli was, in effect, its neighbouring Aboriginal arts community, and it has undertaken several joint projects with Boomalli since then. Australian art history has, in recent years, incorporated the achievements of urban Aboriginal artists, including some members of Boomalli (Beier 1985, Isaacs 1989, Megaw and Megaw 1988, Taylor 1989, Artlink Special Double Issue on Contemporary Aboriginal Art, Vol 10 Nos 1 & 2, 1990, Art Monthly Australia Supplement 'The land, the city: the emergence of urban Aboriginal art' 1990, Art Monthly Australia Supplement 'Aboriginal Art in the Public Eye', 1993).

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1 The Department of Fine Arts is the teaching division of the Power Institute of Fine Arts at Sydney University. Terry Smith was Head of the Department of Fine Arts in 1990 and influential in accepting the proposal for the series Aboriginal Art in Australian Society. This was a Public Education program of the Power Institute of Fine Arts, although a number of undergraduate students enrolled in the Department of Fine Arts attended.

2 Funding was jointly sought by the Power Institute of Fine Arts and Boomalli for the Aboriginal Art in Australian Society, Aboriginal Art in NSW and Aboriginal Artists Speak projects in 1990 to 1991.
Before giving an explanation of the term 'abrogation' and how it can be discerned in the work of urban Aboriginal artists, the meaning given here to the term 'appropriation' is clarified.

In Chapter 2 appropriation was discussed in the context of Western cultural identity formation, citing James Clifford's (1988:221) explanation that, 'those social groups that invented anthropology and modern art have appropriated exotic things, facts and meanings. [Appropriate "to make one's own", from the Latin proprius, "proper", "property"]' (his emphasis). Although it concentrated on the primitive/civilized contrast rather than on the issue of appropriation, the section of Chapter 2 titled 'The Romance of the Primitive', nevertheless gave evidence of how Nolde, Pechstein and others appropriated from the styles and techniques of so-called 'primitive' art. These German Expressionists borrowed widely from 'primitive' art and translated their appropriations into their own art style.

A number of non-Aboriginal Australian artists have appropriated designs, ideas and styles from Aboriginal art and fashioned these into their own art and contexts. Margaret Preston was an early advocate of using Aboriginal motifs and designs to give Australian art a distinctive identity (Preston 1925). Adrian Marrie's *A Topical Bibliography of Aboriginal Visual Arts* (1987) includes a list of white Australian artists who have appropriated elements of style, designs and ideas from Aboriginal art into their own. The issue of the appropriation of Aboriginal art by non-Aboriginal artists is a subject in itself and will not be gone into further here. Among the publications on this theme, a useful one is the collection of

In contrast to non-indigenous Australian artists appropriating from Aboriginal art, there have also been some interesting collaborations between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal artists willingly entered into by both parties: the whole exhibition *Commitments*, which toured Australia in 1993 to 1994 was devoted to such collaborations.

Since the early 1970s, significant and innovative painting movements have emerged from Aboriginal communities in the central to Western desert region (see Chapter 6), and have received international recognition. Recent painting movements from this region are a radical transformation of the ways in which the desert peoples’ mythologised Dreaming stories and environment may be represented. Although this new art arises from a long established tradition, several factors detach it from the traditional method of expression: the paintings are executed in introduced media, and the artists have devised ways of presenting their subjects which prevent anything sensitive or controversial being released to outsiders, and have accepted a new audience for their art. The traditional owners, who authorise and control the original source material, are directly involved in its transformation, and they are painters of Dreaming subjects themselves. The inspiration for the art is the living heritage of Aboriginal tribes of the central to Western desert region. The paintings are not only significant aesthetically; they also communicate a message about the Aborigines’ relationship to their land.
The effect of appropriation is visible here in that Aboriginal artists have elected to respond to outside interest in their art by appropriating Western materials and ways of presenting art in order to get messages about their land and culture across to Western audiences. The strategy of appropriating materials and techniques from the repertoire of the dominant culture allows Aboriginal artists to express different sets of values and a distinct cultural identity, using Western media to translate their message more readily to Western audiences for their art. In this context, ‘dot and circle’ acrylic paintings by leading Warlpiri, Pintupi and artists from other desert communities, may be said to represent appropriation. The imagery and iconography of ‘dot and circle’ paintings belongs to Aboriginal culture, but the artists have appropriated Western media in order to present their images in a non-traditional way to a new audience.

Urban Aboriginal artists have found distinctive ways to live as Aborigines in contemporary Australian culture and make their Aboriginality visible through their forms of creative expression. This has been consciously achieved. I identify in this a step beyond appropriation which I call abrogation.

The idea of abrogation arises from the context of opposition and resistance. A concept of identification and dis-identification was first proposed by M. Pecheux in the discourse on linguistics. In Pecheux's view (1982:111), although language appears to be the common basis for communication, 'words, expressions, propositions, etc., change their meaning according to the positions held by those who use
them', and it authorises division behind the appearance of unity. This allows 'personal space' for each person's interpretation of a message apart from the obvious character of the communication. As Pecheux says (1982:113), 'Each subject has his reality as a system of self-evident truths perceived, accepted, suffered.

The idea of abrogation was developed from Pecheux's theory by William Ashcroft (1988) in relation to the growing body of English-language literature written by Papua New Guineans. Ashcroft delivered a paper outlining his theory of abrogation at the 1988 Waigani Seminar, University of Papua New Guinea, 'The Influence of the Oral Tradition on Papua New Guinea Literature'. Ashcroft took a rather obscure English word meaning to 'cancel, set aside, repeal' (Collins English Dictionary Australia/New Zealand Edition, 1972) and endowed it with a new meaning and application. I have elected to adopt Ashcroft's term 'abrogation' and apply his theory to urban Aboriginal art.

Ashcroft's theory of abrogation proposes that in every society there exists a model, a standard or right way of doing things dictated by the dominant culture. In Australia, for example, the English language and metropolitan literary values are standard; the aesthetic values, art forms and theories derived from Western culture dominate the art scene. Abrogation, while using a 'correct' form, 'denies the primacy of the central or standard language and rejects the domination of the metropolitan culture over the local and indigenous' (Ashcroft 1988:1).
People whose culture has been marginalised by the dominant norm may wish to abrogate the techniques of the dominant culture, and its criteria of taste and value, and appropriate them for their own purposes. In art, as in literature, it may initially appear that the artists are merely attempting to become successful in the dominant mode by, say, painting landscapes in oils or writing poetry in English, and it might appear that their work only marginally reflects their indigenous culture. The similarity between the two forms (that is, that of the dominant culture and the abrogated form) is deceptive, as it is in reality the most superficial element in the composition. Abrogation is a stage in anti-authoritarian discourse where facility and skill in manipulating a technique allows the artist to penetrate and influence the intellectual life of the dominant culture. Insofar as urban Aboriginal art is concerned, I consider abrogation to mean that the artists concerned are engaged in a purposeful, deeper, more complex, more interesting interpretation than appropriation: what they are doing is that, informed by current Western theories and ideas about art, they abrogate both the styles and concepts of Western modern and postmodern art to undermine its dominance. This requires a sophisticated understanding of Western art and how it has marginalised the art of other (particularly indigenous) cultures over time. Several examples of the process of abrogation and how it is reflected in the work of individual artists are given below.

In the work of urban Aboriginal artists, elements of the imagery and iconography are ostensibly those of Western
culture. Abrogation takes a step further than appropriation because its strategy requires a complete knowledge of, and facility with, the standards of the dominant culture - art forms, images, theories and aesthetic values - which are then subverted to express a different set of values, those of the indigenous culture. Despite the diversity of media, content and approach, the work of these artists reflects the issues of paramount concern to Aboriginal people: Aboriginal deaths in custody, land rights, alienation, and discrimination in white Australian society, but also pride in their Aboriginal identity, concern for the environment, and deep respect for traditional Aboriginal culture.

One can get a glimpse of some of the artists' conceptual approaches through a brief examination of some paintings. Trevor Nickoll's work reflects the internal struggles and anxieties of being caught between Dreamtime and Machinetime (U. Beier 1985). His *Homage to Margaret Preston* (1989) mimics several of her stylistic tendencies: one of her favourite subjects, a still life of Australian flowers; her modernist preferences for blocking in, colouration and outlining influenced by Japanese woodcuts. The Australiana vase in Nickoll's *Homage* also refers to Preston's advocacy for Australian artists to freely appropriate from Aboriginal art which started a fashion for Aboriginalia in the decorative arts in the 1940s-1950s (Butler 1987). Nickoll's *Manly Point* (1984), painted in a (European) pointillist style, appealing to Australia's landscape painting tradition, envisages the natural beauty of this headland before it became a densely populated
beachside suburb. The forlorn black figure lying on the beach and boomerang shape in the sky signify Aboriginal possession and dispossession, a windsurfer sails past, oblivious to Nickoll's vision. Judith Ryan gives an extensive reading of Nickoll's *Dreamtime, Calling from Gondololand* (1990) which comments on his experience in Venice as Australia's representative along with Rover Thomas at the 1990 Venice Biennale and 'sets up an interplay between Nickoll's Aboriginal origins and his presence in Venice' (Ryan 1993:61). Nickoll's subtle mimicry, puns and double meanings are deliberate devices that show that he is fully aware of Western movements in modern art and issues in Australian art history and abrogates them for his own purposes.

Les Griggs learnt to paint in jail, and uses his work to campaign 'against the system'. At the age of two he was taken from his mother¹ and raised in a succession of institutions, moving from one to the other, eventually to jail. He started to paint while in Pentridge prison and used his talent to unleash his anger against the effects of institutionalisation, Aboriginal deaths in custody and other political and social issues faced by people like himself. Griggs comments that

> I think it's important for me to communicate with people who have no concept of what that kind of life is about; to try and paint so that they can stand in front of it, and read it, and understand it and maybe put a bit more thought into what they're doing next time they sit on a jury or next time

¹ Under the Aboriginal Children's Act, Aboriginal children could be separated from their families and raised in institutions, often losing contact with their relatives for life. This still occurred until the late 1960s.
they start labelling people without knowing the full facts behind the situation (Griggs cited in Thompson 1990:30).

In his painting *What Are We Going To Do About This Half-Caste Thing?* (1992) Richard Bell confronts both racist attitudes about miscegenation (until recently sexual liaisons were a subject that could never be discussed openly), and the issue of Aboriginality. The title of the painting also questions curatorial uncertainties about the 'legitimacy' of urban Aboriginal art.

Kerry Giles' Murray River installation at the Contemporary Art Centre in Adelaide (1993), and her photographic exhibition, *Pages of History*, at the South Australian Museum (1993),¹ are both expressions of her political activism. At the South Australian Museum *Pages of History* combined photographs, posters, newspaper clippings, messages and hand stencils in an installation documenting the 'Convoy' of Northern Territory, West Australian and South Australian Aborigines from Adelaide to Sydney to take part in protest activities against the Australian Biennale in 1988. Giles also calls her Murray River installation at the Contemporary Art Centre a 'documentary'. The first painting in this group shows the Murray River in a pristine state. In her words 'It shows how the river Murray used to be before colonial people. You've got the whole ecosystem, full of bush tucker . . . a self-sustaining environment'. The next, *Ugly Painting, Ugly Subject* (1993), is a

¹ Both part of the exhibitions program associated with the Pacific Arts Association 5th International Symposium in April. At the Contemporary Arts Centre Giles exhibited with Ian Abdulla and Yvonne Koolmatrie.
huge aerial view and graphically depicts the degradation of the environment and the death of the river by overgrazing, irrigation and pollution. It incorporates a collage of newspaper clippings about environmental degradation and development and handwritten slogans slashed across the painting. A pelican skeleton and bare earth make up the final part of the installation. Both Giles and Bell have learned the skilful manipulation of image and text and use it with calculated irony.

In their works exhibited in *Tyerrabarrbowaryao I*, Bennett and Foley engaged with the travesty of 'terra nullius'. Bennett's *Terra Nullius* (1989) depicts the First Fleet's flag raising ceremony: no Aboriginal people are present among the group of figures illustrated in social studies schoolbook style. *Untitled (Dismay)* (1989), a grid of six panels poses a succession of questions through text and image, ending in a black void. Foley's enigmatic drawings question the white history of her homeland Thoorgine (Fraser Island). A contemporary portrait of Eliza Fraser, survivor of an early shipwreck, dominates a shadowy space. Eliza Fraser has been raised to the status of popular heroine in Australian literature and film, but the written histories do not contain any reference to the history of the Badtjala people, their relationship to their country and their feats of endurance. Bennett's and Foley's paintings demonstrate the artists' knowledge of the current issues, strategies and discourses in contemporary Australian art as well as asserting their Aboriginality. Both Bennett and Foley use techniques of coded elements and ciphers favoured by young Australian
postmodern artists, suggesting a multiplicity of interpretations.

In explanation of his art Bennett wrote that

(m)y sense of aesthetics is that which was nurtured and developed within the structure of a eurocentric world view. I was socialised into a Euro-Australian system of representation which included an art school education .

There came a time in my life, in my sense of self and identity as an Australian, when I became aware of my Aboriginal heritage . Such an awareness was problematic for my sense of identity. The conceptual gap between self and other collapsed and I was thrown into turmoil .

I wish to reinstate a sense of Aboriginal people within the culturally dominant system of representation as human beings, rather than as a visual sign that signifies the 'primitive', the 'noble savage' or some other European construct associated with black skin .

I locate my aesthetic approach within the more conventional notions of Western aesthetic, and iconographical traditions. My approach is however deconstructive in its orientation. I use strategies of quotation and appropriation to produce what I have called 'history' paintings. I draw on the iconographical paradigm of Australian, and by extension, European art in a way that constitutes a kind of ethnographic investigation of a Euro-Australian system of representation in general, but which has focussed on the representation of Aboriginal people in particular (Bennett 1993:77-79).

Some Aboriginal curator/writers, as well as artists, have made interesting contributions to the discourse around the issue of marginality. Marginality is a Western construct which assumes that the canon of Western (modernist) art occupies a
position of power and influence at the centre; indigenous art occupies a peripheral position, as does the art of other groups perceived to be less powerful, for example immigrant cultures and, until the successes of the women's art movement from the 1970s, the art of women.

In terms of abrogation, it is the recognition of the issue of marginality, and the response to it made by Aboriginal curator/writers which is important because it shows that Aboriginal curator/writers also abrogate the terms set by Western art discourse. On the issue of marginality Perkins wrote:

'(m)argins: a white space for black people' is perhaps why many would unthinkingly relegate us and presume that the mainstream occupies that invisible centre to which all of us should aspire in order to be taken seriously. However, it is up to the individual as to where they wish to place themselves, as for many of us there are varying centres from where we chose to address our respective audiences. Some of us are satisfied with altering the scope of others' peripheral vision, encouraging people to take off their blinkers, broaden their understanding and come to us - instead of assuming we always want to work ourway 'in' to a specific undefinable point (Perkins 1993 cited in Croft 1994:51).

Perkin's opinion that there are varying centres from which Aboriginal artists can address their different audiences has been echoed by other artists and writers. Audiences for Aboriginal art include Aboriginal audiences, where there is an internal diversity of experiences and responses depending upon the viewers' backgrounds and knowledge of a particular art form. If set within a framework of indigenous art from other
cultures, like at the Pacific Festival of Arts, the primary audience is other indigenous people; at an African or Cuban biennale the accentuation may be on the marginalisation of other cultures by Western powers. For example, a double agenda was set by Mundine and Foley in the development of Tyerrabarrbowaryaou II, viz. that contemporary Aboriginal art, in particular urban art, should be shown in the context of other marginalised forms of indigenous art, at the Havana Biennale 1994 in Cuba, and that the same exhibition could be a feature on its own merits at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney.

The question may be asked, is there a further step beyond abrogation for Aboriginal artists? For instance, the film maker/photographer Tracey Moffat has refused for several years to be categorised as an Aboriginal artist, and prefers not to place her work in an Aboriginal art context. She is adamant that she does not want to be accepted in the artworld just because she is a talented Aboriginal person, but that she must be considered on her own merits in the 'mainstream' of Australian and international art (Macdonald 1992, Moffatt pers. comm. 1992). In my view, this does not propose a further step for Aboriginal artists, but is purely the inclination of one artist determining the parameters of her own career for herself. Mundine comments on this inclination:

Aboriginal artists had to define themselves, their history, their art. Some, such as Trevor Nickolls, Harold Thomas and more recently, Tracey Moffatt are reputed to have expressed the view that they wanted to be known as artists in their own right rather than being stereotyped as Aboriginal
artists. While to them their Aboriginality was never in question, and their art says this in many ways, their white peers strove to confine them within this category (Mundine 1990:9.)

In Papua New Guinea, contemporary artists combine traditional and new cultural ideals and images in new forms of artistic expression. Contemporary artistic identity reflects the development of a Papua New Guinea national character. Working in urban centres allows artists to draw on new stimuli and use Western materials and technology, as well as their own culture, to develop new forms of creative expression. A characteristic feature of contemporary art is its diversity. No one movement or style is paramount. This reflects the complexity of the cultural milieu of Papua New Guinea in all its richness and vitality. As well there is a diversity in the dialogue between works and viewers - the audience for Papua New Guinean art is composed of both people of the artists' own nationality and the international community who may have different responses to their art.

Aschroft based his theory about abrogation on Papua New Guinean literature in English. As noted in Chapter 7, the first book by a Papua New Guinean, Albert Maori Kiki's, *Ten Thousand Years in a Lifetime*, appeared in 1968. By this time there were a number of writers taking courses in creative writing at the University of Papua New Guinea under the tutelage of Ulli Beier, and much of the writing expressed anti-colonial sentiment. Writers used the European literary forms of poetry, prose and play-writing to deliver their anti-authoritarian messages, effectively abrogating these styles from the
dominant culture in the lead up to Papua New Guinean independence in 1975.

In contrast, the same anti-colonial groundswell did not occur in the visual arts, as the first artists started to emerge in the early 1970s and many of them had no Western-style education. By the time the contemporary visual arts movement gained strength in Papua New Guinea, independence had been achieved and the prevailing ideology was to support the new nation in establishing its distinctive cultural identity. Nevertheless, this national cultural identity had to be a modern one, imaginging Papua New Guinea as a developing nation within the world sphere, cognizant of the overreaching Westernised culture of the region. So, although there is not the same body of polemic, anti-authoritarian work directed against an oppressive regime as exists in Papua New Guinean literature from the late 1960s to the 1970s, abrogation can be discerned in contemporary Papua New Guinean art, at least that part of it which appropriates from the conventions of Western art to affirm the distinctive, modern character of the artists and their country.

Papua New Guineans are citizens of their own independent country, not a minority indigenous population like Aborigines in Australia. Although the Australian public is beginning to realise the extent of the political and social injustices borne by Aboriginal people over the past two hundred plus years since the European ‘invasion’ began, racial prejudice, discrimination and inequality still affect the lives of many Aboriginal people. Since the early 1980s the forceful images of urban Aboriginal
artists have revealed the ‘black side’ of Australia’s history. Their most effective tool in this endeavour is that they use powerful visual language that is clearly understood by Euro-Australians, because it is the language they understand best.

DISCUSSION

Until the late 1980s to 1990s, urban Aboriginal artists experienced difficulties in gaining recognition, for several reasons: urban Aborigines were widely perceived as an underclass in Australian society and racial discrimination frequently denied them equal opportunity. In the past the non-Aboriginal audience tended to view urban Aboriginal art too simplistically: because of some superficial similarities to Western art, paintings by urban or rural Aboriginal artists were often dismissed as copyist or derivative. The examples given above should disprove that the art is simple; in fact, studying it reveals the complexity of vision and insight into both black and white cultures that urban Aboriginal artists have developed. But what really galled Kooris and other urban artists is that their work was initially rejected by the arts establishment on the grounds that it was not authentic, or ‘really Aboriginal’. Their persistent campaign for recognition of the legitimacy of their Aboriginality, and for their work to be judged on its merits, is finally being rewarded.

Now that Koori artists are gaining recognition, the arts funding infra-structure operating in Australia is beginning to support their objectives and artistic development. Not only is
the work of Koori artists being sought for exhibitions, but a number have successfully applied for grants from the Federal and State Governments' Arts funding bodies; for example Boomali Aboriginal Artists Co-operative has received an annual sustaining grant to enable it to pay the rent of its gallery cum office premises. As Croft observes

for the major arts institutions there is no turning back to the days of the token gesture or nominal inclusion on existing agendas, for they have been put on notice as to what is available and what is expected of them in their role in this expanding industry (Croft 1994:51).

Individual Aboriginal artists who are familiar with the white Australian cultural system, and have been educated within its parameters, have used the system to their advantage to get subtle and complex messages across cultural barriers through the medium of art. The theory of abrogation has been developed and transferred from Pacific literature to urban Aboriginal art, and the processes by which it operates can be discerned in the work of the urban Aboriginal artists discussed above. considered that new theories need to be developed as part of a consistent effort to resolve problematic differences in cultural perception and construct a satisfactory and viable relationship between Aboriginal artists and their public. Abrogation allows artists to express their Aboriginality through the very images, media and techniques which, it would seem, are furthest removed from Aboriginal culture. It is a reflection of how Aboriginal artists have discovered distinctive ways to live as Aborigines in contemporary
Australian culture and make their Aboriginality visible through their individual creativity.
Why should we harbor such great respect for the arts of our ancestors throughout the region? I believe that the answer is identity. Our cultural heritage is not a nicety; it is a necessity. . . . To have command of ourselves and our future, we must know who we are.

(Henry 1993:9)

INTRODUCTION

The intention of this chapter is to identify some of the ideas and issues people of South Pacific societies consider important when presenting their culture to audiences outside their own community. For indigenous communities today, whether in the South Pacific region or other parts of the world, fostering a knowledge of their cultural identity and finding ways to articulate and present it to the outside world, has become a social and political necessity. But what is the meaning of ‘culture’ and ‘cultural identity’ for the citizens of independent Pacific nations and the indigenous minorities of Australia, New Zealand and Hawai’i? How do the visual and performing arts portray or symbolise ‘cultural identity’ at a local level and to the world at large? These questions are addressed in this chapter, which offers a partial and tentative response to them.
through an investigation of indigenous arts festivals. This investigation of indigenous arts festivals is relevant to the thesis because of the participation of Papua New Guineans and Australian Aboriginals who are the central focus of the thesis. As well, as Karen Stevenson notes (1993a:1) 'the concept of festival is one that has always played an important role in Pacific societies. One need only peruse the ethnologies to find . . . traditions associated with social, economic, political, agricultural and funeral rituals'.

The approach adopted here is to first discuss the nature of culture, then to investigate the particular problems faced by new nations and indigenous minorities in finding new ways of expressing their cultural identity to outside audiences, and why it is necessary to do so. Singsing groups performing at the Goroka Show in Papua New Guinea illustrate Wolff's point that cultural identity is initially established on a local level. Some professional performance groups, such as the Dance Theatre of Fiji, Te Ivi Maori of the Cook Islands and Kiribati performance groups, have responded to the challenge of developing dance performances which represent national cultural identity to outside audiences. Faced with its nation-building task, the provisional government of Vanuatu staged a National Arts Festival in 1979, the year before independence. The Vanuatu Arts Festival is briefly discussed as a strategy for reaffirming local cultural values and instilling the concept of national identity among ni-Vanuatu.¹ But the main focus of the chapter

¹ Ni-Vanuatu is the vernacular expression for indigenous Vanuatuans.
is on the Festival of Pacific Arts, the major indigenous arts festival of the Pacific region. It is suggested that the Festival of Pacific Arts has encouraged the development an ideology of national cultural identity among indigenous participants. The Festival also reflects perceptions of, and attitudes towards, the visual and performing arts held by indigenous organisers, participants and observers. As K. Stevenson wrote after the 6th Festival of Pacific Arts:

It is intriguing that a concept (as the Festival) so integrally linked to a very diverse population has not inspired great dialogue. Academicians have, for the most part, remained entrenched in their own discipline and have not looked to broader pan-Pacific ideas. Those interested in kastom have broken from this mold (sic); and such topics as the creation of histories, the invention of traditions, and the formulation of ethnic and political identities have begun a discourse without interdisciplinary boundaries. However, the role of the Festival in the Pacific has been rarely addressed (K. Stevenson 1993a:1).

CULTURE

Cultural theorists including Janet Wolff (1981:21-30), Jaques Maquet (1986:201-221) and James Clifford (1989:230-236) recognise some common elements which assist to define 'culture'. These may be summarised as follows.

1 Tausie (1979) discusses the first Festival of Pacific Arts in Fiji. Apart from the media coverage and literature generated by the Festival each time it occurs, Pacific Arts (the Journal of the Pacific Arts Association) has probably been the most consistent in publishing articles on the Festival, including Kaeppler (1989), Carrell (1992), K. Stevenson (1993b), Moulin (1993) Kauraka Kauraka (1993), Lewis-Harris (1994).
Culture includes the physical and social environment inhabited by a community of people. The physical environment, that is the landscape and its natural resources, set some parameters which undoubtedly affect cultural formation. Within the physical environment demographic factors, viz. the density and distribution of the local population, whether rural or urban, and the ethnic mix, all have an effect on local and national cultures. The physical and social environments of a particular culture are reflected in material objects, technology and resources in common use; buildings and monuments; forms of communication and preferred passtimes.

Each culture has a set of commonly held beliefs and values, including collective ideals and opinions the society has of itself. Its legends and myths, its religious and symbolic representations and its shared history are the cohesive forces of a society and are also determinants of its culture.

The organised social system (for example in Western cultures, the nation state and its philosophic, political and economic institutions and policies) forms the framework for cultural activities. The social system includes the dominant language(s), the formal rules and norms (that is the laws and conventions which the people of a society generally acknowledge and abide by), occupational roles and social divisions, collective habits and routines. The social system is also the setting for
emerging values and creative thinking which may challenge existing norms and create the dynamics of change within a particular culture.

The visual and performing arts provide channels for the manifestation of deeply held cultural beliefs and portrayals of personal and social history. Conversely, artists may challenge their society's mainstream philosophies and versions of history through their art.

Wolff (1981:23) claims that, in any culture, art is a collective enterprise. The artist is not an isolated genius, but a cultural producer who has learned their craft from others and shared experiences with their family, friends and associates. These factors have influenced the artist's creativity, as do the time and place where he or she lives. Wolff also maintains that a culture absorbs works of art into its own history. Art objects are therefore complex products which are socially defined and constituted within a set of cultural values (Wolff 1981:30).

Therefore art forms act, in some way, as repositories of cultural meaning and signifiers of a culture. Art forms are particularly well understood by members of the art-producers' culture. Each culture has an aesthetic realm, a distinct sphere of experience which recognises the importance and social effectiveness of creative expression (Maquet 1986:119). Each culture establishes its own locations and conventions for the practises of its art. Where certain elements or forms of art are restricted, as is the case in some tradition-oriented Aboriginal and South Pacific societies, the community must decide which aspects of its important and/or non-secular art can be made
public and what circumstances are appropriate for public displays to outside audiences.

People may perceive themselves as belonging to several inter-linking groups, each of which has its own cultural norms and forms. For example, a Papua New Guinean, as a member of a village community identifies with their local culture. In town he/she may become involved with the quite different urban culture, more aware of the pervading national culture. He/she is capable of participating in cultural activities in either of these circumstances. What is very significant to individuals in their role as a member of a clan in the home community may have little relevance to the way they function in urban society, but the individual can adapt his/her behaviour and activities according to the circumstances. Even isolated groups of indigenous people are continuously learning to adapt and participate in the wider socio-economic sphere and world culture. The presentation and performance of culturally specific art forms to outside audiences is one strategy by which autonomous communities can demonstrate their distinctive cultural identity and gain status and prestige among other groups in the nation or region.¹

Within multicultural societies, such as that which presently exists in Australia, people of different backgrounds participate in the wider structure of Australian culture and

¹By undertaking a sustained cultural revival project, the Gogodala of the Papuan Gulf (Crawford 1981) re-asserted the special character of their clans' culture to themselves. By then participating in regional and, later, international festivals (Pacific Festivals of Art 1980 and 1988), they demonstrated their cultural identity to their fellow Papua New Guineans and the outside world.
society to gain the benefits which its overriding social, economic and political systems provide. However Aboriginal people and immigrants from Asian and European countries can, and do, retain social, religious, and artistic practices which differ from the mainstream Anglo-Celtic norms and values, thus operating within two cultural realms. Apparent cultural unity, for example, ‘being Australian’, may mask the reality of past and present race, gender and class struggles and contradictory values and ideas within the society.¹ Indigenous minorities in the South Pacific region, viz New Zealand Maoris, native Hawai’ians, Australian Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, often connect issues of sovereignty and land rights to their participation in events where they display their own distinctive cultural identity.

NATIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY

Having a sense of cultural identity links people with their past and present history, their philosophies and social structures, the places they inhabit, their material culture and spiritual beliefs. It is now necessary for indigenous people to build upon the common experience of being the citizens of a nation and recognise that this is an essential part of their modern cultural identity. In the era of decolonisation, emergent nations in the South Pacific region have had to find ways to express their

¹ During Australia's Bicentennial Year (1988) was boycotted by most Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders who were adamant that they have separate cultural identities and histories from Anglo-Australians and immigrant groups.
distinctiveness and cultural vitality, and address national and international audiences in ways that their traditional cultures never anticipated. As Nicholas Thomas notes:

A nation is not simply a larger version of a tribe; it is rather a peculiarly modern cultural entity, that ideally possesses a distinctive character, that is somehow expressed both in the whole, and by its constitutive individuals (Thomas forthcoming:134).¹

Developing a sense of national cultural identity is an issue of which politicians and intellectuals of new nations are acutely aware.² The characteristic art forms of indigenous cultures, as well as new art which expresses contemporary realities, have often been appropriated to signify national identity. In the case of contemporary Papua New Guinea art, Thomas asserts that:

Even where artists' agendas have been more localised or personal, their works have often been assimilated to the project of representing Papua New Guinea for its elite, and in an international arena of cultural diplomacy (Thomas, forthcoming:135).³

But the building of a national cultural identity is not a simple process, as it must negotiate between long-established local

¹ I am grateful to Nicholas Thomas for the provision of his manuscript of a forthcoming book on Pacific art to be published by Thames and Hudson.

² See discussion in Chapter 7 of the PNG educated elite's role in developing a sense of national identity and symbols of nationhood such as PNG National Parliament House.

³ The contribution of Papua New Guinean contemporary visual artists to the creation of a national cultural identity is discussed at length in Chapter 7.
identities and national identity formation, tradition and the transition to modernity. Paul Sharrad recognises that:

The 'double bind' that the decolonising process introduces for cultural production is the contradiction of invoking a set of icons of identity (village, vernacular, orality/dance, 'magic', agriculture) in the name of the nation (represented in terms of town, English, writing, science and the office) (Sharrard 1993:13).

As well as nation-building, there are other substantial reasons for indigenous peoples' motivation to establish clear concepts of their cultural identity so it can be demonstrated to outsiders. The representation of indigenous cultures from the South Pacific region in Australian and South Pacific museums will be discussed in the following two chapters, but the museum context is just mentioned here as another avenue for the formation and interpretation of cultural identity.

Since the time of European contact, the sovereignty over land and characteristic ways of life once enjoyed by Aborigines and Pacific Islanders has been greatly disrupted. Since Aboriginal people gained citizenship in 1967, their struggle to regain their land has intensified. For groups of Aboriginal people engaged in land rights claims, the assertion of a distinctive local cultural identity can provide proof for land rights claims, or compensation for land where native title has been extinguished.1 As well as documentary evidence,

1 As with the success of the Torres Strait Islanders in the High Court of Australia in winning back title to the Island of Mer (widely known as the Mabo Case).
genealogies and oral traditions, traditional arts reveal the longevity and distinctiveness of a particular group's culture. The bark paintings expressing Yolngu clan's traditional possession and use of land at Yirrkala, presented to the Commonwealth government in 1963, provided specific and convincing evidence for their claim.

During the colonial era the large islands and archipelagoes of the Pacific were divided among imperial powers. The artificial political boundaries of the colonies, trust territories and protectorates often did not correlate with the distribution of ethnolinguistic groups and have been carried over into their present political status. For example, the archipelagoes of

1 Ron Crocombe (1992:153) details the status of Pacific Islands countries as follows:
There is a core group of Pacific Island countries that have predominantly indigenous populations and/or governments controlled by indigenous people . . . . They include: Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Fiji, Nauru, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Tonga, Western Samoa, Niue and the Cook Islands.
In the remaining island countries or territories, which will be referred to here as peripheral, indigenous people are a minority, and/or significant governing power rests with governments outside the islands or with people descended from immigrants . . . .
The major peripheral islands are characterised by substantial populations and resources. They include: Irian Jaya, a province of Indonesia;
New Caledonia and French Polynesia, departments of France;
New Zealand, an independent nation; and Hawai'i a state; Guam and American Samoa, territories; the Northern Marianas, a commonwealth; and Palau, a trust territory - all of the United States.
The minor peripheral islands . . . include:
Ogasawara and Iwo Jima, territories of Japan
Norfolk Island and Lord Howe Island, territories of Australia
The Kermadec Islands and Tokelau, territories of New Zealand
Wallis and Futuna, a Department;and Clipperton, a territory of France
Pitcairn Islands (sic), a territory of the United Kingdom
Easter Island, a territory of Chile
Howland, Baker, Johnson, Midway, Wake and Palmyra, territories of the United States.
Crocombe also notes that the Federated States of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands could be put in either category since 'although they are Republics, the United States retains extensive constitutional, political and
Polynesia, have had a disparate colonial legacy, but some cultural ties have survived this era. One of the major objectives of the 6th Festival of Pacific Arts, hosted by the Cook Islands in 1992, was to reaffirm and strengthen the ancient cultural links between the people of Eastern Polynesia and Rarotongans, and also Cook Islanders' cultural links with New Zealand Maoris.

For some indigenous peoples there is a need to revitalise, or even restructure, the elements of cultural life which have been diminished or discontinued because of the impact of Western ideas and influences. This is particularly important for minority indigenous communities (Australian Aboriginals, Torres Strait Islanders, New Zealand Maoris, native Hawai'ians) who wish to assert their distinctive identity and maintain a way of life, social structures and values considered important for the cohesion of their communities.1 For many reasons, therefore, indigenous societies throughout the South Pacific region desire to emphasise the importance of their unique cultural heritages to themselves, their countrymen and the world at large that:

(i) on a local scale, a sense of cultural identity is important to support community beliefs and structures; for the cohesion of

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1 It is also important for displaced communities such as the Banaban Islanders forced to move to Rabi Island in Fiji because of the desolation of their island caused by phosphate mining.
the community; to affirm cultural heritage to outsiders; to undertake cultural renewal where culture has been lost; (ii) on a national scale (for new national and indigenous minorities), a sense of cultural identity is important to give people a sense of shared heritage and common goals; to give each nation a distinctive character; to enhance the status and prestige of the nation among other nations; to acknowledge the vitality and skills of its creative people which support national goals and ideologies; to assist citizens with the transition to a modern state.

STRUCTURING CULTURAL IDENTITY: PUBLIC PERFORMANCES FOR LOCAL EVENTS AND NATIONAL FESTIVALS

Indigenous arts festivals, funded by governments and private sponsors, are a recent phenomenon in the South Pacific region. But before the discussion in the next section of the major regional event, the Festival of Pacific Arts this section briefly investigates the motivations for holding indigenous festivals with examples from Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea.

Most groups performing at the national arts festivals in Vanuatu and large regional festivals, such as the Goroka Show in Papua New Guinea, are made up of members of a particular clan or village who present dances specific to their own community. In contrast, in a number of Pacific countries, some performance groups have been formed as national, professional dance and/or theatre companies. Below, the examples of the Dance Theatre of Fiji and Te Ivi Maori demonstrate that their
repertoire is not solely directed to entertainment, but that such professional companies are formed with the intention of expressing their country's characteristic cultural identity, especially for outside audiences. Professional dance or theatre companies often represent their countries overseas and at major local cultural events, and also perform for tourists. They often present interpretations of traditional dances designed for outside audiences (with the permission of elders), and also choreograph new material expressing contemporary ideas.

Indigenous arts festivals

Local 'shows' were a regular feature in many Pacific countries during the colonial era. Before independence in Papua and New Guinea, regional shows such as the Sogeri, Morobe or Rigo Shows, featuring agricultural exhibits, stalls ranging from food to handicrafts, and local dance groups, were a yearly occurrence. These continue today, but with far less expatriate presence and with local control of the events.¹

¹ The Goroka Show 1994's main sponsor was the Eastern Highlands Show Society whose all-indigenous committee had a budget of PNG Kina 60,000 to sponsor the event. Over K 40,000 of this was used to provide prize money for the singsing groups. Mr Nombe, Deputy President of the Eastern Highlands Show Committee announced that each of the sixty participating singsing groups would receive an equal prize of K700 'because every group is unique and cannot be compared with others' (The National 12/9/94:3). Airlines, banks, coffee growers, retail merchants and other local businesses provide corporate sponsorship for the event and ensure they represent their businesses' operations in booths. All of the officials and stall holders at the Goroka Show are indigenous people. Of the 100,000 said to have attended, in my estimation less than 5% were expatriates or international visitors.
In the 1960s (first Mt Hagen Show 1962) the Mt Hagen Show, and soon after, the Goroka Show, became spectacular displays of Highlands clans' prowess and performance skills. Groups of dancers at these 'shows', (singsings in Papua New Guinea Tok Pisin) were made up of the members of a clan or village and performed public dances from their clan's repertoire. Announcing the program for the 1994 Goroka Show, its coordinator Silas Atopare said that 'sixty groups from all four regions of the country will be taking part. Eastern Highlands has the majority of groups, with a fair number from the Islands, Momase and Southern Regions.' He also said that the show committee had thoroughly screened the sixty singsing groups and that each of them would represent a unique type of singsing (The National 12/8/1994:2).

I observed some of the singsing groups at the 1994 Goroka Show with Michael Mel,¹ who commented that, while many of the singsing groups were performing traditional dances, several groups from Highlands villages had prepared innovative pieces which they were performing for the first time.² This was not always apparent to observers, such as myself, who were not familiar with local dance styles and have a limited knowledge of the sets of bilas (body decoration) required for

¹ Michael Mel is of the Melpa people (Mt Hagen area, Western Highlands). He is a Lecturer in Expressive Arts at Goroka Teachers College and is undertaking his PhD at Flinders University, South Australia on drama and performance.

² Mel identified the following groups, mostly from Eastern Highlands Province, as performing innovative dances: Yamouso Acting Group Number 2; Sabu Siane Group, Chauve, Simbu; Yama Acting Group, Gadsup Eastern Highlands Province; Mokimo Singsing Group, Henganofi, Eastern Highlands Province.
the performance of particular clan dances. Muriel Larner, an expatriate who has lived in the Eastern Highlands for over thirty years, ventured the opinion that the idea of performing innovative dances at the Goroka Show was possibly traceable to a Goroka Show in the early 1960s, when the Asaro Mudmen made their first ghostly appearance, frightening half the spectators away (Larner pers. comm. 1994). Since then the Asaro Mudmen have become a cultural icon, representative of Papua New Guinea's spectacular cultures on stamps, postcards and tourist publications.

Today, groups of villagers renowned for their spectacular performances, are sometimes selected to represent their province or their country at national and international festivals. The Papua New Guinea contingent to the Festival of Pacific Arts always includes several village-based dance groups to represent the nation's cultural diversity. Major events like the Goroka Show present opportunities for senior officials, who act as selectors for the Papua New Guinea contingent to the Pacific Festival of Arts and other overseas festivals, to assess the performances of *singsing* groups. This is apparently known to the performers. At the 1994 Goroka Show, after I had watched the *Samoke* (Eagle Dance) of the Murik Lakes group twice, their leader, Leo Satako, approached

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1 The performance of the Asaro Mudmen is based on a legend that the Komunive tribe (Asaro area, Eastern Highlands) were once at war with a rival tribe. The enemies invaded the Komunives, who fled, leaving everything behind. Having no weapons, the Komunives painted themselves made frightening masks from white clay and painted their bodies white. Entering their village like this, the Komunives frightened their enemies who thought they were spirits returned from the dead, and the enemies fled.
me and urged me to write down his address and details of the
dance group in case I had the opportunity to recommend them to
festival organisers in Australia.

When it is decided to display important forms of cultural
expression to outside audiences, deliberate decisions must
often be made by the community about what is appropriate to
present. This situation arises for village *singsing* groups from
performing at local public celebrations, provincial shows or
national arts festivals.

Presenting a cultural event to an outside audience, whether
at the regional, national or international level, differentiates
an indigenous arts festival from a local ceremony. The energies
of the festival participants are not intended to fulfil internal
traditional obligations, but are directed outwards. The arts
festival usually encompasses a wider group of participants who
perform unrelated events; it attracts a larger audience, not all
of whom are local, and obtains sponsorship of the event from
non-traditional sources.¹

In the lead up to independence (in succession to the
Anglo/French Condominium of the New Hebrides in 1980), the
provisional Vanuatu government sponsored a National Arts
Festival in the capital, Port Vila, in 1979. By holding a National

¹ For the 1985 Malekula Arts Festival in Vanuatu, the effort in preparation
and many of the costs involved in traditional payments (for example to
purchase copyrights for dances) had to be borne by the participants. The
national and provincial governments gave support in various ways, by
sending dignitaries to attend, funding films or recordings of the
proceedings, and providing free transport on government services to enable
local people to attend. Funds for larger projects, for example the National
Arts Festival of Vanuatu held in 1979, are sought from local corporations
and internationally through bilateral aid programs and culturally-oriented
organisations such as UNESCO.
Arts Festival the Vanuatu Government sought to draw the diverse population closer together and develop their acceptance and pride of being *ni-Vanuatu*, citizens of the new nation.¹

After this initial national arts festival in Vanuatu, interest grew in such events among the population and local arts festivals have been held on several islands for their own communities: Pentecost in 1982; Malekula in 1985; further festivals on three islands in 1990. In 1991 a second National Arts Festival was held on the island of Santo. Because of Vanuatu's cultural diversity these festivals play an important role in developing familiarity and cultural exchange between groups.²

At the Malekula Arts Festival, the Vanuatu Minister for Culture, a man of Malekula himself, exhorted the people to 'renew the dreams of your ancestors, do not wait until tomorrow', and to create a sense of local and national identity over and above the obligations of maintaining their own traditions. In their speeches of thanks, the *kastom* chiefs stressed the importance of the festival in bringing everyone together so that they could learn from each other, and the necessity for the young people to learn to value their culture. They acknowledged the role of the government-sponsored arts

¹ Kirk Huffman, then Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, Lecture at the Centre for South Pacific Studies, Uni. NSW March 1989.

² For example, there are 36 language/culture groups on the island of Malekula and the 1985 festival provided the first opportunity for all the people of Malekula to get together. Some cultures of Malekula, for example that of South West Bay, have felt the impact over a long period of contact with missionaries, coastal traders, whalers, and other European influences, while on the same island other groups like the Big and Small Nambas still live in a more traditional *kastom* way. Pers. comm. Huffman 1989.
festival in impressing the value of culture upon their youth, and for providing an opportunity for cultural exchange beyond their clan's resources.¹

*Professional dance troupes and the expression of national culture*

The following three examples, from Kiribati, Fiji and the Cook Islands, are of performance groups which have formed ‘national’ dance troupes to represent their cultures at major festivals or other events. Members of national dance or theatre troupes belong to different clans and the troupes perform styles of dance or drama drawn from the diversity of their country’s traditional styles. Some examples of how the routines of ‘national’ dance troupes are approved and choreographed, and who determines what levels of performance are suitable for a particular audience, appear below.

Not many tourists get to Kiribati (formerly the Gilbert Islands), and performances are generally for a local audience. Nevertheless the Cultural Division of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Decentralization, as part of its ten year effort to encourage the revitalisation of Kiribati cultural heritage, introduced three recommended standards for the performing arts; the *Mwaneaba* standard, the Entertaining standard and the On Stage/Show standard. Performances from each of the categories may be produced for local audiences, for visiting

¹ A scene of this speech is in the film *Blong save hu nau Yumi*, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, 1986.
dignitaries or tourist groups, or for Kiribati performances abroad. B. Eritaia gave the following explanation:

With the *Mwaneaba* standard, the dancers will perform in real Kiribati ways, styles, formation, etc. The *Mwaneaba* standard, or a classic Kiribati dance, takes a true form of a Kiribati dance, which might be boring and uninteresting to foreigners who would not understand its significance and meaning....

The Entertaining standard is a more modernised and preferred quality of dance performance. Dances of this type are more prevalent and are popular with the younger sections of the l-Kiribati people, and also with foreigners.... The basic style, music and placing of arms, head and eyes are unchanged but the formation changes and the accompanying tempo, being more lively, provides an exhilarating setting for the audience....

The On Stage/Show standard basically takes the form of the Entertaining standard but includes background documentary explanation of some important meanings in the action, their meaning and the origin of the particular dance being performed (Eritaia 1988:4).

Another example of the conscious adaptation of dance forms for non-traditional audiences is from the Dance Theatre of Fiji (DTF). This group of indigenous Fijian performers was originally formed in 1972 to perform at the first South Pacific Festival of Arts (as it was then called). The original group was tutored by Beth Dean and Victor Carell, but subsequently rejected their Westernised interpretations of Fijian dances.\(^1\)

\(^1\) Likewise in the Cook Islands the initial concept for the Cook Islands National Arts Theatre came from the producer/choreographer team of Victor Carell and Beth Dean. It was set up in 1969 with the support of the Cook Islands Government and appeared at each Pacific Festival of Arts, Brisbane Expo 1988 and other international events. However, some members of the company did not agree with the Carell/Dean ‘balletic interpretation’ of Cook
With the development of the Pacific Harbour Cultural Centre, Manoa Rasigatale, an original member of DTF, formed the troupe which now regularly performs at the Pacific Harbour Cultural Centre (pers. comm. Rasigatale, March 1987). ¹

Rasigatale admits that concessions in the context and style of presentation demonstrations and performances have had to be made to accommodate tourist taste and the limited time tourist groups have available. For example, on occasions when a dancemaker, davinicu, comes to the centre to teach the DTF a particular set of dances, the troupe fulfills its obligations to the davinicu by having a thanksgiving feast and buying the 'copyright' to the traditional dances they have learned. Permission is asked of the davinicu to present a brief version of the performance as it is considered that non-Fijians do not have sufficient understanding of the background and story of the dance, nor do they have the patience to sit through the hours of preliminary ceremony and drawn out performances which would necessarily be part of its performance in the local community context (pers.comm. Rasigatale 1987).

As is the case with many professional performance groups (whether bands, dance groups or theatre companies) in the South Pacific region today, the members of DTF are drawn

Islands dance forms and formed other troupes which regularly perform traditional and contemporary dance in the Cook Islands and internationally.

¹ Rasigatale was then Director of the Pacific Harbour Cultural Centre. The Pacific Harbour Cultural Centre is a re-construction of a fortified village from the Rewa Delta area. It is a popular tourist attraction which, because of the time taken to view the demonstrations of 'traditional' building, canoe construction, tapa-making, pottery, fire-walking, etc. is generally undertaken as a day tour.
from different indigenous Fijian communities. They are attracted by professional opportunities, the opportunity to develop their skills and learn new ones and perform to a wide audience.

In the 1990s the performing arts are the most highly visible form of creative expression in the Cook Islands. The high level of tourism has created a demand for exciting, slick performances to satisfy Western tastes and notions of 'island dancing'. However many local groups perform for their own reasons and retain continuities with tradition in music, songs and chants, dancing, costumes and regalia appropriate to different occasions.

In 1969 the Cook Islands National Arts Theatre was set up with Government support. The original concept for the Theatre came from the producer/choreographer team of Victor Carell and Beth Dean with the objective of training a company to tour Australia for the Captain Cook Bicentennial Celebrations. The Cook Islands National Arts Theatre has subsequently appeared at each Pacific Festival of Arts and Brisbane Expo in 1988. Following the initial tour, splits occurred in the ranks of performers with not all agreeing with the Carell/Dean method of presentation. Some did not like the balletic interpretation of Cook Islands dance forms, but at least it inspired the formation of other dance troupes, along with a revival of interest in the verities of traditional dance, how and when to perform it, and the development of contemporary dance.

Timote Turu, the choreographer of one of the leading dance troupes, Te Ivi Maori, described the way dance links the Cook Islanders' past and present. Te Ivi Maori has a repertoire of some two hundred items. Some are traditional songs and dances learned from elders who were dance masters, such as would be appropriate for the investiture of an ariki (high chief). Different rhythms distinguish dances and melodies from the islands within the group, for example Pukapuka dances are slower and related to the Samoan style resulting from this island's ancestral connections with Samoa. The music of the southern islands characteristically utilises deeper tones than that of the northern islands. Dances are only accompanied by drumbeats and songs sung unaccompanied, usually in harmony. The subject matter is drawn from the exploits of gods, chiefs and sailing voyages and these items are performed in costumes made of natural materials, approximating the original forms of dress (Pers. comm. Turu, May 1987).

New compositions are based on more current themes. For example one of Turu's recent compositions, which has become very popular with the Cook Islanders, reflects on the inroads made by Europeans and cautions the Maoris to guard their land and heritage. Modern composer/choreographers also put legends into drama form, accompanied by chants, singing and dancing. Innovations for some acts include the use of guitars and ukeleles as instruments, fabric and raffia for costumes and melodies derived from popular religious and country and Western styles. However, as well as providing general fun and entertainment the troupe is professionally committed to the
strengthening and preservation of Cook Islands Maori culture (pers. comm. Turu, May 1987).

Each of the three examples discussed above reveals the rationale behind the development of a particular 'national' group's public performances. In each instance the 'national' group has a commitment not to transgress the integrity of the cultural forms and knowledge it represents. As these groups frequently perform locally and overseas, there must be tacit approval from their communities that what they do accurately represents Fijian or Cook Islands or Kiribati culture.

At the Festival of Pacific Arts, held once every four years, both village groups and professional groups appear. For example, the Papua New Guinea contingent to the 5th Festival (Townsville, 1988) included Raun Raun Theatre, a professional theatre company and village groups from North Hagen, Mekeo and Gogodala.

THE FESTIVAL OF PACIFIC ARTS

The Festival of Pacific Arts (FPA) reflects the contemporary life of Pacific peoples. It demonstrates that their indigenous heritage is a conscious and dynamic part of life in every Pacific nation. The Festival is also a response by Pacific people to the erosion of their cultural traditions by external influences which has taken place over the past two hundred (plus or minus) years. The resilience of Pacific cultures to weather the storms of change are contained in a line from a Kanak performance at the 5th FPA in Townsville
'the cyclones have not bent your roof pole
they have changed its form'.

The Festival originated in the early 1970s when a number of South Pacific leaders, including Michael Somare (Papua New Guinea) and Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara (Fiji), urged the South Pacific Commission (SPC)¹ to initiate an event which would demonstrate the cultural assets of Pacific peoples. The Festival of Pacific Arts is organised by, and for, indigenous people of the Pacific region: Melanesians, Polynesians, Micronesians and Aborigines. It is not intended to be a showcase for tourists, but a festival that fosters the vitality of Pacific peoples' traditions and encourages contemporary artists in their creative aspirations.

FPA is the Pacific nations' major cultural gathering. It is held under the aegis of the Council of Pacific Arts, itself part of the South Pacific Commission. The first Festival, called the South Pacific Festival of Arts,² was held in Fiji in 1972 and the Festival has since been held in New Zealand (1976), Papua New Guinea (1980), French Polynesia (1985), Townsville, Australia (1988) and the Cook Islands (1992). The 1988 and 1992 Festivals are discussed below. To embrace the

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¹ Founded in 1947 by the six colonial governments of the Pacific region (Australia, Britain, France, New Zealand, the Netherlands, USA), the South Pacific Commission considered matters of joint interest. The membership now comprises the twenty-seven independent and self-governing nations of the Pacific and its role is advisory and consultative.

² Until August 1981 the Council was known as the South Pacific Arts Festival Council, but following the 21st South Pacific Conference the names were changed to the Council of Pacific Arts and the Pacific Festival of Arts respectively (SPC/7AFC Report 1982:1).
Micronesian nations from the north Pacific ‘South’ was dropped from the Festival’s name in 1985.

The primary audience of the Festival is composed of the indigenous people of the host country and the numerous participants of the other Pacific countries’ delegations. Unlike most Western arts festivals, in which solo artists and groups are selected to participate by the organisers, the PFA leaves the selection of its representatives to each participating country. Delegations are representative of the diversity of cultures and forms of artistic expression of each country. This spectrum allows for the inclusion of talented visual and performing artists from remote villages through to professional theatre companies.

The Festival has become part of contemporary Pacific culture. It continues to give a healthy impetus to the renaissance of the arts of the region, encouraging the expression of the genius of the people through words, song, music, theatre, sculpture, costumes, literature, architecture, engraving, painting, rites and symbols. More than a gala occasion for colour and splendour, it makes a tangible contribution to the recognition of the forms of creative expression of the region and helps in the dissemination on a global scale of the knowledge and appreciation of Pacific arts and cultures.1 After the 3rd Festival its Director, Mali Voi, said that ‘the Festival continued to demonstrate the best and most

1 Each time it occurs, PFA is attended by an increasing number of talent scouts from other international festivals. Just one example is that following the 1992 PFA in Rarotonga, groups from the Torres Strait Islands, Tahiti and Wallis and Futuna were invited to perform at the Adelaide Festival 1994.
creative elements of the region’s cultures while contributing to a Pacific reawakening - a renaissance of the Pacific way’ (Moi 1988:5).

The FPA is often the one occasion in four years where priority is given to the arts and the recognition of the peoples’ cultural heritage. In the small, poor and developing countries of the Pacific urgent priorities exist for economic development, health and education and many strong arguments exist that money is better used to consolidate these domestic priorities. But, as Vilisoni Tausie noted, there is also an awareness that it is essential to nurture the wellsprings of the peoples’ consciousness and pride in themselves, and give them an opportunity to gain confidence in their own cultural enterprises, as ‘with confidence one is able to choose more selectively and critically before absorbing the undesirable elements of another culture’ (Tausie 1979:46). 1

While observing the last two Festivals (Townsville 1988 and Cook Islands 1992), it became apparent to me that there was an interplay of interests at work: artist participants absorbed in their particular medium; politicians manoeuvering for their country’s best advantage; intellectuals debating and formulating critical issues; and people simply enjoying themselves. These interests were apparent at different times and places during the Festivals, but the separate paths were often directed towards the same goal: reinforcing a sense of individual and national cultural identity. The description of

1 Since writing *Art in the New Pacific* Vilisoni Tausie has finished his Doctorate and is now known as Vilisoni Hereniko.
some events at the 5th FPA in Townsville, Australia (1988) and the 6th Festival in the Cook Islands (1992), draws together evidence to support this claim.

*The 5th Festival of Pacific Arts, Townsville 1988*

As the location of the Festival changes each time it is held, initial planning and evaluation meetings are held in Noumea at the Council of Pacific Arts in South Pacific Commission (SPC) headquarters. A budget is allocated from SPC funds, and further funds are sought from international aid agencies and philanthropic organisations. The host country and participating countries also contribute and private sponsors are sought to provide assistance in cash or in kind. Because each Festival is planned by a different committee and held in a different location each develops its own character. In each instance the host community demonstrates its own culture to the visitors, as the Aboriginals did with this message, 'Our culture underpins our life. We must continue to maintain it and ensure it forms our future'. To cope with the organisation and planning of the FPA a company is formed and a Board of Directors and staff recruited from the host community - these are disbanded at the conclusion of each Festival. For the Townsville Festival, an Advisory Committee drawn from

1 An article by the writer on the 5th Festival, Townsville 1988, was published in *Oceania* (Cochrane Simons 1989) from which some of this material is drawn.

Aboriginal and Islander communities was elected which provided 'a barometer of community feeling on the direction the Festival should take' (Obah, press release 1988).\footnote{P. Obah, Liaison Manager for the Festival, Press Release 20 Aug. 1988.}

It has already been mentioned that 1988 was the year of Australia's Bicentennial, an event celebrating Australia's two-hundred year history of white settlement. It has not been possible to ascertain whether Australia particularly lobbied to be the venue for the 1988 Festival of Pacific Arts as part of the cultural agenda for the Bicentennial celebrations. However, it is certain that, as the event drew closer and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' protested strongly that the Bicentennial was not in their interests and they wished to have nothing to do with it, efforts were made to entirely disassociate the Festival of Pacific Arts from the Bicentennial. In his introduction to the commemorative catalogue of the 5th Festival of Pacific Arts the (then) Minister for the Arts and Territories, Gary Punch, wrote that

\begin{itemize}
\item[(1)] The Government's support for the Festival is the strongest possible expression of our commitment to the integrity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and to access and participation in the arts for all Australia's diverse cultures.
\item The Government recognises that the Festival is not part of Australia's Bicentennial celebrations. It is a major celebration of regional culture (Punch 1988:7).
\end{itemize}

An intention of the 1988 Festival organisers was to prove that Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders could stage a
major international arts festival.¹ The desire to succeed was perhaps a reason for the conservatism of the Festival’s arrangements, but the 5th Festival was also the first time the Board of Directors had been completely composed of indigenous people (although they did employ some white advisors).²

The 5th Festival of Pacific Arts was the largest indigenous cultural event ever held in Australia. The Festival Committee and three hundred-strong Australian delegation, hosted 1,500 Festival delegates from around the Pacific. The aim of the 1988 Festival was to promote the maintenance of indigenous cultures within the region, with two objectives in mind: to maximise cultural exchange between the Australian and Pacific participants and to increase the general public’s awareness and understanding of these indigenous cultures (Isaacs 1988:17).

Apart from its ease of access from the Pacific and its pleasant tropical location, Townsville was chosen as the location for the Festival because of the association with Pacific Islanders from the blackbirding days when hundreds of Vanuatuans, Solomon Islanders and New Caledonians worked as indentured labourers on the north Queensland cane fields. Many

¹ There has been a notable lack of opportunities for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to be involved in any significant planning capacity with any of Australia’s major international arts festivals, such as the Adelaide Festival, Perth Festival, New South Wales’ Carnivale, or the Sydney Festival.

² Notably Anthony Steele, previously a Director of two Adelaide Arts Festivals who assisted with planning. Jennifer Isaacs was commissioned to write and publish the commemorative catalogue, and I was sub-contracted to write the material on the Pacific Islands nations participating.
of these Pacific Islander indentured labourers stayed in Queensland and intermarried with the local Aborigines.¹

While performance was the main focus of the Festival program, exhibitions, film screenings, band music, oratory and story-telling were also featured. The Craft Village, where thatched shelters had been specially constructed to house a couple of hundred delegates displaying and demonstrating their artifact-making skills, was the most popular venue.

*The Past in the Present,* was billed as an exhibition reflecting Festival Board’s desire to focus on contemporary life in the Pacific region. It was intended ‘to illustrate the unique and individual cultural identity of the indigenous people of each participating country and secondly that cultural heritage is a dynamic ongoing part of the fabric of Pacific life’ (1988 FPA publicity, n.d., no page number). This exhibition, and the collection of Pacific artifacts lent by the Michoutouchkine Pilioko Foundation of Vanuatu were, except for a few excellent pieces, disappointing selections and poorly displayed.² The failure of these exhibitions perhaps reflected the lack of access for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders to professional training in exhibition and curatorial skills (see chapter 10, ‘Australian Museums and Indigenous People’). The exhibition of Aboriginal art, displayed at the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, included bark paintings from several Northern

¹ Novelist Faith Bandler and actor/producer Bob Maza are descendants of indentured Islanders and are activists in the cause of better recognition of this group of indigenous people by Australian authorities.

² Even though Townsville lacked sufficient gallery venues, the exhibitions were poorly arranged, scarcely documented and badly lit.
Territory communities; paintings and prints in non-traditional media; pottery; traditional fibre works and contemporary textiles. Curated by Aboriginal Arts Australia, it was another example of presenting contemporary Aboriginal art in the wider sense of 'contemporary' (that is, objects representative of all kinds of art made now, see Chapter 3).

In the State Office block exhibition, the section dealing with Pacific Navigation, with excellent models of Hawai’ian seafaring canoes, was by far the most informative and best presented. But it was the only acknowledgement of one of the most significant and widespread aspects of Pacific cultures - ocean navigation. Canoes have had a major and essential role in the proceedings at past Festivals, notably Papua New Guinea in 1980, but the initial plan to include a canoe ‘armada’ for the 1988 FPA was scrapped for unstated reasons.\(^1\)

The vitality of the Craft Village provided a striking contrast to the lifelessness of the exhibitions. People were drawn back again and again to this hub of activity where, under airy thatched shelters, an everchanging contingent of artists and craftspeople demonstrated their specialities. This probably reflected a preference among the indigenous participants and onlookers for observing the intricate processes of making objects, rather than looking at collections of them.

Outside the Papua New Guinea hut in the Craft Village several women were making *bilums* (net bags) from hand rolled

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\(^1\) PNG had built 10 canoes at the suggestion of the organisers, but the idea was scrapped just four weeks before the Festival, to the canoe builders' annoyance. Report in *Pacific Islands Monthly* (Oct. 1988:22).
natural fibre dyed with plant extracts or brightly coloured mercerised cotton, sometimes interspersed with hand spun wool. The women were willing to sell these for $A80 -$150.¹ One beautiful large bilum, was hung on the branch of a tree for display but was not for sale. Its owner and maker, Asa Hisau, explained that it was her own special one, made for her by her aunt before she died. Hisau willingly told interested observers that such bilums are considered one of a woman’s most valuable personal possession since they are thought to contain some part of the deceased person. As the fibre from which they are made is rolled on the maker’s thigh the friction causes particles of skin and hair to be absorbed into the string, becoming an essential part of the bilum. For the person to whom it is given it will always be a precious reminder of the loved one long after their death. Stories like this, related by the artist or craftsperson while demonstrating their speciality, absorbed the attention of onlookers and greatly facilitated cultural exchange.

A number of Aboriginal men and women artists from Papunya (Central Australia), including the well-known artist Dinny Nolan, were working on large ‘dot and circle’ acrylic paintings in one of the Craft Village shelters. This was the only type of significant contemporary art activity taking place here.² It seems that most countries had elected to send

¹ A large bilum purchased by the writer in 1988 at the Madang market in Papua New Guinea, similar to some on display at the Craft Village, cost $A60. This indicates that selling art and craft at Festivals such as this is to the sellers’ advantage.

² Here I mean specifically artists making ‘new’ art using introduced materials.
specialists to demonstrate traditional art forms and crafts: for example, Malaita (Solomon Islands) women making shell money; Maori women weaving feather cloaks; tapa demonstrations from Tonga and Fiji; leis and tivaevae (appliqued quilts) taking shape in the Cook Islands and Hawaiian pavilions.

In the Rapa Nui (Easter Island) pavilion a large moai\(^1\) replica was taking shape under the deft hands of two carvers, Pedro Atan and Keo Teao. The two metre high figure was carved from Australian bloodwood\(^2\). After European contact the population of Easter Island was decimated through disease and slavery and much of its cultural knowledge lost. Pedro Atan, whose father taught him to carve, learnt to carve small replicas of many Easter Island objects such as those illustrated in books on Rapa Nui art (Heyerdahl 1970). Other carvers demonstrating their skills in the Craft Village (Hawaii, Kanak, Cook Islands, Marquesas) stressed that the making of major pieces required more than deft workmanship. A special relationship was necessary between the carver and the figure he was going to make. This intimacy of knowledge extended to the feel and shape of the wood selected, and the carving had to

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1 *Moai* are monumental ancestor figure of ancient Rapa Nui culture, typically carved in volcanic rock. Although Pedro also made several small replicas of *moai* from volcanic rock he had brought with him, large stone *moai* have not been carved on the island for an unknown period, (the making of *moai* ceased before European contact for reasons not well understood).

2 Systematic archaeological research on Rapa Nui, to document and conserve the *moai*, has been going on since 1968, although Heyderhal and Ferdon (Norwegian Archaeological Expedition) first undertook some experiments with them in 1961 (van Tilburg 1993:25-29).
grow from the *mana* of the bond between the artist, the image of what he is creating and his material.

Nauru is considered by many to be culturally as well as ecologically devastated.¹ Nauru is the wealthiest Pacific nation, due to phosphate royalties, and the islanders are ostensibly acculturated to a Westernised materialistic lifestyle. The main visible activity which had been reported was Ibbon Itsu, the male competitive ritual of capturing frigate birds and taming them.² Daphne Fotu, a leader of the Nauruan delegation to the Festival, was adamant that the Nauruans had retained their original culture and language, but that these were jealously guarded as a highly personal heritage by Nauruans and not revealed to outsiders. If made accessible to outsiders it is believed that the immediate result would be an immediate diminution in value, and once commenced, the process of revelation would be unstoppable and irreversible. The only way to keep Nauruan culture intact, she maintained, was to keep it secret.

As a concession to the prevailing attitude of the Festival, that it was an opportunity for cultural exchange, the Nauruan clans had agreed to the making of one mat, comprised of ten sections each representing a fragment of the distinctive clan

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¹ In the preparation of the text on the participating Pacific Islands countries for the official catalogue we had considerable difficulty in obtaining information on present cultural activity in Nauru. Sources approached included Nauruan consul in Melbourne & Dr Jim Specht (Pacific Anthropology) Australian Museum who had visited Nauru.

² After a search for images of recent Nauruan art and cultural events, the image located for the Festival catalogue was the practise of Ibbon Itsu, photographed by Jim Specht of the Australian Museum.
designs. An elderly woman was given permission by the traditional owners of the patterns to weave the mat, but found it almost impossible to complete as only the members of each clan can use their own pattern. When attempting one particular section, the weaver complained she couldn't do it and became ill until assurances were given her that it was alright to complete the task (pers. comm. Fotu 1988). Incidentally, the Nauruan delegation was comprised of thirty school children and a few adult leaders, the philosophy being that the children would begin to appreciate the necessity of cultural survival and the value of identifying with a personal and national heritage by observing its importance to all the Pacific nations taking part in the Festival.

The program of 5th FPA offered a visual feast of traditional and contemporary dance and drama from countries throughout the Pacific region. This included some virtuoso individual performances; presentations in traditional style by village groups and specially written and/or choreographed performances by national dance and theatre companies.

Performances took place in in open spaces around the city. During the day there would be performances at Queens Park and lunch hour shows at the mid-city mall and Craft Village. A popular spot at sunset was the Rock Pool, where a specially constructed stage had been built out over sea. Fully staged performances were mounted nightly at the Civic Theatre and bands played at the Sound Shell. Storytelling, oratory and poetry readings were also held daily on the waterfront at Anzac Park. Limitations on the performers time were perhaps
necessary, but seemed to be an unfortunate restriction on the nature of dance or dance/dramas being presented unless they had been specifically tailored for the space and time available.

The range of performances in the program of the 5th PFA was consistent with the aim expressed by the Festival organisers, viz. to increase awareness of the diversity of indigenous cultures in the region. Some performances, such as those from the islands of Pentecost in Vanuatu and Bellona in the Solomon Islands; the Mekeo, Gogodala and North Hagen groups from Papua New Guinea and the Mornington Island Aboriginal group, were representative of traditional practices. The three groups of performers from Papua New Guinea adhered to their characteristic traditional costumes and style of performance. The North Hagen group, who had taken hours of careful preparation over their elaborate headdresses and body decorations, seemed disconcerted when asked to stop performing after their twenty-minute time slot in the lunch hour at the Craft Village was over. Moving out of the central arena to another area under a huge strangler fig, they continued their performance for the rest of the afternoon and returned the following day (unscheduled) for a further day's dancing. In the Festival newsletter Torres Strait Islander elder Ephraim Bani explained that

(d)uring traditional dancing the dancer is lifted above the present reality into a world of emotion . . . .

When the myths and stories are exhibited in chanted form and combined with music, ritual and dance, it becomes the great switch which releases the instinctive energy that, directed into trains of
collective actions, results in a gratification and an experience of inner peace and harmony.

The inspiration is an experience for both parties, the dancers and spectators. This is why dances are sacred and spiritual (Bani 1988:7).

At the Civic Theatre, the performances of Sido, by the Raun Raun Theatre of Papua New Guinea, and The Dreamers, by Aboriginal playwright Jack Davis, exemplified skilful adaptations of Western theatrical forms and techniques. Of Jack Davis, fellow Aboriginal writer Colin Johnson commented:

(Davis is) an Aboriginal writer who is committed to his people and who writes with a purpose. He is a writer of Aboriginality using Aboriginal speech forms, though he has not yet structured his plays on Aboriginal forms. This lack does make for European type plays which Europeans can follow without any difficulty (Johnson 1988:3).

True to form, in The Dreamers, 'certain aspects of Aboriginal reality keep intruding to bring the genre identification into doubt'.(Johnson 1988:8).

In contrast Sido, an interpretation of a legend of the Kiwai people about their culture hero, was presented in Tok Pisin, Papua New Guinea's lingua franca, with the actors wearing approximations of traditional costumes.1 Raun Raun Theatre (raun raun is a Tok Pisin expression for going around,

1 Kiwai is on the Gulf of Papua, where earlier this century Police Motu would have been better understood. Tok Pigin has spread from New Guinea into Papua and, as this play is presented to audiences all over PNG it has been chosen as the right language for the maximum audience. The performers design their costumes from natural materials and achieve a 'look' similar to the traditional costume of the area without impinging on any particular clan designs or dress traditions.
travelling) was established to perform for the rural communities of Papua New Guinea. Much of their repertoire is the interpretation of legends and myths, updated and pertinent to today's world. The cast of Raun Raun Theatre, mostly National Art School trained, have successfully syncretised Western and indigenous dramatic techniques.

Those inclined towards regional politics and social issues made their way to the Cultural Forum held daily at James Cook University for debates and panel discussions on crucial issues: the desire for a nuclear free Pacific; a greater need for intra-Pacific cultural exchange;\(^1\) the nurturing of cultural identity.

During the 5th Festival a number of criticisms of the arrangements and programming surfaced and became clear issues which participants wanted addressed in future Festivals. It was interesting to observe that several of these were indeed seriously considered by the organisers of the 6th Festival in the Cook Islands. In brief, the main criticisms circulating at the 5th (Townsville) Festival were as follows.

(i) There was an over-reliance on formal structures and types of programming which, it was felt, were more relevant to a Western arts festival than an indigenous one; for example, strict restrictions of time for performances automatically meant that the selection of dances was limited and, most likely, the length of the dances was curtailed. There was

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\(^1\) For example, some Maori spokespersons recognised that they had overlooked the needs of the expatriate Polynesian communities in New Zealand (Samoans, Tongans, Cook Islanders, Nuiens) as they have been preoccupied with the problems of the regeneration of their own culture.
insufficient time to gauge the dancing style of each group and get accustomed to their rhythms.

(ii) The eclectic mix of groups performing in the same program (e.g. Fiji, Marshall Islands, Easter Island, Guam) did not appeal. Setting aside an area for each participating country, as was done in the Craft Village at the Townsville Festival, and allowing each delegation to stage their performances to their own timetable was offered as an alternative proposition.

(iii) It was considered that more ‘fringe’ events, such as feasts prepared in earth ovens, traditional island games and canoe racing, as well as more opportunities for oratory and story telling, could enhance the Festival and make people aware of other aspects of Pacific culture.¹

The 6th Pacific Festival of Arts, Rarotonga 1992

The Cook Islands, geographically situated in the centre of the South Pacific and culturally part of eastern Polynesia, is the smallest nation to have hosted the Pacific Festival of Arts. Ingenuity and careful planning were necessary to overcome the limited physical and material resources of the country. Another factor of the 6th Festival’s success was its focus on the renaissance of Polynesian skills of ocean-going canoe building and navigation.²

¹ Tausie commented on the potential for such events after the first Festival in Fiji (Tausie 1979:49).

² Although island Melanesians (Fijians, Kanaks, Solomon Islanders, Vanuatuans, coastal and island Papua New Guineans) are also seafarers, the concentration at the 6th Festival was on Polynesian inter-island navigation. The New Ireland contingent (PNG) transported by plane two outrigger canoes
Some political statements were carried through performances, particularly in contemporary theatre. Although there was no overt political activism, many acts served a dual purpose of entertaining and getting a message across. Wan Smolbag Theatre from Vanuatu engaged with environmental rape, an issue which presently affects the marine resources and rainforest timbers of many Pacific countries. *Sana Sana*, Papua New Guinea's ‘tribal opera’, voiced humanistic concern for the fate of tribal peoples since Christopher Columbus's reaching of the New World. The ‘cabaret’ version of the Aboriginal musical *Bran Nu Dae* attracted quite a following during its few performances. The songs became immediately popular and, behind the comedy, the Aboriginal experience of missionisation and family displacement began to filter through.

At the two day Pacific Arts Symposium at the Festival some of the participating artists, representatives of arts organisations and arts bureaucrats spoke out about their cultural concerns in an informal forum. John Kasaipwalova, the delegate representing Papua New Guinea's National Theatre Company, said that the aim of their company was to maintain and protect the integrity, spirit and essence of Papua New Guinea music and dance, but to acknowledge at the same time that Papua New Guinea has 'married the world'. Within this

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^This shortened, concert-style presentation of the production was presented instead of the full three-act musical. It was termed a 'cabaret' performance in the program.
partnership the contemporary arts of Papua New Guinea have absorbed stimuli and influences from outside, as world music and art have likewise absorbed cultural influences from Papua New Guinea. In contrast to Kasaipwalova’s view, Richard Walley, a delegate from the Aboriginal contingent said that some Aboriginal people wanted to de-emphasise the aspect of sharing culture. He pointed out that, as people could see from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation at the Festival, Australia’s indigenous peoples do not have a unified cultural identity although there were common grounds for them all wishing to participate in the Festival. To ensure cultural survival, he said, ‘what outsiders think of us is not as important as what we think of ourselves’. Fame and accolades are a secondary concern, the mastery of a strong, thriving culture by the members of a community was the paramount concern.

The Maori delegation from Aotearoa New Zealand were also concerned with aspects of cultural sharing, in particular with the issue of the ownership of intellectual property and copyright. They disputed the assumption that it was the Festival organisers’ right to sell exclusive media rights to certain events (those held in the Cultural Centre at night) and restrict access to other activities to media other than the official crew. In the Maori view, this usurped their copyright. If the official crew, because of their privileged position, were the only ones to obtain footage of a Maori event, they would be in a position to sell their coverage back to the Maoris. The Maori delegation wanted their film crew to take the coverage
of Maori events and have control over how Maori participation was presented. Another issue relating to cross-cultural media coverage was expressed by Hereniko. He pointed out that much of the reporting on, and assessment of, Pacific cultures at the Festival was being undertaken by non-indigenous people. Although several Pacific nations had financed their own film crews and reporters, seventy percent of the accredited media personnel were from the USA, Europe, Japan, Australia, etc. Even if they were experts in documenting cultural events, many had little prior knowledge of Pacific cultures. Hereniko made the point that the Festival and its participants were therefore being subjected to critique and commentary by people who did not have the same sensibilities and attitudes as the participants. Outside media would generally be self-reliant and give their viewers/readers a perspective of the Festival little informed by indigenous points of view. There was a need for Pacific writers and intellectuals to develop methods of assessment and aesthetic criteria which could become internationally known, accepted and appreciated.¹

Other cultural issues were forming outside the cultural debates going on in the forum. Divergent opinions of what was representative of a country's culture and legitimate to present at a Festival of this nature were epitomised in the figure and actions of Raymond Gaffe, the self-styled ta'unga (high priest).

¹ In response to Hereniko's point, I acknowledge that the present remarks are the impressions and observations of a white Australian observer with a reasonable knowledge of Pacific cultures. However, readers are urged to search out other impressions, particularly those of indigenous commentators, which will provide other perspectives on the Festival (Stevenson 1993, Lewis-Harris 1994).
of Tahiti. Gaffe is the (self-proclaimed) master of the Tahitian fire-walking ceremony and his bearing, actions and fully tattooed body incline many to accept his role as legitimate.¹ He was trained as an archaeologist, but the style of his ceremonies and tattoo designs are, in the opinion of some serious Polynesian scholars, suited to his own purposes and obscure in origin.² In response, members of a Tahitian film crew commented that, as a Tahitian 'high priest', Gaffe has become a recognisable figure in contemporary Tahitian culture. While some criticise him and his revival of ancient Tahitian culture as, at best, highly romanticised and, at worst, fakery, he has nevertheless raised interest and awareness in some aspects of Tahitian culture. Even if his cult only appeals to new age-ers it may spur others to seek further. In response to criticisms of the major set pieces of the Festival, such as the Tahitian Fire Walking Ceremony, the Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Sir Geoffrey Henry, had a favourite quote from Oscar Wilde, 'cynics know the cost of everything and the value of nothing' (Henry at press conference 27 Oct. 1992).

The Festival's centrepiece, the Vaka Pageant, was acclaimed as a major achievement, not only for the enterprise and endurance of the canoe-builders, navigators and crews, but

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¹ In pre-contact times, variations of fire walking were practised in Polynesia and Fiji (in Fiji, firewalking is performed regularly for tourists, the writer is not sure of the extent to which it is still used for ceremonial purposes). Tattooing was a widespread practice in some Pacific cultures and is presently undergoing a revival among young Polynesians.

² Pers. comm. Karen Stevenson, a Tahitian scholar, who was at the Festival. Stevenson subsequently reviewed the 6th PFA at the Pacific Arts Association Symposium in Adelaide, 1993, in a paper titled 'The Arts and Cultural Identity: Tahiti's Participation in the 6th Pacific Arts Festival'.
for its significance in re-establishing recognition of the knowledge and skills of ocean-voyaging across the Pacific Ocean. The vaka had sailed from the Marshall Islands, Hawaii, Tahiti, Raiatea, Aotearoa (New Zealand) and the outer Cook Islands. Welcoming the crews ashore after their voyages across Te Moana Nui A Kiva (the Pacific Ocean) the Prime Minister echoed the refrain of the ariki (chiefs) of ancient times, 'Who is this chief who travels in my region of the heavens'. This refers to the fact that navigators knew their positions as intimately by the pattern of stars as by the formations of ocean and land on the earth's surface.

Many forms of knowledge had been regenerated in the building and sailing of the double-hulled vaka. It was a profound achievement, not only because canoe voyaging across the Pacific had not been attempted for over a hundred years, but also because it presented tangible evidence of the extraordinary abilities of the generations who settled the islands of the Pacific and maintained contact with each other over many centuries. The mana (strength, power) of present day Polynesians, and belief in the values and traditions of their ancestors, was greatly enhanced on the day the canoes arrived.

In contrast to the greater cultural homogeneity evident in the Polynesian performances and exhibits of arts and crafts, the diversity of the Aboriginal and Melanesian cultures attending the Festival was apparent. The deep throbbing of the Torres Strait hour-glass drums and the virtuoso digeridu playing by members of the Aboriginal group, Kunjal, were both sensations at the Festival. Their music contrasted sharply with
the slit-gong percussion prevalent through Polynesia and the ubiquitous string bands. Each group in the Australian contingent displayed its own cultural basis and artistic personality. The Melanesian identity of the Torres Strait Islanders was revealed in every aspect of their performances - costuming, dance accessories, instruments and singing. The individual styles of the two groups, Drums of Mer and Saibai, also demonstrated how even a little distance, in terms of physical distance between islands, allowed culturally specific forms to develop.

Kunjal, a contemporary dance/theatre group from Cairns, became one of the most popular acts although some found their performance too 'slick' and designed for the 'entertainment industry'. The leader of the group, Philip Geia, freely admitted that they had recently opened a theatre restaurant in Cairns and had rapidly become a tourist attraction. But this belied the origin and intent of the group. It had originally been formed in 1989 (when it was called Jaibaru), with the purpose of popularising Aboriginal culture among the Kukanji youth and others in the Yarrabah area of north Queensland. Philip decided to put a show together, a mix of entertainment and education, deliberately 'stagey' to appeal to young people without being too 'forceful'. The group obtained permission from elders to present dances in a contemporary form for schools and community gatherings. It proved popular and the group has grown to twenty performers aged between twelve and twenty-seven. With the theatre restaurant now operating, Kunjal employs thirty-eight Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders and has emerged as an organisation which motivates and
employs young people in an area where low self esteem is practically endemic.

The lack of sophisticated art venues is not a deterrent for most Pacific and Aboriginal artists participating in the FPA. Many museum curators and conservators would have found the conditions at St Josephs School, converted to a display area for 'arts and crafts' exhibitions, unsuitable because of lack of temperature control, insects, dust, mould and overcrowding. But, even with foreknowledge of the conditions clearly spelt out by the visual arts co-ordinator, Lynnsay Rongokea, Papua New Guinea and Aotearoa New Zealand brought pieces from museums to form part of their exhibits. Even the Australian National Gallery lent a painting by a Balgo artist (unfortunately not accredited in the display) to be exhibited. In its small allocated space (about half a classroom), an eclectic mix of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander objects, textiles and paintings was carefully arranged. As the only visual artist in the Australian contingent (apart from the women from Balgo) the painter and printmaker Arone Raymond Meeks was the spokesperson for the visual arts represented. Whether acting as 'minder' for the exhibition, or giving workshops, Raymond was articulate and committed to the success of the visual arts section. Some new lithographs and earlier works, including his award-winning children's book, attracted interest.

Both exhibition areas of the Sir Geoffrey Henry Cultural Centre were dedicated to the Cook Islands. Kauraka Kauraka, the government anthropologist had arranged an exhibition of the investiture robes and ritual objects of the ariki of the Cook
Islands. Each of the sets of *tapa* robes and other items of adornment and ceremony belonged to the present *ariki*. Usually the existence of the *ariki* and their authority in the community is not apparent to many visitors because outward appearances are Westernised, especially on Rarotonga. As well as the Maori protocols, ceremony and use of language throughout the Festival, this exhibiton emphasised the traditional structure and values of the Cook Islands Maoris. A riot of colour greeted the visitor upstairs. The Cook Islands 'mamas' *tivaevae* (appliqued and embroidered quilts) were displayed as hangings, in domestic and ceremonial settings in the spacious exhibition room, which highlighted their skilful construction and reflected how they feature in the life and ceremony of the Cook Islands.1

The ties of the Cook Islands to the British Crown and Christianity were acknowledged. Prince Edward opened the Festival following an elaborate parade of the Pacific delegations with islands-style pomp and ceremony. Several delegations took the opportunity for an unscheduled presentation of gifts to the Prince, but the protocol officials (Cook Islands *ariki*) allowed this to proceed with dignity. The prestige of *tivaevae* as ceremonial gifts was emphasised throughout the Festival as dignitaries, first of all the Prince, were presented with *tivaevae* of exquisite work(wo)manship.

The Cook Islanders' deep commitment to Christianity was recognised in the large scale Ecumenical Services on both

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1 This exhibition was also arranged by Lynnsay Rongokea, whose book *Tivaevae: Portraits of Cook Islands Quilting* was launched at the Festival.
Sundays of the Festival, and by the Gospel Day Biblical Pageant.¹ There were several staged events celebrating contemporary lifestyles: the fashion parade, Pageant of Costumes; the pop concert, An Evening with the Stars; and the Mardi Gras. These were occasions for partying. But they also showed the virtuosity of Pacific designers, musicians, performers and stage managers.

The *mana* of the Cook Islands Prime Minister, Sir Geoffrey Henry, undoubtedly rose during the 6th Pacific Festival of Arts. Other politicians of the region were impressed by the Sir Geoffrey Henry Cultural Centre, built at a cost of eleven million dollars, in time to hold some of the Festival’s main events.² The audacity of planning such a large-scale Festival, largely held on the island of Rarotonga, which is only thirty-two kilometres in circumference, and carrying off a ten day program full of major events with over 3,000 participants, deserved recognition for the Prime Minister and his team of Festival organisers.

But the main reason for the Prime Minister’s accrual of *mana* lay deeper in the structure of the Festival and what it sought to achieve. This was the renaissance of Pacific cultural

¹ Gospel Day is a fixture on the religious calendar of the Cook Islands. On that day local village, church and school groups gather and each group enacts a story from the Bible.

² See chapter on Pacific Museums, for description of this Cultural Centre. The Government of Nauru loaned the funds for this building and many were critical of the burden this would pose on the Cook Islands (deficit) economy, citing the debt per head of population it represented. But Henry was adamant that the increase of tourism in the wake of the PFA would more than repay the loan (discussions at press conferences throughout the Festival).
values and the increased self-esteem of Pacific peoples, particularly for those of Eastern Polynesia. Although English was the main language used throughout the Festival, every presentation and the opening of every event was preceeded by a set of speeches in Maori\(^1\) and the observance of Maori protocols led by the ariki representing the traditional divisions of Rarotonga and the outer Cook Islands. On these occasions the ariki resumed their traditional costume and insignia of rank, as did the dancers, musicians and others in the welcoming ceremonies. The 300-strong delegation from French Polynesia and their contribution to the Festival attested the support of those genealogically linked to the Cook Islanders.\(^2\) At the Closing Ceremony, Sir Geoffrey Henry was made a titular Chief of American Samoa, an act which revived pre-colonial links between Polynesians.\(^3\) However, this act may also have been a consequence of modern day politics, as it was announced that

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1 Cook Islands Maori differs slightly from the Maori language of New Zealand and the Maori spoken by Tahitians and other French Polynesians, but speakers can understand most of the other dialects.

2 As well as sending the largest delegation, the Government of French Polynesia showed their support of their Eastern Polynesian cousins by providing the lighting and technicians for major events, and several vehicles of the 'le truck' variety (Tahitian style passenger vehicles). These were transported to Rarotonga by the French Navy.

3 These are genealogical links identified in Sir Tom Davis book *Vaka*, released at the time of the Festival. Sir Tom Davis was the first Prime Minister of the Cook Islands as well as being the ariki of the area of Rarotonga known as Takitumu. To participate in the vaka activities of the 6th Festival, Davis built the double-hulled vaka 'Takitumu', a scale model of a vaka of the same name which sailed between (the islands now called) Cook Islands, Samoa, Tahiti, other eastern Polynesian islands and New Zealand over a period estimated to be 300 years (the original 'Takitumu' was rebuilt several times) (Davis 1992).
Western Samoa had won the rights to hold the 7th Festival of Pacific Arts in 1996.

In this short outline it has only been possible to mention a few of the features and events of the 5th and 6th Festivals of Pacific Arts and to give a personal interpretation of them. Other Pacific scholars (including K. Stevenson 1993a, Lewis-Harris 1994) have paid attention to other events and art forms in their interpretations. But in the media coverage of the 6th FPA and in articles subsequently published about it, there is a consensus of opinion that, as Lewis-Harris comments:

The sixth festival could aptly be subtitled the Pacific Islands Cultural Identity Festival, with cultural identity being defined as identification with one’s social and possible familial group through shared values, belief systems, ceremonies and art styles which are held to be part of the person’s cultural heritage (Lewis-Harris 1994:10).

DISCUSSION

Following the 1980 Festival in Port Moresby, the (then) Assistant Director General for Culture and Communication of UNESCO, Makaminan Makagiansan, commented on the role of the FPA. He stressed that

all peoples have the right to preserve and develop their own cultural identity, for it is through a knowledge and a sense of one’s own cultural identity that the richness of others can be appreciated (Makagiansan 1981 cited in the SPC report of the 1980 Festival SPC/7AFC 1982).

In the late twentieth century, following a period of rapid social change and the introduction of many new elements into
social and cultural structures, it has become necessary for Pacific nations and minority indigenous peoples to assert and explain their cultural values both to their own communities and the wider world.

Performances developed for non-indigenous audiences, are opportunities for indigenous groups to present aspects of their culture to outsiders. The examples given from Kiribati, Fiji and the Cook Islands are indicative of how and why groups are willing to innovate and adapt traditional forms of expression and representation to suit external situations. On occasions, this may lead to constructs of identity, as in the case of the Dance Theatre of Fiji's presentations of Fijian culture at the Pacific Harbour Cultural Centre. However, in this instance, the limitations of presenting 'Fijian' culture in this manner are recognised by the leader and members of the troupe.

Although its location and nature changes each time, the PFA is perhaps the most highly regarded 'cultural institution' in the Pacific region. In contrast to most of the museums in the region, the Festival was invented and is continually generated by indigenous people. The Festival itself is an opportunity for the formation, adaptation and manipulation of concepts of cultural identity. It also represents an authorative statement of Pacific indigenous peoples' cultural identity to observers within and outside the region. Polynesian, Melanesian, Micronesian and Aboriginal people are united under the theme of indigenous cultural identity, displaying to the world their characteristic diversity at the same time. Through a series of vignettes from the past two Festivals, this chapter has
demonstrated that the PFA is a vehicle for social, artistic and political representations of cultural identity by the indigenous people of the South Pacific region.
CHAPTER 10: AUSTRALIAN MUSEUMS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Museums are an international growth industry. Not only are they increasing in numbers, but they are acquiring new functions in the organisation of cultural activities. It is through museums that societies represent their relationship to their own history and to that of other cultures and peoples.

Robert Lumley (1988:iv)

INTRODUCTION

The formation of collections in Western museums, as well as the context in which collected objects have been, and are presently exhibited, may be viewed as a metaphor of the evolving relationships between Western and indigenous societies. The fluctuations in relationships and levels of cultural exchange between Australian and indigenous societies in the South Pacific region can be observed through the filter of collection policies and curatorial practices in Australian museums.

Part I of this chapter contrasts the different roles of art and ethnographic museums (or in Australia, natural history museums with ethnographic collections). Part II compares the evolution of collections and exhibitions of Aboriginal and Pacific Islands aesthetic objects at the Australian Museum (AM), The South Australian Museum (SAM), the Art Gallery of
New South Wales (AGNSW) and the Australian National Gallery, since 1992 called the National Gallery of Australia (NGA), and to a lesser extent, the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) and the Queensland Art Gallery (QAG). It also assesses some recent changes in curatorial practice. Comments by a number of curators and their predictions of possible future directions for Australian museums in relation to their Aboriginal and Pacific Islands collections are summarised before conclusions are reached.

Some of the material for the second part of the chapter results from the writer’s involvement with organising a major series of seminars, *Aboriginal Art in Australian Society*, for the Power Institute of Fine Arts, Sydney University, in 1990. This series, initiated and co-ordinated by the writer and Koori artist and activist, Bronwyn Bancroft, engaged twenty-eight speakers, mostly Aboriginal, in intensive discussions of the representation of their art and culture in the Australian art world. The last seminar, ‘Curating Aboriginal Art’, featured: Djon Mundine, then Curator of Aboriginal Art at AGNSW and Arts Adviser at Ramingining, Central Arnhem Land; Wally Caruana, Curator of

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1 The seminar series was videotaped and published in a set of four videos with the title *Talking About Aboriginal Art* (Power Publications 1991). This set comprised: ‘Tradition and Change: Art from the Desert’, ‘Aboriginal Women Artists’, ‘Urban Aboriginal Art’ and ‘Aboriginal Art: Conserving, Exhibiting, Interpreting’, and included a booklet of teacher’s notes. A second series of seminars, *Aboriginal Art in New South Wales*, and a third *Aboriginal Artists Speak* were held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1992. The three series of seminars were developed as part of the Continuing Education program of the Power Institute of Fine Arts and were attended by students and the general public. AGNSW, the Australian Museum and the Powerhouse Museum co-operated in the presentation of these lecture series.
Aboriginal Art, Australian National Gallery;¹ and Peter Sutton, then Head of the Division of Anthropology, South Australian Museum. Some of their observations and analyses of the task of curating Aboriginal art are discussed in Part II.

In 1992 the writer accepted the position of Co-ordinator of the 5th International Symposium of the Pacific Arts Association, *Art, Performance and Society*. This event was hosted by the South Australian Museum and took place in April 1993. One of the conference sessions at this Symposium, ‘The Mission of Museums’, invited speakers to assess the present, and possible future relationships, roles and policies of their respective institutions vis a vis the arts and cultures of indigenous people of the South Pacific region.² Some speakers responded to the suggestion to develop their paper around one of the stated objectives of the United Nations’ International Year of the World’s Indigenous Peoples (IYWIP), viz:

IYWIP recognises that cultural patrimonies are essential to the livelihood and practise of indigenous cultures. They must gain international recognition and respect, but where culture is promoted, for example through exhibitions, it should be done

¹ The Australian National Gallery changed its name in 1992 to the National Gallery of Australia (NGA).

² Speakers were Virginia-Lee Webb (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), Soroi Eoe (PNG National Museum, Port Moresby), Chris Anderson, (South Australian Museum, Adelaide), John Nunley (St Louis Art Museum, Missouri), Daniel Thomas (retired Director, Art Gallery of South Australia), Bernice Murphy (Museum of Contemporary Art), Sydney, Elizabeth Bates (Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane), John Stanton (Berndt Museum of Anthropology, Perth) and Susan Cochrane (Pacific Arts Association Coordinator).
with full indigenous participation and consent (UN Guidelines for IYWIP, 1992).

Some of the findings of the speakers in the 'Mission of Museums' session of the Symposium are also reported in Part II.¹

PART I

DEFINITION OF MUSEUM AND THE ROLES OF ART AND ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUMS

The term ‘museum’, in its widest sense, refers to art museums (also called art galleries), natural history museums, ethnographic museums or museums of mankind, technological museums and so on. ‘Museum’ will be used in this wide sense when different types of museums, for example ethnographic museums and art galleries in Australia, are referred to collectively.

In 1970 the International Council of Museums (ICOM), defined a museum as

a non-profitmaking, permanent institution, in the services of society and its development, and open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits for the purposes of study, education and enjoyment, material evidence of man and his environment (Monreal 1980:20).

¹ A selection of papers from the PAA Symposium will be published in book form by the Pacific Arts Association, as has been the case for past Symposia; Mead ed. (1979), Mead & Kernot eds. (1983), Hanson & Hanson eds. 1990, Dark & Rose eds. 1993.
The phrase ‘in the services of society’ requires that a museum makes its holdings accessible to the public to whom it explains and interprets its collections via exhibitions and education programs. A museum not only serves the community within its immediate vicinity, but should also maintain relationships with other societies, in particular those from which its major holdings originated. Service to society requires providing access and information about its collections to isolated or underprivileged sections of the wider community which it serves.¹ In multicultural societies, like Australia, museums need to balance their representations of the various cultural groups.

The functions outlined in the ICOM definition of a museum, viz: acquisition, conservation, research, communication and exhibition are given in the present tense, suggesting that museums should have active and progressive policies in these areas and a commitment to recording the present as well as preserving and interpreting the past.²

¹ For example, the Australian Museum in Sydney serves the State of New South Wales. It also maintains its historical links with museums in Pacific Island nations. In addition to its permanent and temporary exhibitions based on its ethnographic collections and the services of its Education Department, its other services include the Wandervan and Museum-in-a-box services which provide small travelling exhibitions to country towns. Since 1980 the Museum has employed an Aboriginal Liaison Officer to communicate with, and develop services for, Aboriginal communities in New South Wales. It maintains liaison with museums in Pacific Islands nations, including undertaking joint research/fieldwork such as the Gulf Research Project undertaken with the PNG National Museum. Fuller exposition of the Australian Museum’s policies, especially relating to its Aboriginal collections and relationships with Aboriginal communities are outlined in a paper given by Phil Gordon, Aboriginal Liaison Officer, in the forum on Museum Collections and their Use, Aboriginal Art in New South Wales series, Power Institute of Fine Arts, Sydney University, April, 1991.

² As Johanna Agthe points out in her recent volume on the collection of contemporary African art at the Frankfurt Museum fur Voelkerkunde, ‘If
In Australia ethnographic collections are contained within museums of natural history. There are no museums solely dedicated to ethnography, such as Museums fur Voelkerkunde in Germany, the Musee de l'Homme in Paris, or the Museum of Mankind in London. When I refer to ethnographic museums in Australia it will mean the ethnographic divisions of museums of natural history.¹

Keith Thomson points out that there is a trend for the term ‘art gallery’ being changed to ‘art museum’ (Thomson 1981:3), as with the American institutions the Museum of Modern Art and the (former) Museum of Primitive Art in New York, now part of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. In Australia, which follows the British rather than the European or American example, National and State Museums and Art Galleries exist, often side by side, with distinct identities. In Australia, the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) incorporates both roles, as do institutions in some Pacific Islands nations, such as the Papua New Guinea National Museum).

In 1993 the Council of Australian Museums Associations amalgamated all their associations into one central body, now called Museums Australia, in order to streamline museum policies and practices and to provide a more effective group

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¹ The Museum of Victoria, formerly the National Museum of Victoria, has reformulated its divisions, bringing Anthropology together with Australian Social History.
advocating the role of museums to government and the public. Museums Australia will ensure that each museum retains and further develops its distinctive role (Museums Australia membership publicity, 1993).

The issue of terminology and the associations attached to the terms 'museum' and 'art gallery', particularly in the Australian environment, have recently been critically re-examined in devising a name for Sydney's newest cultural institution, the Museum of Contemporary Art (formerly the Power Gallery of the University of Sydney). In their deliberations the Council of MCA reviewed the origin of both terms. 'Museum' derives from the ancient Greek mouseion, seat of the Muses. One set of referents is to the inspiring goddesses of poets, artists and musicians and to the use of the verb to muse, to ponder, gaze reflectively. The other is that the European idea of museums evolved from the way ancient Greek society used museums as an interactive space for teaching, learning and celebrating the arts, nature and science. 'Art Gallery', derives from the Latin galeria, a separate hall attached to an aristocratic residence reserved for showing works of art. The works of art were commissioned by wealthy patrons and shown to a similarly privileged, exclusive audience, giving rise to the notions of art galleries being elitist. Because the Council of the Museum of Contemporary Art wished it to be perceived as not just an exhibition space devoted to the contemplation of works of art, but a place for the exchange of ideas, education and
entertainment, they preferred to use the term 'museum' (Murphy 1991) 1

The Museum of Contemporary Art and the Flinders University Art Museum are two exceptions to general Australian parlance, where 'museum' refers to a natural history, ethnographic, or technological museum and 'art gallery' specifically to art museums. Here, when the discussion refers to a particular institution its full name (or initials) will be given, for example, the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) or the South Australian Museum (SAM); it will then be referred to as the museum or the art gallery. The term 'museum' is also used in its wide sense to refer collectively to all types of museums.

How museums use objects to represent cultures

All museums can be regarded as data-banks of objects and the histories that the objects have acquired. The designation and use of objects has been largely determined by how they are categorised and who controls them.

In the collections of Australian art galleries aesthetic objects from Aboriginal or South Pacific societies may represent either the art of an individual or a culture.2 In

1 Bernice Murphy, Chief Curator, MCA, lecture given at the Power Institute of Fine Arts, Sydney University, July, 1991.

2 The artist's name and full details of provenance were often not recorded by collectors before the 1950s, for example many significant bark paintings are labelled 'artist unknown'. Part of the rationale was that
ethnographic museums, material culture objects, including objects of aesthetic merit, are considered in the wider context as part of a society's culture.

Museums have traditionally concentrated on the material object and its testimony to human achievement. Objects in exhibitions represent one culture to another. Each object reflects its parent culture and may be used to interpret the social, political and cultural norms of that culture at a particular time. Its display and interpretation in a museum setting also signifies the interests of the host culture. The time when the object was introduced by the contacts between an indigenous and another culture should also be recognised as an essential part of the object's history.

The ownership of objects, and therefore control of them, has become an issue of great importance to Aboriginal communities and has a significant bearing on their relationships with museums at the present time. The objectives of collection formation and the use of objects in a collection are recognised as increasingly important issues in Australian museums, particularly in relation to collections of material from indigenous societies. The non-material creations which revolve around the object - dance, oral history, philosophy, religion, ceremony - and which formed part of the object's life in its originating culture, have been given recognition in recent exhibitions of Aboriginal and Maori art in Australia.¹

¹ As evidenced in the participatory exhibition policy developed by the South Australian Museum for both travelling exhibitions, Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia (1988) and internal exhibitions. The
A collection needs a framework in which objects may be represented and exhibitions are the main means of achieving this. But the theme, design and catalogue conceived for a particular exhibition influences the meaning the viewing public will draw from it. When exhibitions in Western cultural institutions exhibit the art of other societies to make them accessible to a Western audience, curators make careful decisions about the selection of objects they wish to display or document, regarding what attributes of the image or object are relevant and will be retained, and which attributes may be modified or suppressed. As M. Brawne comments:

It is worth remembering . . . that any object removed from its original surroundings, or no longer put to its intended use. . . will acquire different connotations. These changes can at times be subtle, at others quite radical as when, for instance primarily religious and ceremonial tribal artifacts are displayed as abstract art (Brawne 1982:21).

This introduces the essential difference between the roles of ethnographic museums and art museums and how they use objects to represent cultures. Ethnographic museums presently use objects to provide information about the culture being represented. Art museums are primarily concerned with the presentation of objects as contemplative aesthetic objects in a setting where they are recognised as 'works of art'. The following brief outline will fill in some of exhibitions *Te Maori* (1984) and *Taonga Maori* (1989) which toured internationally were also based on this philosophy.
the historical background, indicating how the different functions and philosophies of ethnographic and art museums have evolved.

*Ethnographic museums*

The origins of natural history museums, with their ethnographic component, from the curiosity cabinets and private collections of European aristocrats and amateur scientists has been well documented (Hudson 1987:60ff) and will not be pursued at length here. One example is given to show the path of development.

The curiosity cabinet of Sir Ashton Lever, which included many objects and specimens from Captain Cook's three voyages of exploration, outgrew the family's residence at Alkington Hall, Oxford, and in 1774 Lever transferred his collection to his London residence, Leicester House, where he opened a museum for the general public. Kenneth Hudson comments on Lever's collection that

> it was in no way scientific. It is best described, perhaps, as an assembly of objects, mostly within the field of natural history, which had been brought back to England by sailors and travellers. Sir Ashton regarded them as exotics and curiosities, not as material for study (Hudson 1987:66).

Natural history museums with ethnographic specimens, and separate ethnographic museums, developed rapidly in Europe in the nineteenth century. Brian Durrans explores the relationship of ethnographic museums to the expansion of
imperialism in Britain in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. His research indicates the political pressure put on public institutions including museums:

In 1875 the Admiralty was pressing the British Museum to display objects from the Pacific "in a particular manner and in a distinguished place as a monument of . . . national exertions of British munificence and industry" (Durrans 1988:145-6).

Durrans also asserts that 'In their modern form, ethnographic museums, like academic anthropology, emerged as adjuncts of European expansionism and colonialism'. But he emphasises that, 'the ways ethnographic collections and anthropology . . . served and were influenced by colonial policies are complex and contradictory', and were not always in the interests of imperialists (Durrans 1988:155). Colonies furnished the museums of the colonisers with most of their collections. However, ethnographers could retain a detached objectivity and commitment to science, and demonstrate evidence of the technical and aesthetic sophistication of peoples who were otherwise denigrated as needing the benefit of British civilization (Durrans 1988:155).

By the late nineteenth century, when European trading and military interests spanned the world, museums of natural history had been founded in many European and American cities and in Australia. Scientific expeditions went to remote areas and returned with a profusion of specimens for every branch of natural history and science to fill the museums. Museums of natural history often combined zoological,
botanical and ethnographic specimens in their displays.¹ Natural history museums dealt with 'low cultures' where man was allied with nature, as opposed to the 'high culture' of European civilization which was represented in art galleries (Vogel 1989).

Artifacts from African and Oceanic societies were thought to provide a glimpse into the past, to the dawn of human evolution and art. For example, the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford, which opened in 1884, used its collections to demonstrate, 'a technological view of mankind tempered by evolutionary doctrine. Each class of objects was grouped together, regardless of its geographical origin, and with the implication of improvement through time' (Newton 1978:42).

D.J. Mulvaney profiles an Australian example of museum practice at the turn of the century:

Australian museums were established during the nineteenth century, under the impetus of the Darwinian biological revolution. Most of them were natural history museums and their interest in evolution led to an emphasis on taxonomy, the classification and description of all living things. The indigenous races of the Pacific region were included within the scope of these museums. As a result, Aboriginal society was incorporated into the taxonomic scheme along with Australian flora and fauna . . . .

The National Museum of Victoria provided an interesting example of the museological divorce between a taxonomic approach to 'primitive' cultures and the humanistic concept of the culture of

¹ Good examples of nineteenth century displays in natural history museums are given in Susan Vogel ed. (1989).
'higher' ancient societies. In 1904 the Museum's Director, Baldwin Spencer, transferred his Museum's Egyptian archaeological collection to the National Art Gallery.

At the Museum (Aboriginal) items of human creativity were displayed... in clusters of type, with the same anonymity as mindless, repetitive geological fossils or butterflies. Meantime, at the National Art Gallery, any Egyptian artefact was displayed separately as a work of individual creation (Mulvaney 1978:77).

Australian museums were not alone in their natural history approach to indigenous races; the same rationalisation was occurring in the USA, for example at the Smithsonian Institution's Natural History Museum in Washington, D.C. In Europe, where separate ethnographic museums were established, they were essentially storehouses of the material culture of indigenous races and excluded the arts of European civilizations.1

From the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries it was probably not a major consideration in Western ethnographic museums that taxonomic displays may be offensive to indigenous people. It was highly unlikely that many colonised people would enter a white cultural space such as a metropolitan museum, even if items from their culture were displayed there. It is perhaps not co-incidental that taxonomic displays disguised much of the vitality, creativity and diversity of indigenous cultures as well as individual differences in the art of members of such societies.

1 A division was made between 'high' cultures and 'low' cultures. Mulvaney (1978:77) gives the examples of the Musee de l'Homme and The Louvre.
Eventually, the characterisation and attribution of objects of 'primitive' art to 'style areas' became important, as Douglas Newton explains:

(i) If culture areas could be defined, and a component of each culture was its art, then the differences between those arts were available to be traced: the notion of 'style areas' in the primitive arts became inevitable. It was an important step towards the development of an art-historical approach to the primitive arts (Newton 1978a:42).

Art of the South Seas, curated by Ralph Linton and Paul Wingert for the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1946 exemplified this approach. Many museums arranged major exhibitions demonstrating the distribution and characteristic styles of so-called 'culture areas'. In Australia, the Melanesian Gallery at the Australian Museum, a permanent exhibition on display between 1968 to 1988 followed the (by then) well-defined parameters. Concentrating on the societies of lowland New Guinea and island Melanesia which were considered 'important centres of Oceanic art', this

1 Linton and Wingert's, Arts of the South Seas, MOMA, New York, 1946, divided Oceania into 'four major regions comprising twenty culture areas... a convenient device to organise the exceedingly complex material into more or less homogeneous units' (1946:8). Of these twenty, Aboriginal Australia is a single unit, as is Micronesia; Polynesia comprises six units; Melanesia has seven major divisions, with New Guinea having six subdivisions worthy of a chapter each. The map indicating the major characteristic styles of New Guinea (1946:91) leaves the mountainous Highlands regions blank, giving the following explanation, 'only a small number of types of objects, such as stone axes, slate knives, net bags, bows and arrows, are made by the known Negrito tribes'. This, and the under-representation of the diversity of Aboriginal cultures, reveals the fixation of this type of analysis on material objects, rather than non-material expressions, as the basis of describing culture.

2 The Melanesian Gallery at the Australian Museum followed set precedents, but defined the style regions more closely.
exhibition displayed outstanding objects of artistic merit, many of which had been collected in the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries.

Another tendency from the 1970s was to place objects in contextualising displays; ethnographic artefacts represented alternative social and technological solutions to their known world which differed from the lifestyle and objects in daily use known to the museum visitor.\(^1\) Durrans comments that such 'exhibitions have tended to stress the complexity and integration, and (at most) regional affiliations of cultures, rather than their susceptibility to change or how they compare with others in different times, locations, or degrees of complexity' (Durrans 1980:163).

Some recent exhibitions in ethnographic museums, while still concentrating on the wealth of expression contained in the arts of tribal societies, also use the exhibition context to explain how Western perspectives have changed (Mead 1984; Specht 1988; Sutton 1988). In the 1980s some major exhibitions were formulated in Australia and New Zealand that involved a considerable number of indigenous informants and expressed their viewpoints as well as those of the non-indigenous curators. *Te Maori* (1984) and *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia* (1988) toured the United States of America and were accompanied by groups of indigenous participants, who gave their interpretation of the objects

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\(^1\) The *Abelam Gallery* and the *Aboriginal Gallery* at the Australian Museum fit this description. The *Rituals of the Human Life Cycle* exhibition, installed in 1988 at AM is one which compares cultures from different parts of the world.
represented in these two exhibitions to international audiences.

Contemporary display techniques and careful lighting enhance the aesthetic impact of the magnificent pieces being presented, as demonstrated in the 1988 exhibition of significant Melanesian objects in the exhibition *Pieces of Paradise* at the Australian Museum. Now that museums have generally turned away from presenting objects in taxonomic arrays and dioramas, there seems to be little to distinguish art galleries and museums in terms of presentation and display techniques.¹

Contemporary anthropologists acknowledge that each society operates within its own concepts of reality and tend to consider art as one part of the totality of a community's occupations, rather than isolating it from the other functions of society. Art is part of the network of ideas and the ways in which they are manifested in material culture and situated among systems of religious belief, social organisation and economy. These ideas are reflected in the present policies of collecting and exhibiting objects from indigenous cultures; examples are given in a later section.

¹ Not all displays in museums are approached in the same manner. Other techniques such as dioramas are considered appropriate depending on the context being emphasised. For example, the *Ngurundjeri* exhibition (1987 to present 1994) installed at the South Australian Museum effectively employs the technique of dioramas. Museum exhibitions may also contain more mundane objects, because, as Agthe points out, 'Ethnology sees its task as being to collect as relevant a sample of cultural documents as possible; it is not the task of a museum of ethnography to collect only "masterpieces". An ethnographic collection ought to contain examples of various designs and qualities, representative of a given material culture and its art at a particular period. Of course these should include outstanding works - but not exclusively' (Agthe 1990:68).
Art galleries

The evaluation, selection and purpose of art objects in the context of a Western art gallery are based on a set of criteria different from those of ethnographic museums. Since the extension of art galleries into the public arena, which also occurred in the late eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, their aesthetic focus has been on the history of Western art from the Renaissance. The conservatism of art museums established in this period has been rationalised by the argument that the historical depth and diversity of Western art is sufficient justification for their desire to concentrate in this area. Art galleries were considered to be the temples of the high culture of Western civilization, until the social and artistic criticisms of modernism, which attacked the elitist social and artistic mores of art galleries, became effective. In the art gallery objects are appreciated for their aesthetic value and are regarded as representative of humankind's highest level of intellectual and artistic achievement.

In some instances the antecedents of Western art, antiquities from the earlier civilizations of Egypt, Greece and Rome, have been included in art gallery collections. The most frequent inclusion of non-Western art is Asian art, primarily Chinese and Japanese antiquities, acknowledging the
centuries of fine arts traditions in these civilizations. Except for specialists in Asian art and antiquities, the training of curators and art historians has been based on the canon of Western art.1

Traditionally, art galleries have presented objects in a contemplative setting, with a minimum of information to distract the viewer from the aesthetic experience.2 When a new art form is considered 'important' according to the criteria of the art world, aesthetes and curators must at least have begun to be convinced that it should be in the galleries' collections and exhibitions.3 For example, by the 1940s a need was felt to establish art museums devoted solely to modern art and the aesthetics of modernism, which

1 As will become evident later, curators of Aboriginal and Pacific collections in Australian art galleries are conscientiously attempting to overcome the eurocentricity of their profession and develop their own, and by extension, the viewing public's appreciation of works of art from other cultures.

2 Harold Osborne describes the characteristics of the aesthetic attitude as follows. Firstly aesthetic perception allows the viewer to separate the object from its visual environment to concentrate attention on it. Second, the historical, sociological and stylistic contexts of the object are irrelevant to the aesthetic beholder; according to Osborne 'the intellectual interest in knowing all that can be known about a work of art may be ancilliary to, but is not identical with, the aesthetic interest. The two interests are related but distinct'. Third, a complex object is perceived as complex but not broken down into an assemblage of parts. Fourth, the aesthetic experience is 'here and now', bringing serenity and detachment from everyday life. Fifth, concentration on the aesthetic object temporarily locks out meditations on other topics/objects. Sixth, aesthetic perception is concerned with the object as seen, thus with its appearance not with factors of its existence. Seventh, the beholder becomes absorbed with the object, losing sense of time and place and eighth, aesthetic attention can be directed to anything but cannot be maintained beyond what the object can sustain to the individual (Osborne 1970:27-37).

3 Not necessarily only in terms of innovations in Western art, but also in accepting the art of non-Western societies. For example, Aboriginal art, considered to be the oldest continuing art tradition in the world, was not included in the collections of Australian art galleries until the Art Gallery of New South Wales commenced collecting it in 1958.
often conflicted with academic notions of art. This gave rise to such institutions as the Museum of Modern Art and the Solomon Guggenheim Museum in New York. In Australia, the Museum of Contemporary Art, which opened in November 1991, is dedicated to contemporary visual arts in all media and from all nations.¹

In Australia, changing attitudes, including an acceptance of the aesthetics of modernism, often awaited an imprimatur from leading galleries in Europe, England or the United States. Humphrey McQueen describes this Australian attitude as 'the cultural cringe' (McQueen 1979). Nevertheless, despite the art historical nature (i.e. the representation of all periods of Western art history) of the collections of Australia’s State art galleries, much emphasis is now given to contemporary art. AGNSW exhibits contemporary works from its own collection, hosts project shows and the bi-annual surveys, *Perspecta* (Australian contemporary art) and *Sydney Biennale* (international contemporary art).² One AGNSW curator said that the Gallery cannot follow up all the possibilities for exhibitions of contemporary art offered to it, nor even

¹ The Chief Curator of MCA, Bernice Murphy (lecture 1991, Sydney University), said that now that ‘modern art’ was recognised as that of a distinctive period, European modernism (around 1900 to 1950). MOMA, Guggenheim and other museums were restricted by that framework and the focus of their collections on that period. She considers that ‘contemporary’ refers back to the last twenty years but also continually moves forward with time. As MCA’s collection gets older it will be able to be viewed as antecedent to contemporary arts practice.

² The AGNSW sponsors the *Sydney Biennale* and *Australian Perspecta* to focus on recent developments in contemporary art, including art conceived in electronic media, installations and other forms of ephemeral art as well as paintings. *Perspecta* and the *Biennale* have to be located at several venues because the number and scope of the exhibits is too large for the AGNSW.
physically contain the size of some exhibitions, whether they wish to house them or would prefer not to (pers. comm. Ursula Prunster, 1990).

To date, art galleries have not offered contextualised displays of objects from other cultures in the same manner as ethnographic museums. In Ian Burn's analysis this is because

the art museum does not reinterpret, it re-contextualises the art object in terms of an institutional notion of art history, nominated through 'great' works of art detached from social contexts of their production (Burn 1989:3).

The history of the acquisition and display of objects of aesthetic merit from tribal societies in art galleries is shorter than it is in ethnographic museums. An art institution may, because of its established practises and requisite authority, confer the status of art onto an artifact. Probably the best example of this was the elevation of certain types of artifacts from tribal societies to the status of art in some significant exhibitions designed for the Museum of Modern Art in New York by its (then) Director, Rene d'Harnoncourt: *Indian Art of the United States* (1941), *Art of the South Seas* (1946) and *Ancient Art of the Andes* (1954). As Newton wrote of this strategy to develop recognition for the art of tribal societies:

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1 The last-minute cancellation of an important section of the 1990 Biennale, including loans of works from major international museums which had been negotiated over a period of years, indicated the personal opposition of senior members of AGNSW to some recent developments in Western contemporary arts practice, much to the overseas curator's chagrin (Block 1990).
Situated in a museum of great prestige, famous for its adventurous policies, these exhibitions brought to a large public largely unfamiliar works with the full panoply due to accepted styles of art (Newton 1978:43).

Nelson Rockefeller, who became the President of the Museum of Modern Art, admitted he had been fascinated by primitive art since the 1950s and became determined for it to be, 'ranked on par in terms of aesthetic value with the great art forms of other so-called classical civilizations' (1978:19). Rockefeller assembled a superb collection of African, Pacific and Pre-Columbian 'masterpieces of primitive art', working with d'Harnoncourt towards their vision of establishing a Museum of Primitive Art. This Museum opened its doors in 1957. In a later essay Rockefeller refers back to the first exhibition catalogue in which he wrote

(m)useums of ethnology and 'natural history' have, of course, long shown these arts. They have done so primarily to document their studies of indigenous cultures. It is our purpose to supplement their achievement from the esthetic point of view. However, we do not wish to establish primitive art as a separate kind of category, but rather to integrate it, with all its amazing variety, into what is already known of the arts of man (Rockefeller 1978:19).

Through the display of 'primitive' art in the Museum of Modern Art and the Museum of Primitive Art in New York, influential patrons and committed curators conferred the status of art object, in Western terms, onto objects from
indigenous cultures and legitimated their selection by exhibition and publication. The interesting parallel with the establishment of special art museums for modern art is that both modern art and indigenous art were perceived to need separate spaces, away from the historical context of European art, in which they could be viewed.

Philip Jones notes that the first appearance of Aboriginal material as ‘art’ was at an exhibition titled *Dawn of Art* held in Adelaide in the late 1880s. Organised by John George Knight, deputy sheriff of Palmerston (now Darwin) Gaol, it consisted of eighteen ‘original sketches and drawings by Aboriginal natives of the Northern Territory executed without the aid of a master’ (Jones 1988:166).

Forty years later, in 1929, a comprehensive display of Aboriginal material was presented at the National Museum of Victoria in an exhibition titled *Primitive Art*. Baldwin Spencer, the former director of the National Museum of Victoria, had made a significant contribution to gaining recognition for Aboriginal art. This exhibition was also notable for being the first occasion where Aboriginals demonstrated their skills at an exhibition. (Jones 1988:152-9).  

Following this exhibition there was what Tony Tuckson (1964:62-3) described as a ‘period of apathy’ until ‘Aboriginal art was given official sanction, as it were, when eleven bark drawings (paintings) and three pen drawings were

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1 See extract quoted by Jones from the Adelaide *Herald* newspaper of 9 July, 1929 (Jones 1988:166).
included in an exhibition of *Art of Australia* shown in the United States in 1941’.

AGNSW was the first Australian art gallery to respond to the challenge of accepting art from indigenous cultures. A collection was assembled by Tony Tuckson between 1958 and 1973. AGNSW's collection and display of Aboriginal and Melanesian art, initially followed the precedent set by the recognition of ‘primitive’ art in the United States.1 Other Australian art galleries (NGA, National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of South Australia) began to seriously collect Aboriginal art in the mid-1970s (Caruana 1990, Hylton 1986).

In 1987 Bernice Murphy reviewed changes in attitudes towards Aboriginal art in Australian art galleries, making particular reference to the inclusion of contemporary Aboriginal art in collections and exhibitions. She firstly acknowledged the initiatives of the Australia Council's Aboriginal Arts Board after 1973 when it was under the direction of Wandjuk Marika, an Aboriginal artist and elder from Yirrkala, Arnhem Land. Marika, by personal representation and careful explanation, began to break down many of the barriers leading to a better acceptance of Aboriginal art and Aboriginal viewpoints in Australian art galleries. But, as Murphy reports, by the mid-1970s, all that had been achieved within our major art institutions, it seemed, was a precarious juxtaposition of two different

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1 In Australian art galleries, the emphasis is on collecting current developments in Aboriginal art. Curators realise that it would be difficult to form coherent collections of historic material, and for the most part, leave this in the domain of museums. The NGA is an exception to this (see below).
cultures within the domain of the European art museum . . . across a still huge symbolic chasm of the presumed impossibility of interaction on any terms other than sharp difference and contracting Otherness. There was much more conceptual ground to be opened out before some new relations could be mobilised across that chasm (Murphy 1987:30).

The introduction of recent and innovative Aboriginal art into international exhibitions and major international survey exhibitions was one strategy open to, and exploited by, curators. Murphy herself followed this strategy in the third *Sydney Biennale* in 1979.¹ However, even as 'isolated gestures', the inclusion of Aboriginal works in major national and international survey exhibitions of Australian art was strongly criticised in the 1970s and into the 1980s. Murphy (1987) commented that, 'some wilder allegations (were) ventilated in 1981 and beyond', and that a double traducement of Aboriginal culture was argued. First, a stylistic one: of 'traditional' and 'true' forms of Aboriginal art by Western-inspired, large-scale formal abstraction; second, at a social level: the Aboriginal artists themselves were purportedly lured from the pursuit of ceremonial cultural forms to the manufacture of 'artifacts', for sale and circulation through the art market. I believe that both these lines of argument are founded on ignorance, and that their promotion for

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¹ Murphy (1987) refers to the inclusion of a bark painting by David Djuta and an acrylic painting by Billy Stockman in an exhibition representing Australian landscape art for an exhibition of Australian art touring Indonesia in 1971 and Aboriginal bark paintings introduced for the first time into the international survey exhibition, the *Biennale of Sydney* in 1979.
ideological interests in the arena of metropolitan art criticism, without further inquiry into the circumstances and interests of Aboriginal culture is, at best, mischievous; at worst, a further expression of dominant culture arrogance and paternalism towards Aboriginal culture itself (Murphy 1987:30).

The ‘arrogance and paternalism’ of many Australian art curators and theorists, was challenged by the mid-1970s with the strong emergence of new forms of art from Central Desert communities. Aboriginal people had discovered new ways of representing their images, with acrylics on canvas (Bardon 1979). The explosive brilliance of these paintings caused an upheaval in the art-world, upsetting the previous mind-set about what Aboriginal art was. Painting movements spread rapidly across the Central and Western Desert in the late 1970s to the 1980s, every year introducing new developments in Aboriginal art which had to be acknowledged as being of great cultural and aesthetic significance. At the same time urban-based Aboriginal artists were struggling for the recognition of their identity and recognition of their penetrating images of dispossession and discrimination.1

By 1988 to 1989 the groundswell had reached major proportions and several major survey exhibitions celebrated both the continuing traditions of Aboriginal art and innovative art by Aboriginal artists from a diversity of

1 Koori Art ‘84 and Urban Kooris (1986) were seminal exhibitions for urban-based artists. Although they were held in marginal art spaces they were influential in establishing the vision and viewpoint of urban Aboriginal artists and curators began to take their work seriously. James Simon was the first urban Aboriginal artist to be represented in a Sydney Biennale (1986). See also Chapter 8.
backgrounds: *A Myriad of Dreamings* (Queensland Art Gallery for Brisbane Expo 1988); *On The Edge*, (Art Gallery of Western Australia 1988); *Mythscapes* (National Gallery of Victoria 1989); and *Windows on the Dreaming* (Australian National Gallery 1989). Moreover these galleries have had major Aboriginal exhibitions every year since then. Aboriginal persons have now been employed as full-time curators or guest curators in most major art galleries. The concentration on Aboriginal art in 1988, the Bicentennial year, was significant. Aboriginal people had considerable objections to this celebration of what they viewed as 200 years of invasion and oppression and this penetrated the Australian psyche. Australians were more prepared to be conciliatory and receptive to Aboriginal statements about their culture; one way this could be achieved was through the visual impact of large-scale exhibitions.

As well as stimulating several major survey exhibitions of Aboriginal art, the Bicentennial also motivated the production of the *Aboriginal Memorial*. This assemblage of two hundred *dupun* (hollow log coffins) was made by forty-three artists from the Raminginging area of Central Arnhem Land who collaborated to produce a memorial commemorating the loss of life inflicted on Aboriginal people in the cause of European settlement of the nation. Its Aboriginal curator, Djon Mundine, had to decide whether or not to take part in the Bicentennial and persuade the community that the resulting strong visual statement in expressly Aboriginal terms would more than counter any objections to an Aboriginal project for
white Australia's Bicentennial celebration (Mundine 1990). Visitor records prove that, since its installation in Gallery One in 1992, the *Aboriginal Memorial* is now the most-visited exhibit in Canberra's National Gallery.

In contrast to the rapidly changing attitudes towards Aboriginal art in Australian art galleries in the 1970s to the 1980s, a similar breakthrough has not occurred for art from South Pacific Island countries. The NGA has made some purchases of contemporary Papua New Guinea and Maori art, and QAG now sponsors the Asia Pacific Triennale (see below). But overall, the involvement of Australian art galleries with collecting or exhibiting art from South Pacific Island nations remains at a lamentably low level. Although I acknowledge that each country's institutions has a primary commitment to presenting the cultural achievements of its own people, there have been interesting developments South Pacific art in the 1970s to the 1990s. Most public art galleries in Australia still appear disinterested in acquiring or exhibition contemporary art from the South Pacific region as a priority, or assigning a specialised curator to better establish collections and develop exhibitions in the near future.
I now turn to a comparison of some of Australia's leading cultural institutions, the Australian Museum (AM), The South Australian Museum (SAM), the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) and the National Gallery of Australia (NGA). As well as briefly comparing the history, collection and exhibition policies of each institution an internal comparison of their collections and exhibitions of Aboriginal and South Pacific Islands material is given.

The Australian Museum (AM)

Each museum is unique in that the ideas, ambitions and tastes which shaped the growth of its collections reflects the individual talents and passions of the curators, trustees and benefactors who have guided its direction. Ron Lampert outlines the history of the Aboriginal collections at the AM, Sydney, which is indicative of the influences and interests which have shaped this collection and its interpretation (Lampert 1986).

AM was established as a Natural History Museum in 1827, and in 1832 George Bennett (who became Secretary and Curator of the Museum in 1835), suggested that

native weapons, utensils and other specimens of the arts, as existing among the Aborigines . . . would be a desirable addition.
. . . Here, in a public museum, the remains of the arts, etc. as existing among them, may be preserved as lasting memorials of the former races inhabiting the lands, when they had ceased to exist (Bennett cited in Lampert 1986:10).

Evidence of Aboriginal cultures was collected from the earliest contacts between Europeans and Aboriginals,¹ and continued as European settlement fanned out across the continent. As Philip Jones notes, despite discoveries that Aborigines use pigments and ochres in ceremonial art and rock paintings, throughout the nineteenth century, Europeans remained unimpressed by Aboriginal art. They found no evidence of the Aborigines' capacity to create works visually powerful or accessible enough to modify a dominant Anglo-Saxon aesthetic . . . . Attitudes towards Aborigines and their art remained negative within Australia, partly because of . . . the increasing popularity of evolutionist theories (Jones 1988:142-3).

From his brief factual history of the AM's collections, including the major donations and initiatives taken by successive curators, Lampert makes the following deductions:

We can see the changing attitude towards collections and their display at the Australian Museum. Had ethnographic items been displayed when the museum was founded their value would have

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¹ The first collection of artefacts from the Sydney district was made by Cook and Banks at Botany Bay of which a number of spears are at the Cambridge University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, a shield in the British Museum, a boomerang and club in the Australian Museum and a spear shaft in Stockholm (Lampert 1986: 11).
been as rare and curious specimens. In 1832 George Bennett saw them as memorials to a vanishing culture. By the 1880s, the age of great exhibitions, they had become one of the products of the growing colony, displayed together with wool and gold at the Garden Palace. At the turn of the century Etheridge saw them as records of the early history of the continent. By the 1930s the systematics of the natural historians were being used to treat artefacts as specimens; to be classified into groups attributable to region. However, the aim by then was to place the artefacts in a cultural context. This was greatly improved by the 1950s, with material culture being used to demonstrate social, economic and religious aspects of Aboriginal culture, albeit in a timeless idyll of the ethnographic present (Lampert 1986:15).

Deciding on the installation and content of a new permanent gallery (which opened in 1985) involved consultation with Aboriginal advisers who strongly suggested the need to show the effects of change and have some references to contemporary life styles. It was decided to show two ways of looking at the remote past, through Aboriginal Dreamtime stories and the scientific evidence presented by prehistory and archaeology. Lampert states the aims of the anthropological exhibition designed for the Australian Museum's Aboriginal Gallery as

1. Aims which have the intellectual purpose of providing information about Aboriginal culture, particularly its long history, its regional diversity within an overall unity, and its survival, against all odds, in the variety of forms seen today.
2. Aims having the social purpose of improving the attitude of the public towards Aborigines (Lampert 1986:16).

In the last century, the collection of material from Polynesian and Melanesian cultures for the AM followed the same fairly random pattern as its collections of Aboriginal objects. Two early curators, George Bennett and George French Angas, donated some Melanesian and Polynesian artefacts from their own collections.

The Ethnological Court at the huge Garden Palace Exhibition of 1879 stimulated public interest in the Pacific dominions, with an exhibition of some 2000 artifacts which displayed, 'the habits, dances, ornaments, weapons, canoes and paddles, implements for fishing and the chase, and the rude pottery of the various Australian Colonies, and the natives of several groups of Polynesia' (Official Record of the Sydney International Exhibition 1879, cited in Strahan 1979:23).

The destruction of the Exhibition by fire in 1882 destroyed the collection, but also stimulated a great effort to replace this loss. E.P. Ramsay built up a collection of 7,500 ethnological specimens between 1883 to 1887 and the next curator, Robert Etheridge, was also active in building up the collections between 1890 to 1920. A permanent Pacific Gallery was installed in 1906 with objects neatly arranged like specimens in glass cases. From time to time sections were replaced, for example material from Ian Hogbin's fieldwork on Ontong Java was installed in the late 1920s (Strahan 1979:40f). But even though new material was
inserted occasionally, the overall concept was retained for the next several decades. It was disbanded following a flood in the Pacific storeroom in 1971 which required the entire collection to be moved. This stimulated the Museum to think of a new exhibition concept, eventually leading to the installation of the Abelam Gallery (pers. comm. Specht 1988).

But prior to that, in 1978 the Australian Museum installed a Melanesian Gallery to house part of its excellent Pacific collection. In accordance with the prevailing theory of the time, the Melanesian Gallery was arranged in culture areas. This gallery was removed in 1988 because, according to Specht, 'it had served its purpose' (pers. comm. 1988) and also because of the extensive rebuilding program taking place at the Museum.

The Abelam Gallery, also at the Australian Museum, designed to represent an Abelam village complete with spirit house, was constructed in 1982 with the assistance of two men from Apangi village.1 This was the first exhibition in an Australian institution to recognised the value of active participation by people from the culture being represented.

Apart from these 'permanent' exhibitions (that is, installations with an expected lifespan of two to ten years), since 1988 the Australian Museum has been the venue for important temporary exhibitions of Pacific and Aboriginal material, facilitated by the opening of an extensive new exhibition. *Pieces of Paradise*, a major exhibition which

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1 The Abelam Gallery was removed in 1993.
explored Melanesian ways of knowing the world expressed through objects of cultural and aesthetic significance, and assembled largely from the Museum's world-class collection, first occupied this space. The Museum then hosted *Taonga Maori*, a significant exhibition of Maori treasured objects, both ancient and modern, in 1989. In 1990 *The Woven Image* presented, in a most visually striking display, the infinite variety of objects created from fibre and feathers with dexterity and artistic flair by the women of Maningrida, Arnhem Land. In 1991 *Luk Luk Gen! (Look Again!): Contemporary Art from Papua New Guinea* occupied this space alongside an exhibition of recent works by a Sydney based Aboriginal artists collective, *Boomalli Artists*.

Temporary exhibitions such as these diversify the types of exhibitions a museum is able to initiate from its own resources. Having the capacity to host temporary exhibitions allows the museum's exhibition program to reflect changing attitudes and perceptions more quickly than can be achieved with permanent exhibitions. According to Ross Clendinning of the AM, 'since 1988, with the exhibition of Melanesian art, *Pieces of Paradise*, the Australian Museum has embarked on a long-term program to develop Museum exhibitions around the cultural and aesthetic achievements of non-Western cultures' (pers. comm. May 1993). Since the late 1980s the AM has made a major contribution to raising the profile and appreciation of Aboriginal and other non-Western cultural and artistic achievements in the Australian consciousness.
The South Australian Museum (SAM)

In publicity material introducing international visitors to SAM on the occasion of the 5th International Symposium of the Pacific Arts Association (April 1993), Chris Anderson and Susan Cochrane wrote the following precis:

The South Australian Museum holds collections of cultural and historical material relevant to the peoples of Aboriginal Australia, the Pacific Islands, Africa and Asia. The Museum cares for this material and tries to make it accessible for appropriate usage, particularly by people with cultural rights and interests in it. The Museum has a policy of cooperative ventures for all exhibitions, publications and similar uses of its collections. It has undertaken a range of projects in recent years with Aboriginal communities, including the Ngurunderi, Yuendumu, Dreamings and other exhibitions. The Museum has also worked for the last eight years to establish an extensive consultative mechanism to deal with secret/sacred objects and has repatriated objects where traditional custodians have requested it. Recently the Museum has set up projects which focus on the interaction between different cultures - particularly in the field of visual arts. The hosting by the Museum of the Pacific Arts Association's Symposium and associated events promotes interaction between Aboriginal and Pacific Islands peoples in the context of the International Year of the Worlds Indigenous People (Anderson and Cochrane unpub.1993).1

1 Background statement prepared by Christopher Anderson, Head of the Division of Anthropology, and Susan Cochrane, Symposium Coordinator, for the 5th International Symposium of the Pacific Arts Association hosted by
SAM’s innovative exhibition policies with regard to Aboriginal culture, and the viable working relationships they have established with Aboriginal communities, are particularly evident in the work undertaken by the Museum’s Anthropology and Family History staff with Southern and Central Australian Aboriginal communities. It is central to the Museum’s present philosophy that its activities must have direct relevance to the Aboriginal communities in its region, viz. South and Central Australia. SAM’s Anthropology Division aims to concentrate on social activities which result in the production of artifacts, rather than being focused on the collection of artifacts (pers. comm. Anderson 1992). This aim is evident in the SAM’s Family History project which is adding genealogical information and oral histories of the present generation and missing intermediary generations to the systematic recording of the Aboriginal tribes of Australia established by Norman Tindale from 1928 and those of his predecessor, Sir Edward Stirling, from 1860.

The philosophy of community participation in the development of exhibitions is observable in SAM’s present long-term Aboriginal exhibition (opened in 1987), a presentation of the Ngurundjeri epic. This is a narrative of


1 The Family History project has published full genealogies of several South Australian Aboriginal extended families, and is updating Tindale’s records for extensive areas of Australia. This project was initiated by an Aboriginal woman, Doreen Kartinyeri, and several Aboriginal staff are employed on it.
the making of the River Murray by the mythological hero Ngurundjeri. The visitor is drawn along a winding path following the River Murray story, learning of the creations of the hero and absorbing knowledge of the people of the area through video, audio and diorama installations. This presentation uses Aboriginal interpretations as well as objects to explain an Aboriginal culture and involved extensive participation of local Aboriginal people in its development.

But SAM is perhaps best known to white Australians for its initiatives in the 1980s when two well-publicised exhibitions were directed primarily to non-Aboriginal audiences. There was extensive Aboriginal involvement with the preparation of both these exhibitions, but the intent of the exhibitions was to challenge white Australian's ideas of Aboriginal art and culture. *Art and Land* (1986) critiqued Eurocentric concepts of what is, and is not, art. *Dreamings: the Art of Aboriginal Australia* (1988), toured in America, where it addressed the difficulties faced by a white audience trying to understand and appreciate Aboriginal art.¹

In *Art and Land* the curators, Peter Sutton and Philip Jones, pointed to the fact that objects inevitably lose some aspects of their meaning and function when transferred, or

¹ The *Dreamings* catalogue extends the themes of the exhibition. Both demonstrate that better understanding of Aboriginal art can be achieved by understanding a number of things: the different environments and geographic distribution of various forms of art; the history of the development (or disappearance) of art forms since European contact; what Sutton calls the 'morphology of painting', i.e. their content and meaning; the acceptance or lack of acceptance of Aboriginal art in the Western art world, and the recent social history of Aborigines in Australia.
‘metamorphosised’ out of their original context and aesthetic locus. In this exhibition *toas* were displayed as art objects. The curators assumed that such foreign cultural forms would have more meaning if they were placed within a framework of values and references to which the Australian public could relate. Admitting that this was a purposeful manipulation to establish the credibility of Aboriginal artifacts as objects of cultural and aesthetic value, Sutton says it was useful to ‘promote the status and intelligibility of *toas* by packaging them as art’ (Sutton 1986:8).3

Even while in preparation *Dreamings* stimulated interest and controversy among curators and theoreticians and even among some Aboriginal artists who felt their work was unfairly excluded. Kerry Giles and other Aboriginal artists from urban and rural centres criticised the curators for not representing in the *Dreamings* exhibition, recent developments in poster art, silk screen printing and paintings depicting urban environments and commenting on black/white

1 When Aboriginal objects which had a ceremonial function are adopted as art in Western culture, the loss of the original function does not necessarily interfere with their transfer from one culture to another. They will have other functions viz, representing the culture of the originating community and/or being admired as aesthetic objects (Sutton and Jones 1986).

2 The same *toas* as were referred to in Chapter 6, viz those collected by Reuther in the 1890s. To Lake Eyre Aboriginals, *toas* refer to a group of natural features and a mythological event believed to have taken place there, and are thus typical of Aboriginal culture. *Toas* function as direction markers and location finders. Each *toa* indicates a particular locality by its shape, while its colours and crests symbolise geographic features and names.

3 Replying to Sutton’s arguments, Donald Brook was adamant that interpreting *toas* as works of art was ‘a smart aleck Duchampian replay’ which would have to wait for the verdict of history for their ‘arthood’ to be accepted (Brook 1986:6).
relations. Accepting that this was a just criticism, a chapter on survival and regeneration was included in the book (Sutton ed. 1988) which served as an exhibition catalogue and Giles was one of the artists who attended the exhibition’s opening in New York (Sutton, Jones and Hemming 1988:180-214).1

*Dreamings* was also criticised by Tony Fry and Anne-Marie Willis (1989), substantially on the grounds that the exhibition served Eurocentric interests, and that its result would be to raise the prices in the art market and enhance the reputations of the curators, rather than to directly benefit Aboriginal people or increase the acceptance of their art by Australian and international audiences.2 Since *Dreamings*, SAM has continued its policy of close collaboration with Aboriginal communities, moving closer to exhibitions curated by Aborigines. Giles worked as a guest curator in the Division of Anthropology on her photographic exhibition, *Pages of History*, one of the exhibitions associated with the Pacific Arts Association Symposium in 1993.3, 4

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2 Peter Sutton responded to Fry and Willis’ criticisms in the forum ‘Curating Aboriginal Art’ as above. His response to their criticism was that a number of Aboriginal communities supported the effort which went into *Dreamings* and appreciated its value for their own reasons.

3 The photographs recorded the progress of the Aboriginal convoy, travelling from Western Australia, the Northern Territory and South Australia to Sydney to protest against the Bicentennial celebrations in 1988.

4 The Aboriginal staff of SAM managed their own projects for the PAA Symposium. These were: the ‘Message Stick’, a concept developed by Peter Bertani whereby groups of Aboriginal people were invited from Arnhem Land, Central, Western and South Australian communities to participate in a major ceremony and hold dance workshops for South Australian
The Mission Statement of SAM contains, as one of the institution's objectives, 'to research and promote understanding of the cultures of Aboriginal Australia and the Western Pacific' (SAM Annual Report 1992). However, since the Waite Expedition to Melanesia in 1918, led by the then Director of SAM, Edgar Waite, very little fieldwork in the South Pacific area has been undertaken by SAM anthropologists, and only minor additions to the collections have been made by them. Other additions to the collection have been from donations.

The problems of permanent exhibitions are exemplified by SAM's Melanesian Gallery. No history of the Melanesian Gallery, or SAM's collection of Pacific material, has yet been written, but some facts have been gleaned by the Museum's Curator of Social History, Philip Jones, while researching the history of SAM's collections and the collectors who acquired them.

The main installation of the Pacific Gallery was completed in 1931, and it remains substantially as it was when the last alteration was made to the installation in the 1950s. Glass display cases against the walls house artfully arranged ranks of weapons forming a backdrop to other types

Aboriginal youth; 'Visual Artist's Week' for Aboriginal and Pacific Islanders to share knowledge about their art, arranged by the Aboriginal curator, Franchesca Alberts and held at Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute; and Kerry Giles' exhibition, Pages of History.

1 Some material from Papua New Guinea (mostly archaeological) was collected by Graham Pretty during his fieldwork there in the 1970s. Barry Craig, when Curator of Anthropology of the Papua New Guinea Museum, also collected some artifacts for SAM.
of artifacts from each area represented. The display is a 'museum piece' in itself, and there is some validity in the argument that it should be preserved intact, so that present-day museum visitors can have an opportunity to see how museums displayed objects in the past. This view would be especially plausible if, as Jones suspects, at least part of the installation dates back to 1893, when the wing housing the Melanesian Gallery was opened. Collections of items from Melanesia were donated to SAM prior to that, for example a collection of Fijian artifacts was donated by the missionary William Owen in 1861 when SAM first opened and it likely that some of this material is still on display in the Fijian showcase in the Melanesian Gallery (Pers. comm. Jones October 1991).

The dilemma facing SAM is that, although the permanent Melanesian exhibition may be historically interesting, the presence of human skeletal remains, the taxonomic nature of the displays (objects displayed in specimen types), as well as a number of inaccurate, and perhaps offensive, labels and the mis-identification of objects are now recognised as offensive to indigenous people and anachronistic in terms of present museological practice. The staff of the Department of Anthropology are aware of these sensitive issues, but have not yet been able to convince the Museum's Board of the need for a complete change. This is probably attributable to a lack of consistent advocacy for the people represented by the Melanesian collection, although personnel from Pacific
Islands museums, notably Papua New Guinea, have established working relationships with SAM.¹

When the agenda for the Pacific Arts Association (PAA) Symposium, scheduled for 1993, was being prepared, Soroi Eoe, Director of the Papua New Guinea National Museum, who is also on the Council of PAA, visited SAM. He noted the most problematic areas, from the point of view of indigenous Pacific people, and wrote a report to the Director of SAM. As stated in the Co-ordinator’s Final Report of the PAA Symposium:

The Symposium drew attention to (SAM’s) Pacific Gallery . . . .

Although some cosmetic touches were made to the Pacific Gallery in time for the Symposium, including the removal of the Museum Shop to another floor, the decision to leave the display fundamentally unchanged may be a ploy. In museological terms the Gallery is outdated, but a huge allocation of funds would have to be made to the Museum to enable it to change the context and installation of objects from its Pacific collection. The presence of many Pacific curators and scholars, especially indigenous people whose cultures are represented in the Pacific Gallery, may bring enough pressure to bear on the Museum’s funding body, the South Australian Government, to bring about a significant change (Cochrane 1993:16).

The commitment to PAA demonstrated that SAM had resolved to re-engage with South Pacific societies. Apart

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¹ SAM’s Department of Anthropology is on good terms with the PNG National Museum. Staff from both institutions are presently working on a joint project and PNG staff have undertaken training at SAM.
from hosting the Symposium two significant projects involving consultation and participation of Papua New Guinean communities, were undertaken. With the assistance of the Papua New Guinea National Museum and the direct involvement of Chris Issac and Noah Lurang, SAM anthropologist Barry Craig negotiated participatory performance/exhibitions with the Sulka people of New Britain Province and custodians of the Malanggan rituals from Tabar Island, New Ireland Province.¹

The commissioning, acquisition, reception, performance and installation of the Sulka Dance Mask and the Malanggan Masks and associated objects provided a visual and conceptual focus for the PAA Symposium. The new masks joined similar objects in the Pacific Gallery which had been obtained on Waite’s 1919 expedition. These projects contrasted the early twentieth century scientific expedition approach to collecting objects, and the collaborative venture more appropriate in present circumstances. The spectacular climax of the projects came about when Sulka and Malangan ritual experts ‘danced’ the masks, first outside and then into the Pacific Gallery, demonstrating public aspects of the performances associated with these masks. This provided

¹ Craig had been Curator of Anthropology at the PNG Museum in the early 1980s and had previously worked with the Sulka people of New Ireland in 1981. Chris Issac, a Sulka man, had worked with Craig on the 1981 project. Now (1993) Director of the J.K. McCarthy Museum at Goroka, Isaac returned with Craig to negotiate the Sulka Dance Mask project. Noah Lurang is the Cultural Officer of the New Ireland Province and a participant in Malanggan rituals. Lurang assisted Craig and Mike Gunn (Curator of Oceania, Northern Territory Museum of Arts and Sciences, who had previously researched Malanggan rituals) to bring the Malanggan Mask project to fruition.
new avenues for the display and interpretation of such objects, in contrast to the old form of display and interpretation of the 1919 masks as discrete objects in glass cabinets.

The Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW)

Until AGNSW started to form its collection of Aboriginal art in the late 1950s, Aboriginal and Pacific collections had been considered the domain of Australia's natural history museums. J.A. (Tony) Tuckson, (then curator of paintings at AGNSW) and Dr Stuart Scougall (a collector of contemporary Australian art who financed the acquisitions), determined to persuade the AGNSW to form a collection of Aboriginal art. A set of *pukamani* poles (ceremonial mortuary poles of the Tiwi people, Bathurst and Melville Islands) was commissioned by Scougall for the Gallery's first acquisition in 1958. In 1959 a number of significant bark paintings were commissioned from Mawalan and other painters at Yirrkala, Eastern Arnhem Land. Tuckson and Scougall spent a considerable time in the field in 1958 to 1959 collecting data on the artists and the

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1 The Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA) was the first art gallery in Australia to acquire a painting by an Aboriginal, Albert Namatjira's *Haast's Bluff* (1941), but this was an isolated incident. Several exhibitions of Aboriginal art were held between 1949 to 1960, which toured Australian capital cities (Tuckson 1964:63). These included David Jones Art Gallery, Sydney, (1949); Jubilee Exhibition of Australian Art, all capital cities (1951); Arnhem Land Bark Paintings, Perth (1957); UNESCO exhibition of Aboriginal culture, all capital cities (1957 to 1958); exhibition at the Adelaide Festival of Arts, Adelaide, 1960). In 1956 each State art gallery received from the Commonwealth Government twenty-four crayon drawings from Arnhem Land collected by C.P. Mountford at the time of the American-Australian Scientific Expedition to Arnhem Land in 1948.
processes of production for these specially commissioned acquisitions. In 1964 part of the Tuckson and Scougall collection toured Australia and an important book of essays on Aboriginal art was released in conjunction with the tour (R. Berndt 1964).

Also in the 1960s Tuckson collected Melanesian art, making a trip to Papua New Guinea in 1962, but also buying objects from dealers. AGNSW was the beneficiary of a significant collection of Eastern and Southern Highlands (Papua New Guinea) material donated by S.G. Moriarty.

When AGNSW opened its Aboriginal and Melanesian Gallery in 1973 it, 'accepted and celebrated receiving the collection, which was different from other attitudes at the time' (Mundine 1990). Djon Mundine, who was part-time curator of Aboriginal art at AGNSW from 1983 to 1990, points out that in the late 1960s to early 1970s attitudes towards Aboriginal art in the Australian art establishment were very disparaging, with many curators believing it should remain in ethnographic museums.

In the Foreword to the 1973 exhibition catalogue the then Director of AGNSW, Hal Missingham, wrote that

1 These field trips and information on the works acquired are documented in the exhibition catalogue, *Aboriginal and Melanesian Art*, AGNSW (1973) and in the *AGNSW Quarterly* (Vol 1:4, July, 1960).

2 AGNSW did not receive the entire Moriarty collection. Another part of it was donated to the Australian Museum and much was sold at auction.

3 Djon Mundine, lecture in the forum 'Curating Aboriginal Art', *Aboriginal Art in Australian Society* series, Power Institute of Fine Arts, 1990. Mundine was then AGNSW's Aboriginal curator-in-the-field and Arts Advisor to the Ramingining community, Central Arnhem Land.
It was his (Tony Tuckson's) vision to establish primitive art as art, not purely as ethnographic material. His contribution to AGNSW has been considerable, particularly in the establishment of its primitive art collection. Many people will see this as his personal memorial (Missingham 1973:3).

For ten years, following Tuckson's death in 1973 and Mundine's appointment in 1983, there was what Mundine politely describes as a 'lull in collecting'. AGNSW did not extend its collection of Aboriginal (or for that matter Pacific material), or employ a specialised curator for it. One of Mundine's first objectives as curator of the Aboriginal art collection was to acquire recent works by artists from the same language groups as those already represented. Works by the later generation of artists were chosen to show how the rendition of the same subject matter varied from generation to generation and artist to artist.1

A refurbished gallery presenting an extended collection, but still with a heavy concentration on Arnhem Land art, was opened in February, 1988. Mundine devised a layout in which the large collections of bark paintings (in the top level of the gallery) were arranged in three areas which correspond to the

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1 Mundine regards the bark paintings in the AGNSW collection assembled by Tuckson and Scougal in the late 1960s as 'classic paintings of a very creative period'. Paintings by Mawalan, which are a feature of the collection, are, in his words 'book type paintings... records of the period when people were painting a whole story on barks'. In his analysis these paintings were made during a time when there was a fear within the Yirrkala community that the existing generation of artists, including Mawalan, had to record its history and stories for perpetuity, before the culture died. The cultural disintegration the older generation feared did not occur, but artists of the present generation prefer to paint part of a story in each bark painting rather than representing the whole story (Mundine, lecture in the forum 'Curating Aboriginal Art' 1990).
stylistic differences of eastern, central and western Arnhem Land; in each of these areas the stories of the moiety divisions face each other on opposite walls. Soaring funerary poles, again from Arnhem Land cultures, are grouped in with other funerary objects in a spacious well at the base of a spiral ramp. Artists from desert communities and urban artists are represented by a few paintings grouped at the top of the ramp.

Despite the dedicated effort and investment which went into the creation of the first Aboriginal gallery and then its refurbishment, AGNSW collected Aboriginal art only sporadically in the 1980s. A possible interpretation of the Gallery's attitude during that period is that, in establishing a permanent gallery showing the classic traditions of Aboriginal art, it had done enough. The Gallery offered its audience a good selection of Aboriginal (northern Australian and Arnhem Land) art, and likewise Melanesian art, but distinctly separated these from the remainder of its collections in a manner which has sometimes been criticised as 'ghettoising' Aboriginal art (Thomas 1989:1).

This criticism does not belittle the intentions of those who initiated the collection and established the gallery, who were enthusiastic and dedicated advocates of Aboriginal art and determined to have it recognised, as Tuckson and Scougall did, on par with all the other treasures of world art. But it is indicative of the lack of interest to follow through and build around the collection. From the mid-1970s to 1980s the acquisition budget was pegged at a low level and as Mudine's
appointment was as a part-time curator there was no-one on the AGNSW’s staff to consistently advocate the need to better represent Aboriginal art.

Some strategies were developed in the 1980s at AGNSW to circumvent the ‘ghettoising’ effect. A few recent works, for example several acrylic paintings by major artists from Papunya and other Central Australian communities, and some sculptures were purchased by the curator of contemporary art and the curator of sculpture and were displayed alongside contemporary Australian art. Some guest curators strategically included Aboriginal art in the major survey shows conducted under the aegis of AGNSW, Perspecta and the Sydney Biennale (Murphy 1987). But in comparison to the development of Aboriginal art collections at other State galleries in the 1980s (AGSA, the Art Gallery of Western Australia and the National Gallery of Victoria) this demonstrates some individual efforts, but a rather paltry commitment by the Gallery overall.

Although Mundine is an innovative curator, he only worked part-time at AGNSW,¹ and the Gallery procrastinated about the appointment of a full-time curator, inhibiting acquisition and exhibition development. However, in 1990 AGNSW appointed Hetti Perkins to guest curate the Aboriginal Womens’ Exhibition. AGNSW subsequently advertised for a full-time Aboriginal curator and appointed an Aboriginal

¹ Operating from his other position as Arts Adviser to the Aboriginal community at Raminginging, Mundine initiated the Aboriginal Memorial now at NGA, and in 1984 also worked as a guest curator for the Power Gallery at Sydney University (the precursor of the MCA).
person, Daphne Wallace, in 1993. At the time of Wallace’s appointment the AGNSW was committed to establishing a major new space for Aboriginal art and providing substantial funds for the acquisition of (mostly) contemporary Aboriginal art in order to develop this area of their Aboriginal art collection. The Yiribana Gallery of Aboriginal Art at AGNSW opened in November 1994.

Until 1991, of all the works of art on display in the Aboriginal Gallery, only six were by women, all of which are recent paintings. In 1988 the Senior Curator, Renee Free, acknowledged that this imbalance presented a problem for the Gallery, but it took several years until an opportunity arose where the Gallery felt this could be redressed. In late 1990 AGNSW appointed an Aboriginal guest curator, Hetti Perkins, to formulate a project show. The Aboriginal Women’s Exhibition (1991) introduced the diversity of contemporary Aboriginal women’s art to AGNSW’s audience. The acquisitions of AGNSW have considerably diversified since the appointments of Perkins and Wallace.

1 Daphne Wallace was the first Aboriginal person to be a curator at a regional gallery, the Armidale Art Museum in New South Wales. She was then the first Aboriginal person to have a curatorial position at the National Gallery of Australia as the Assistant Curator of Aboriginal Art. She is now the first Aboriginal person to be a full-time curator at a State art gallery.

2 Three acrylic paintings by women artists from the central desert and three paintings by Koori artist Fiona Foley. More acquisitions have been made since Perkins curated the Aboriginal Women’s Exhibition.

3 Pers. comm. October, 1988. Free pointed out that women’s art is under-represented in other areas of AGNSW’s collections, resulting from the gender bias in European art; also the traditional objects made by Aboriginal women were in forms and media which differed from the European concept of art.
As far as its Melanesian collection is concerned, the Gallery has not added a single item to the collection formed by Tony Tuckson in the 1960s to 1973. There is a strong feeling among senior curators that the material in the Moriarty collection is 'too ethnographic' (pers. comm. Free 1990). Should an offer be forthcoming from the Australian Museum for the loan of the Moriarty collection to be re-negotiated, AGNSW would welcome the opportunity to divest itself of it.¹ Representations by the writer for AGNSW to be the Sydney venue for the travelling exhibition Luk Luk Gen! (Look Again): Contemporary Art from Papua New Guinea were inconclusive, as there is no curator for the art of the Pacific region to act as an advocate for the collection and exhibition of art from this area, nor does the Gallery regard it as a priority.

The National Gallery of Australia (NGA).

The NGA, which opened in Canberra in 1972 as the Australian National Gallery, began to collect Aboriginal art in 1976. Its first purchase comprised 139 bark paintings by the north-east Arnhem Land artist Yirawalla. In 1990 Wally Caruana, Curator of Aboriginal Art at the NGA, described the aim of the NGA's acquisition policy in terms of its overall collection as, 'to place Aboriginal art in the context of World art' (Caruana

¹ S.G. Moriarty also loaned part of his collection, the 'more ethnographic' material to the Australian Museum and they are interested in re-combining it (pers. comm. Pacific Collections Manager, AM). The AGNSW staff member who divulged this information prefers not to be named.
lecture 1990). On a national level the policy directing NGA's Aboriginal collection is, 'to actively collect current Aboriginal art on a national scale' and to 'track the continuing and evolving traditions of Aboriginal art . . . and be representative of all areas' (Caruana 1990).¹ Explaining these policies Caruana stated that they

recognise the fact that Aboriginal art is not one unified entity; there exist within the broad description many different artistic idioms and practices. This is a reflection of the fact that Aboriginal peoples across Australia, while sharing a host of values and ideals, are distinct, with different languages, religious beliefs and social customs, different backgrounds, and, in relation to their contact with Europeans, different histories. The Gallery's collection represents the major and peripheral stylistic areas, as well as the many exceptions to the broad definitions, to reflect Aboriginal art in all its diversity (Caruana lecture 1990).

Over the years in which he has been Curator of Aboriginal Art, Caruana has assembled possibly the largest collection of Aboriginal art in the nation, representative of the diversity of contemporary Aboriginal art. He realised that the NGA, because it was only established in 1972, could not hope to rival collections from earlier periods and these were already represented in other public collections.² But there were

¹ Lecture given in the 'Curating Aboriginal Art' forum, Aboriginal Art in Australian Society Series, Power Institute of Fine Arts, 1990.

² Nevertheless the NGA has received or negotiated donations of significant collections, such as part of the collection of Karel Kupka, adding historical depth to its acquisitions.
considerable gaps in other major public collections, such as have been described for AGNSW, and the NGA aims to fill the gaps by 'actively collecting current Aboriginal art on a national scale' (Caruana 1990). Curators of other departments at the NGA, for example Prints and Textiles, also collect Aboriginal works of art in their field of speciality.

In contrast, the art of Oceania is poorly represented. In the context of 'world art', the artistic traditions of New Guinea are represented to the Australian public by the stone figurine known as the Ambon woman and the magnificent twin figures joined at the base from Lake Sentani. For a time in the 1970s to 1980s there was a display of significant works of African, native American and Pacific tribal art in one of the galleries at NGA.¹

The Curator of Prints at NGA, Roger Butler, acquired nineteen prints from Ulli Beier in the late 1970s, mostly by Akis and Kauage. In 1991 he purchased a further seventeen prints, representing the work of Papua New Guinean contemporary artists in the late 1970s to mid 1980s, for an exhibition, Affirmations of Heritage: Contemporary Prints by Australasia’s First Inhabitants, to be held later that year. Caruana, who also has the brief to collect art from the Pacific region, purchased a few drawings and small metal sculptures by Papua New Guinea contemporary artists at the same time and expressed interest in acquiring major

¹ In the initial period of forming its collections in the 1970s, Barry Craig was commissioned to make a collection of Melanesian art, but this avenue of collection soon ceased and most of the artworks have never been displayed.
paintings. In 1991 both curators admitted that the NGA had no coherent collecting policy for Pacific art, although there is awareness of a loose political directive from the Australian Government, as part of its foreign affairs policy, to 'do something' to recognise the cultural achievements of Pacific nations (pers. comm. Butler and Caruana July 1991).

However, by 1993, NGA had revised its policy. Butler informed the writer that his brief and those of other curators of Australian art (including Caruana), had been extended to encompass the Pacific region and an exhibition concerned with the Pacific region is on the drawing boards for the late 1990s (pers. comm. April 1993). Some works by contemporary Pacific artists were acquired by the NGA from exhibitions held in association with the PAA Symposium.

Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA)

Although it only opened at new premises at The Rocks under the new name, Museum of Contemporary Art, in 1991, MCA had previously operated as the Power Gallery at the University of Sydney. It is a unique institution in Australia in that it is (largely) financed by an endowment. The beneficiary, Dr John Power, willed a substantial sum to Sydney University to

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1 The Papua New Guinean contemporary paintings, prints and sculptures purchased by Butler and Caruana in 1991 were sold to NGA by PNG Arts Advisers. This partnership of the writer, PNG artist Joe Nalo and Hugh Stevenson was set up during the Australian tour of the exhibition *Luk Luk Gen! (Look Again!): Contemporary Art from PNG*, to assist PNG artists with the sale of their works overseas.
establish a museum 'to bring to Australia the latest of the world's art'.

MCA began its collection of Aboriginal art in the early 1980s when it was still the Power Gallery at the University of Sydney. Bernice Murphy (Chief Curator) commissioned Djon Mundine (in his role as Arts Adviser at Ramingining) to assemble a collection based on the knowledge of the taxonomy of flora and fauna of the Aboriginal people of Central Arnhem Land. This collection was displayed in the exhibition, *Objects and Representations from Ramingining: A Selection of Recent Art from Arnhem Land* (1984) and was acquired by the Power Gallery. As Murphy (1991) explains, the exhibition described Yolngu peoples' knowledge of the environment, their systems of classification and their ways of knowing the world.

The second collection of Aboriginal material obtained by MCA also arose from the development of an exhibition. This time the objects were woven items by women from Maningrida (also in Central Arnhem land and related by kinship with the people of Ramingining). The collection, assembled by Diane Moon, Arts Adviser at Maningrida, was displayed as *The Woven Image* in 1989 at the Australian Museum (as the MCA was then under construction). Instead of purchasing this collection outright, the MCA is researching the possibilities of joint ownership, or allowing the creators

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1 These comments on the MCA are a precis of Murphy's 1990 lecture at the Power Institute of Fine Arts, Sydney University and her address in the 'Mission of Museums' session of the PAA Symposium, 1993.
to retain ownership while the Museum is the custodian. Murphy maintains that these exhibitions have resulted in acquisitions, rather than the other way around, which is the norm for museums. MCA intends to pursue this policy of letting the process of developing a project and exhibition lead that of acquisition (Murphy 1991).

In the arena of Pacific art, MCA staged its first major exhibition with *Headlands: Thinking through New Zealand Art* (1992). *Headlands* explored cultural relationships between Maori and Pakeha. Reviewing it for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, I wrote that

> The installation draws the viewer through rooms which emphasise particular themes and relationships and cover all types of contemporary arts practice. Pervading all the selections are the distances and dialogues between Maori and Pakeha....

The timeframe and thematic structure of *Headlands*, circa 1940s to the present, bore witness to a turnaround in... cultural relationships. Maoridom is now in a period of ascendency. Maori art is now free from earlier Pakeha histories and formulations of it as an unchanging, classical style, of ethnographic rather than art interest, and as emblematic of a national character....

*Headlands* is the Museum of Contemporary Art’s first major international exhibition. MCA's direction, looking to the Pacific/Asia region first to find, as John Power willed, the latest ideas in international contemporary art, is laudable and long overdue in Australia. Criticisms will inevitably be levelled at

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1 Respectively, the indigenous and non-indigenous people of New Zealand.
the selection, but the exhibition should also be evaluated as a model for exploring cultural history through a cross-section of artistic vision and multiple interpretation (Cochrane 1992).

Because MCA does not have a long history and has to attract an audience, and also because MCA's directors seek to differentiate it from Australia's longer-established cultural institutions, much effort has gone into developing policy and directions for the new museum. In a few years time it will be easier to evaluate the success of MCA's project-based acquisitions policy and other initiatives it might take in exhibiting Aboriginal and Pacific art.

Queensland Art Gallery (QAG)

In 1990 the QAG announced it would stage the first Asia/Pacific Triennial in 1993. As QAG had not expressed interest in Pacific art before, this event was monitored by the writer to see what would eventuate.

Since the mid-1980s there had been an increasing engagement of Australian artists, curators and theoreticians with contemporary Asian art, including special programs developed by the Australia Council to provide for artists in residence in Asian locations and allocations to fund exhibition development. Asialink was established at the Centre for Asian Studies at Melbourne University to assist enquiries and facilitate introductions and access for curators and others, both from and to Asia. Art journals increased their coverage of art in Asia and a new journal, Art and Asia
Pacific, came into being. There is no Pacific equivalent for Asialink, and the coverage of Asian art in *Art and Asia Pacific* and other art journals far exceeds that on Pacific art.

While it sent 'selectors' to many Asian countries and negotiated extensively with Asian arts councils, artists, academics and others to formulate the selection, only New Zealand and Papua New Guinea were included to represent the Pacific region in the first Asia Pacific Triennale. The artists representing New Zealand included Maori, Pakeha and South Pacific Islanders resident in New Zealand, and the works selected were inventive and diverse. The 'selector' for the Pacific, Ross Searle, Director of the Perc Tucker Regional Gallery in Townsville, travelled extensively through Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands. However he was hampered by lack of experience and knowledge of the area's contemporary art. His selection of two Papua New Guinea contemporary artists, Joe Nalo and Kauage, was conservative and the artists were not challenged to produce really innovative works.2

The Pacific delegates attending the Conference which marked the opening of the first *Asia Pacific Triennial* were unanimous that contemporary Pacific art was poorly represented. I interviewed Pacific delegates and artists...

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1 The first issue contained only Asian material, and the second covered only New Zealand.

2 Searle's lack of experience in negotiating with PNG artists became evident when, a month before the exhibition was to open, Kauage had failed to produce the promised work. QAG approached PNG Arts Advisers (Cochrane and Stevenson), and they arranged alternative works from existing collections in Australia and PNG for Kauage's exhibit.
present during the Conference and opening celebrations for a review of the Triennial. Their most frequent objections concerned the under-representation of Pacific art in comparison to the Asian component:

One Pacific delegate didn't think much of the placement of the Papua New Guinea exhibits, located in peripheral spaces (Nalo's on a mezzanine level, separate from any other works, Kauage's near the exit to the sculpture garden). According to Sai Lealea, Director of the South Pacific Islanders' branch of Te Waka Toi (NZ Arts Council), it was clear from this exhibition that Australians had no real idea of what or who represents the Pacific. In the future, he said, Pacific artists and curators should be included in the selection and curatorial processes. This may help overcome some of the misconceptions and the ignorance of Pacific art in the Australian art world. It would also assist Pacific artists to know how and why they are being represented (Cochrane 1993e:12).

The QAG was courageous to propose and carry through the ambitious concept of the first Asia Pacific Triennial. As Caroline Turner, the Assistant Director of QAG responsible for it pointed out, each Triennial is, and will be, a learning experience for the Gallery and the Australian audience (pers. comm. Sept. 1993). QAG is not shy of its failure in finding a better representation of contemporary Pacific art, as Turner says, this will stimulate them to greater efforts for the 1996 Triennial.
Part I outlined the historically different roles of art galleries and museums in the Australian context. Part II compared the histories and present policies regarding collecting and exhibiting Aboriginal and Pacific Islands material in some Australian museums and art galleries, and provided some contrasts between the institutions.

It has been demonstrated that each museum is shaped by its own history and interests. From time to time pressures arise causing the re-assessment of curatorial practices and acquisition policies. These can arise from the development of new theories and curatorial practices, successful advocacy for the inclusion of new material, acquiescence to pressure from indigenous people for better representation of their interests, and growing public awareness and interest in Aboriginal and Pacific Islands art and culture.

The examples of AGNSW and QAG have demonstrated that, among art galleries, consistent and strong representation by indigenous people and scholars of indigenous art is necessary to build interest in collecting and exhibition Aboriginal and Pacific Islands material. In the case of art galleries, as well as consistent advocacy, appreciation and aesthetic interest in the classical and contemporary artworks of these cultures needs to be developed.

SAM has made a major contribution in achieving recognition for Aboriginal culture in Australia and overseas. But its history with regard to its Pacific collection again shows the need for consistent advocacy by indigenous people.
and scholars of indigenous cultures for the development of collections. It also indicates that a State museum must have the political will and interest in cultural exchange to look beyond its regional concerns.

The policies of art galleries and museums towards collecting and exhibiting Aboriginal and Pacific Islands material continue to be different, but are complementary rather than divisive.

In Australia, museums, in contrast to art galleries, have long established collection and exhibition policies related to Aboriginal and Pacific cultures. In 1978, at the influential UNESCO-sponsored conference *Preserving Indigenous Cultures: A New Role for Museums*, it was claimed that contact with Aboriginal people by museums were wanting; for example, there were no examples of real encouragement being given to knowledgeable elders to take a deep interest in the work of museums. As well, curators had been insensitive and perhaps ignorant of the wishes of Aboriginal people. Edwards noted that

> it was not until 1967 and the beginning of policies of self-determination that Aboriginal people began to speak out with indignation about the inconsiderate attitude of our museums . . . such action came as a surprise to many people within museums and led to some resentment (Edwards & Stewart 1978:1-2).

The greatest change for Australian museums in the 1970s to the 1990s was the expansion of their relationships with indigenous people. Aboriginal groups now actively participate in the formulation of museums' collection and
exhibition policies; individuals have been appointed to museums’ staff in various full-time capacities and as guest curators, and Aboriginal persons now serve on the councils of major museums. Museum collections represented one obvious way Aborigines could restructure links with their past, but they wished to do so on their own terms which included gaining a greater measure of control over the material in collections and a voice within the museum hierarchy as well (Fourmile 1988:30).

The Australian Museum has been the most active museum in Australia in the 1980s to the early 1990s, as far as developing and hosting exhibitions which represent Pacific Islands cultures is concerned. The AM included some contemporary Papua New Guinean acrylic paintings, prints and metal sculptures in its 1988 exhibition Pieces of Paradise, and work by contemporary Maori artists in Taonga Maori in 1989; in 1991 they were the Sydney venue for the Australian tour of the exhibition of contemporary Papua New Guinean art, Luk Luk Gen! (Look Again!) Contemporary Art from Papua New Guinea. AM has also supported a training program for Pacific Islands personnel and maintained working relationships with Pacific museums in field research. Jim Specht, Head of Pacific Anthropology, said that the lack of

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1 For example SAM has consistently developed exhibitions in collaboration with Aboriginal groups, including Art and Land, Nurundjerri, Dreamings. The Australian Museum employs Aborigines as Collections Manager, Liaison Officer and Education Officer. Aboriginal Advisory Committees are being appointed by a number of museums.
space and resources have confined the AM’s desired level of activities (pers. comm. April 1991).

Differences between Australian art galleries’ and museums’ methods of presenting Aboriginal art are narrowing, insofar as both types of institutions now recognise the aesthetic merit of objects and attempt to enhance this aspect in their displays. But anthropologist Peter Sutton (1989) has criticised art historians and art gallery curators on the grounds that they do not undertake long-term field trips or work frequently with Aboriginal individuals and communities in the preparation of their exhibitions. In his view they usually have to rely on anthropologists and other informants such as arts advisers for detailed first-hand information on Aboriginal artists and their art. According to Sutton (1989:15), it seems that most art historians are indifferent to the question of the social and cultural conditions in which the works are produced and only interested in them when they enter and circulate within the mainstream Australian art world. This indicates a failure to fully analyse the controversies at the point of production and restricts the sites of the debate to the art historians’ heartlands, the city art gallery, universities and art journals.

It is likely that some museum anthropologists are presently better skilled at the analysis and interpretation of Aboriginal and Pacific cultural material than some of their counterparts in art galleries. Anthropologists who undertake fieldwork, rather than just working in the museum environment, are also more familiar with Aboriginal (and
sometimes Pacific Islanders'), points of view and what desires communities have expressed regarding displaying their material to an outside audience. But this is also true of committed art gallery curators, including Wally Caruana (NGA), Djon Mundine (when at AGNSW), Judith Ryan (National Gallery of Victoria), Margie West (MAGNT) and Mick O'Ferrell (Art Gallery of Western Australia), who undertake a considerable amount of fieldwork in the preparation of exhibitions and are most careful to acknowledge and represent Aboriginal viewpoints. New imperatives have emerged which require responses which go beyond traditional set areas of interests in the disciplines of anthropology and art history. The formation of relationships with the individual artists or representatives of the originating culture, and the creation of opportunities for their contribution to any program concerned with the representation of their culture is now required. As Stephen Bann perceptively wrote

the very enterprise (of museums) seems to call for a new disciplinary synthesis, in which art historians, philosophers and anthropologists can play their part . . . to encourage a new community of scholarship among all who explore the way artefacts, institutions and modes of thought and to give a heightened account of the social, cultural and historical situation in which they arise (Bann 1986:27).

A number of possible directions have been suggested as appropriate for both Australian art and ethnographic museums to follow within the next decade. The suggestions
range from quite specific curatorial options, such as adopting extended labelling, to developing new approaches to formulating exhibitions which reflect the Aboriginal viewpoint. Larger issues have to be resolved by the institutions' policy makers as they involve developing working relationships with Aboriginal communities and the appointment of Aboriginal staff.

Since Aboriginal art has entered art galleries there is no doubt that it is valued and enjoyed for the aesthetic experience it brings to viewers who are generally non-Aboriginal. Aesthetes may argue that explanations (such as extended labelling) interfere with the viewer's response to the aesthetic qualities of the object, and that contextualising objects belongs to the didactic role of ethnographic museums.

A counter-argument is that it is difficult for an audience with minimal knowledge to comprehend Aboriginal artworks, or aesthetic objects from other cultures, and that some explanation makes the art more accessible to those unfamiliar with it (Taylor 1989a:99). Caruana considers extended explanatory labels a necessity, as the notion of 'just looking' and reflecting on the aesthetic qualities of an image/object is passe and the audience wants to be informed.¹ In his view, extended labels should also include the acceptance of practices which better represent customs

¹ A practice other NGA curators are adopting for Australian and other Western art as well as non-Western art.
and the ways in which Aboriginal people wish certain things to be viewed (or concealed).  

Stanton indicated some ways that labelling or annotation can help the viewer better appreciate Aboriginal art:

Neither are all of the items (in the exhibition *Innovative Aboriginal Art*) 'art' in the sense of being 'fine art'; they are, however, artistic expressions of a range of Aboriginal cultures and as such, may be viewed as manifestations of these social systems, each benefiting from local stylistic standards. Many of the pieces may be appreciated on their own merits, through the application of whatever personal aesthetic standards the observer may possess. At the same time . . . the detailed annotations provide, in the absence of the artists themselves, a means of coming to a greater understanding of these works, an appreciation of the cultural context in which they were produced, and the kinds of information they were meant to convey (Stanton 1988:2).

Daniel Thomas, when Director of the Art Gallery of South Australia (AGSA), suggested that Aboriginal people may prefer their art displayed separately, that is, not with other Australian paintings in the context of contemporary Australian art. They want their art validated as highly significant art, but would also prefer art displays to be more

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1 Examples Caruana (1990) cited include the supression of an artist's name for a respectable time after his/her death until cleared by the family; and care taken with certain images/objects which cannot be viewed by people from the originating community and their being notified if such an image/object is to be exhibited, and then only with permission from the owners of the representation giving their consent to a valid reason for its exhibition.
like anthropology displays, with an extended explanation of the special characteristics of Aboriginal traditional beliefs and ways of life. As he says, 'they hope for understanding as well as admiration' (Thomas 1988:7). However, when displaying Aboriginal art in AGSA’s collection Thomas prefers to mingle black and white, so that Aboriginal art can be viewed with widest international comparisons, rather than being in a separate 'ghetto'. he argues that 'No object or idea can remain fully controlled by its originator after it has been let out into the public domain' (Thomas 1988:8).

The problem of whether separate, dedicated areas for the display of Aboriginal art are preferable to the integrated approach has been generally resolved in recent years by the multiplicity of contexts in which Aboriginal art has been displayed. A number of Aboriginal artists, including Tracey Moffatt, Gordon Bennett and Trevor Nickolls, have very successfully competed and exhibited in ‘mainstream’ contexts, and prefer their art to be viewed and evaluated by the criteria of international art (see Chapter 8). Thomas’s criticism of the ‘ghetto’ effect is most applicable to older installations, such as the original installation at AGNSW.

Imaginative curatorship that is conscious of the preferences of Aboriginal people can provide some solutions. Some curators have developed proposals ready for implementation in the immediate future. Luke Taylor suggests that, if the Australian public is receptive to being educated about Aboriginal art, there are a number of possibilities for presenting artworks arranged according to
Aboriginal conceptions of thematic unity. He suggests some examples based on clan affiliations, such as exhibitions by artists who paint a particular subject, use a specific style, or live at a single outstation. Using such information a curator could design an exhibition that included male and female artists, the young and old, and develop ideas about the interlinkage between utilitarian and fine art (Taylor 1989:17).

In 1990 Wally Caruana outlined possible directions which curators of Aboriginal art could follow over the next decade. He outlined several ways by which 'tracks' can be followed, some of which he has since used in the exhibitions *Windows on the Dreaming* (1989), *Flash Art* (1990), *The Art of George Milpurruru* (1993), and which he hopes to further pursue in future exhibitions at the NGA.

One approach he suggested is to look at major figures in Aboriginal art and attempt to acquire a range of their work over the period of their creativity, following how they extend their visual vocabulary, expand the scope of their own individuality and the parameters of innovation. Another track is to follow the influence of significant artists like

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1 In this context ‘tracking’ means to follow the path of an artist’s development or trace relationships between artists. It is used by people working with Aboriginal artists and contains an unspoken reference to Aboriginal trackers who could find their way through the most difficult terrain. Caruana has followed this theme through in the recent exhibitions *The Art of George Milpurruru* (1993) and *The Art of Rover Thomas* (1994).

2 Caruana cited the specific examples of Arnhem Land bark painters George Milpurruru and Jack Wunuwun and the development of Emily Kngwarreye of Utopia from batik to painting on canvas. Since 1990 he has developed single artist exhibitions, the first of which featured the art of George Milpurruru (July 1993), and the second Rover Thomas (1994).
Yirawala and Mawalan on their own and succeeding generations, including the development of women artists in their families. A third possibility is to trace innovations and their probable causes, for example Caruana traces ‘urban’ Aboriginal art back to drawings on paper by William Barak and Tommy McRae in the 1880s, pictures which show a response to contemporary urban life from an Aboriginal point of view.

According to Caruana, an important adjunct to the collection and ‘tracking’ of Aboriginal art is to document the story of Aboriginal art and artists as it continuously unfolds. This now not only requires the recording of the bare biographical details of the artist but, where possible, the curator learning the nuances of the single image and understanding it as a representation and re-presentation of an important story (particularly in the instance of continuing traditional art forms such as bark paintings). As Caruana says, people outside the artist's own clan can now become aware of an artist's individual hand. Despite the communal way of life of Aboriginal communities and conventionalised

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1 For example with Mawalan Marika, his sons Wandjuk and Roy and daughter Banduk Marika; Dawidi and his daughter, Daisy Maynburraharrawuy. One way this concept is coming to fruition is with the planned Wagilag Sisters' Story exhibition, which will examine interpretations of this mythic story by painters of succeeding generations and different regions of Arnhem Land. This exhibition is proposed for 1996 at NGA.

2 In 1994 an exhibition of drawings and paintings by nineteenth century Aboriginal artists William Barak, Tommy McRae and others was held at NGA, and a book by Andrew Sayers (1994) on the subject was released at the same time.
forms of representation of images, every artist has their own story to tell through the images they create.

Discovering what indigenous people have objected to in relation to collections and collection management in the past is helpful in determining future directions. Durrans makes the point that

the concept of the museum may come from the West, but its appeal cannot be explained only in terms of any prestige that Western values may possess: on the contrary, it is attractive to many Third World countries precisely because it offers a means of recapturing, elaborating, or inventing their own distinctive cultural traditions as a countermeasure to past or present domination (Durrans 1986:153).

And as Caruana has said, many Aboriginal artists who were initially indifferent to the NGA's and other similarly committed galleries' collecting their art, now understand and accept that there is a valid purpose and intent in the collections to which they are willing to respond (Caruana 1990).

By ‘tracking’ the development of Aboriginal and Pacific Islands collections it becomes evident that all Australian museums have, throughout their history, consistently reflected the predominant attitudes of the times. As Lumley says, ‘It is through museums that societies represent their relationship to their own history and to that of other cultures and peoples’ (Lumley 1986:iv).

Towards the end of the 1980s museums were moving away from being privileged white institutions. There are a
number of challenges facing Australian museums into the 1990s. With regard to their Aboriginal collections and exhibitions the challenge is to further encourage the rapprochement between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians. In Pacific arena of Pacific art, museums need to acknowledge Australia's position as a Pacific nation and to redress years of neglect in responding to, and appreciating the cultural vitality of Pacific peoples. Museums will do this best by continuing to develop innovative exhibitions in collaboration with indigenous people who recognise the value of the museum's role.
CHAPTER 11: MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL CENTRES IN PACIFIC ISLANDS COUNTRIES: ISSUES FOR THE 1990s

The role of museums in the Pacific: change or die
Soroi Marepo Eoe

INTRODUCTION

This chapter investigates the present circumstances and prospects of some museums and cultural centres in several South Pacific Islands nations. The main objective is to find out whether existing institutions are considered appropriate or relevant to the people whose cultures they represent and, if not, why not. The case studies selected reflect the range of present circumstances faced by museums and cultural centres in South Pacific nations. These are the Papua New Guinea National Museum, the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, the New Caledonia Museum, the planned Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre in New Caledonia, the Cook Islands Museum and the Sir Geoffrey Henry Cultural Centre of the Cook Islands, the Fiji Museum and the Cultural Centre and Marketplace of Fiji.

The chapter is structured in two broad sections. In the first, distinctions between museums and cultural centres are made. It also includes a thumbnail sketch of each of the selected museums and cultural centres and a discussion of
some of the operational difficulties they face. The main area of investigation in the second section is whether museums and cultural centres in South Pacific countries satisfactorily represent indigenous culture(s) and respond to the needs of indigenous people. There are three main issues discussed: firstly, if people still engaged with traditional cultural practices are satisfied with the ways museums and cultural centres present their culture; secondly, if museums and cultural centres satisfactorily present the ancestral heritage and contemporary culture of their nation to their own people and the outside world; thirdly, whether or not they should represent more than their home culture(s).

Material for this study has been drawn from museum publications (Eoe and Swadling 1991), the proceedings of several conferences, a recent report commissioned by the Tourism Council of the South Pacific (TCSP 1990) and other published sources. As well, the writer has conducted fieldwork in Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the Cook Islands.¹

¹ The writer is familiar with some of the institutions discussed and has conducted several interviews with the directors and other staff of the following institutions during periods of fieldwork: PNG National Museum 1988, 1989, 1991; Fiji Museum 1987, 1990; Cook Islands Museum 1987, 1992. I am grateful to all the directors and senior staff of Pacific Islands museums and cultural centres who have communicated their ideas to me; these are recorded in the Acknowledgements section at the front of the thesis.
Distinctions between museums and cultural centres

All the museums and cultural centres featured in this review were established this century. Some were built on the foundations of private museum societies (Fiji Museum, Vanuatu Cultural Centre, Cook Islands Museum); others were developed with assistance from the departing colonial regime (Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery), others again have been built more recently as symbols of the nation's cultural identity (Sir Geoffrey Henry Cultural Centre, Cook Islands).

The Papua New Guinea National Museum, Vanuatu Cultural Centre and Fiji Museum are members of, the International Council of Museums (ICOM), a United Nations instrumentality, and their activities follow (as far as funds and facilities permit) the objectives and functions of museums set out by ICOM (as stated in the Introduction section of the previous chapter).

The role for museums set by ICOM was acknowledged by Nelson Paulius, speaking at the Cultural Heritage in the Pacific Conference at the University of Papua New Guinea in 1989. Paulius further identified objectives of museums from the

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1 Here I am referring to the Cook Islands Museum founded and operated by the Cook Islands Museum and Library Society.

2 The Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery is generally referred to as the Papua New Guinea National Museum, and for convenience I will refer to it by the latter name.
Papua New Guinean perspective and differentiated them from the roles and objectives of cultural centres.\(^1\) As he said:

Museums have five principal roles which include research and documentation, publication, display/exhibition, preservation and conservation and education.

1. Research and documentation

Research into the traditional arts and crafts. Documentation to be preserved in the museum for safe-keeping from damage for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Museums will continue to do research and documentation studies for preservation and conservation.

2. Publications

Museum publications be displayed for people to see and read about their cultures. The museum can develop programs on legends and handicrafts for radio to broadcast in the evenings.

3. Display and exhibition

The display or exhibition of art work and artifacts by the museum is an important role. Traditional arts and crafts will be put on display for people to see and appreciate for their real value and significance.

4. Preservation and conservation of cultural property

Museums will preserve and conserve from damage unique arts and crafts.

5. Education

Museums can develop programs and educate our people and foreign tourists about our rich traditional cultural heritage and values.

\(^1\) As well as the Papua New Guinea National Museum, which has three branches (see below), sixteen of Papua New Guinea's nineteen provinces have provincial cultural centres. It is appreciated that Paulius was speaking of museums and cultural centres in the Papua New Guinea's context, and the nature of institutions and their roles may differ in other Pacific Islands countries.
Principle roles of Cultural Centres

Cultural centres will specialise in housing and preserving special arts and crafts of the local people of each province, district or area. The principal roles of Cultural Centres may include the following:

1. To record, store or preserve local songs, music and legends.
2. To publish and provide publications of local arts and crafts.
3. To develop programs and educate the public about local legends, arts and crafts. Elders can be employed part-time to educate and train children and the public on songs, dances, arts and crafts of the people and the area (Paulius 1991:10-11).

There are four main types of purpose built institutions for the preservation and celebration of cultural heritage in the South Pacific island nations.

• National museums such as the Fiji Museum and the Papua New Guinea National Museum. These are funded by government and follow international museum objectives. They do not identify foreign visitors as primary targets for their activities. These museums, which are also museums of natural history, do not usually feature live performances or stage cultural events other than exhibitions. The Vanuatu Cultural Centre also comes within this category and incorporates the national library, archives and museum.

• National cultural centres such as the Tonga National Centre, Cook Islands Cultural Centre and the planned Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre in New Caledonia. These cultural centres are modern developments, generally funded with assistance from developed countries. Tourists, as well as local residents, are a target for their activities. Live performances
as well as static exhibitions are featured. Cultural centres can also fulfil the function of resource centre with libraries, archives, workshops and educational activities on their premises.

- Provincial cultural centres. Most of Papua New Guinea's nineteen provinces have a Cultural Centre, a model which is also being followed in the Solomon Islands. Provincial cultural centres are primarily local resource centres. They provide space for artists and craftspeople to work, can collect evidence of local material and non-material culture, undertake marketing activities for local products and organise groups from the area to participate in cultural activities.

- Commercial cultural centres. Hawai'i's Polynesian Cultural Centre is the forerunner of these institutions which provide live performances and cultural interpretations which reflect foreign visitor expectations. The Cultural Centre and Marketplace in Fiji is a self-sufficient cultural centre of this nature.

The main distinction between museums and cultural centres is that 'cultural centre' is generally the preferred name for newer institutions\(^1\) and, more importantly, major areas are provided within their structures for performances and workshop spaces where 'live' activities can take place.\(^2\)

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1 Those established since 1960. The tendency emerging in Pacific Islands nations is to build cultural centres, focussing on 'live' culture, rather than museums. The PNG Museum had longer antecedents and also fulfils the role of a natural history museum.

2 The Papua New Guinea National Museum at Waigani has facilities for live entertainment, but until the new Museum Act was passed in 1993 these were rarely utilised due to lack of funding. Its art gallery function also did not operate fully for several years for the same reason.
Some national cultural centres (for example those in Vanuatu, and Tonga) also contain the most significant collections of indigenous material culture in the country.

At the conference on Cultural Heritage in the Pacific hosted by the Papua New Guinea National Museum in 1989, there was considerable debate about rationalising the objectives and roles of museums and cultural centres. The eventual goal is to develop one kind of institution which better serves the requirements of Pacific cultures. It was noted in the proceedings of the conference that

(considerable discussion focussed on the perceived differences between museums and cultural centres . . . . Participants could see no reason why museums could not also function as cultural centres where living aspects of culture are encouraged, and cultural centres might also provide some storage and exhibition facilities in addition to their other functions (Eoe and Swadling 1991:269).

Perhaps this is how they may evolve in the future. But before considering their prospects, a brief outline of the present circumstances of several museums and cultural centres is given.

BRIEF OUTLINE OF SELECTED MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL CENTRES IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC REGION

Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery

Location

The main Museum buildings are located at Waigani (the
bureaucratic centre of Port Moresby), adjacent to National Parliament House. The Museum also has two branch establishments, the Modern History Museum at Gordens, a suburb of Port Moresby, and the J.K. McCarthy Museum in Goroka, Eastern Highlands Province. Since the new Museum Act was ratified by Parliament in September, 1992, the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery has also been given overriding authority for Papua New Guinea’s provincial cultural centres.

History
Important collections were made by two early governors. Sir William McGregor, Lieutenant Governor of British New Guinea, initiated a collecting program from 1889 to 1898. As funds to establish a museum were not forthcoming the Macgregor Collection was sent to Australia for safekeeping. Sir Hubert Murray, Lieutenant Governor of Papua from 1908 to 1940, enacted the Papuan Antiquities Ordinance in 1913 to protect Papuan antiquities. Murray also formed a major collection which was sent to Australia.¹

In 1953 the Department of District Services and Native Affairs began an active collecting program and the Papua New Guinea Public Museum and Art Gallery was established in 1954.

¹ A substantial portion of the Macgregor Collection has been recently repatriated to PNG. Sir Hubert Murray’s Papuan collection was deposited at the Australian Museum in Sydney, then transferred to the Institute of Anatomy in Canberra and is now being documented at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.
It was housed in temporary premises until 1960 when it was given premises in the old hospital building at Paga Hill.

A purpose designed building to house the national collections was commenced in 1975, the year Papua New Guinea achieved Independence. It was funded by a cultural grant from the Australian Government and national funds. This building has five display galleries: the Masterpiece Gallery, the Independence Gallery (regional displays), the Sir Alan Mann Gallery (temporary exhibits), the Life and Land Gallery (natural history and prehistory), and the Michael Somare Gallery (new acquisitions). Other facilities include a central courtyard with live animals and birds, a theaterette, ampitheatre, shop, storerooms, conservation laboratory, photographic laboratory, library, graphics room and offices.

The J.K. McCarthy Museum in the town of Goroka was initiated in 1964 by the Rotary Club of Goroka, assisted by the Eastern Highlands Agricultural Society and Goroka Local Government Council. This Museum opened in 1968. As public collections could not be donated to a private museum it was decided to constitute the Goroka Museum as a branch of the Papua New Guinea National Museum. The J.K. McCarthy Museum collection focuses on items of interest to Highlands provinces and includes artifacts, historical relics, geological specimens, documents and photographs.

The Modern History branch of the Papua New Guinea National Museum has temporary premises at Gordens (in Port Moresby). Its focus is modern technology and it also acts as a repository of war relics. A number of aircraft, vehicles and
modern weaponry are in its collections. A new building has been planned and this branch of the Museum will be relocated near Jackson's Airport.

Ownership/Control

The Papua New Guinea National Museum is government owned. The Museum Act was repealed in 1983 and until the passing of a new Museum Act in September 1992, responsibility for it was located, from time to time, in a range of Ministerial portfolios: first Civil Aviation, then Culture and Tourism, then Education, and finally, Tourism and Liquor Licensing. Under these diverse administrations, and because of severe budgetary constraints, it was difficult for the Museum even to keep up routine maintenance, change or renovation of displays or to add to collections. Even though it is one of the few museums in the South Pacific region which has good museological facilities and employs specialised staff, its activities were extremely curtailed by budgetary restrictions. Revenue earned from museum activities was deducted from the annual budget, further inhibiting revenue earning activities.

Following the passing of the new Museum Act in 1992, the Museum has received a higher budgetary allocation and is set to implement a five-year plan which will enable it to employ new staff, revivify its activities and upgrade facilities. The latest developments were outlined by the Director, Soroi Eoe at the Pacific Arts Association's 5th

1 The annual budget of PNG Kina 600,000 did not keep pace with inflation and 98% was committed to fixed costs (TCSP 1990:14).
International Symposium in the 'Mission of Museums' session. These include the re-establishment of the Museum's art gallery function with an exhibition program and an artist-in-residence program, and the employment of a performance group-in-residence to demonstrate Papua New Guinean dance and music.

Objectives:

The 1992 Museum Act was only recently gazetted and a copy is not available to the writer, so the objectives contained in it cannot be reported. However, as a member of ICOM, the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery is committed to observing the international objectives set for museums, viz. collecting, conserving, curating, displaying and conducting research and scholarship. In a recent essay the Director, Soroi Eoe, wrote that the National Museum takes the position that a people's culture is more than the objects that they produce. 'Culture' includes the shared ideas, beliefs, values and practices of a society. We believe that it is the museum's responsibility to preserve and promote all aspects of culture in Papua New Guinea... as much as possible, we must record the meanings of the objects in our collections for the people who made and used these objects (Eoe 1991:28).

Fiji National Museum

Location:
Thurston Gardens, Suva.
History:
The Museum dates back to 1904. It was founded by the Fijian Society whose members wished to preserve Fijian artifacts and objects for the purposes of scientific enquiry. The early material culture collections orientation meant that, unlike most national museums in the South Pacific, the Fiji Museum has a good representative collection of Fijian material dating back to last century. The Museum has moved premises several times, but in 1955 moved into its present location, a building funded by the Carnegie Foundation. The building was extended in 1971. A program of collecting Fijian oral traditions commenced in 1971 and in 1976 the South Pacific Archive of Music was transferred to the Museum. In the 1970s educational programs were introduced and by 1979 there was a marked increase in the number of Fijians using the Museum, including school visits. In the 1990s interactive workshops, including wood-carving demonstrations using traditional tools and evening story-telling sessions around a bowl of kava have been introduced.

Ownership/control
In its early history the Museum catered for the members of the Museum Society. It became a statutory body in 1929 and has a Board of Trustees appointed by the Minister for Women and Culture. Despite having plans for much needed extensions and extended staffing levels since the early 1980s, the budget has

been pegged at $F100,000 since 1985, 92% of which is for salaries.\(^1\) Although it has had stability of directors, the trustees are often changed with changes in senior government appointments.

**Objectives**

To achieve internationally agreed museum objectives for the human and natural history of Fiji and to act as a national and national resource for all concerned with the subject (TSCP 1990:15).

**Vanuatu Cultural Centre**

**Location**

Main Street, Port Vila, Vanuatu.

**History**

The Cultural Centre initially catered for the needs of the expatriates who set it up in 1954. The first building was funded by the New Hebrides Condominium government but was unsuitable for museum purposes and was mainly used as a library. Material culture began to be collected by the first Curator, Michael Jean Charpotier. Little had been done by the combined English/French government (of the then New

\(^1\) Middleton's (TCSP 1990) brief assessment of the Museum contains the comment 'Current layout of museum (under review) is confusing to visitors. No orientation, no guides, limited interpretive/linking panels at present'. Since the last exhibition officer left in the mid-1980s the display has been left the way it was; budgetary restraints have meant the position could not be filled.
Hebrides) to encourage the numerous Melanesian cultures of the islands, but this changed when the country, renamed Vanuatu, gained independence in 1978. Kirk Huffman (curator 1977 to 1989) encouraged considerable local involvement, attracting the interest of the Council of Chiefs and the general public to the Cultural Centre. In 1978 the first National Arts Festival was planned and carried out by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre, focussing attention on the extent and value of local cultures. Considerable time has been devoted to the Oral Traditions Project which began in 1975 and is funded by UNESCO. Volunteers, who will be based in the islands, are trained in collecting oral history, songs and legends, and in the use of still and video cameras, etc. Two publications based on the oral histories thus collected have been released and more are planned.

The building was extensively damaged by a cyclone in 1987, prompting the Vanuatu government to draw up plans for a new Cultural Centre which would include a museum, archives, library, crafts shop, theatre, restaurant, kastom (traditional) village, meeting places for chiefs and women and offices. This has not yet (1993) eventuated.

Ownership/control
Government owned with a Board of Control appointed by and responsible to the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Vanuatu Cultural Centre received support from the first Prime Minister, Sir Walter Lini, and the Council of Chiefs. Funding levels are
around VT seven million and have remained unchanged in recent years.

Objectives
To achieve internationally agreed museum objectives for the human and natural history of Vanuatu, including archaeological responsibilities. To act as a national resource for research and scholarship (TSCP 1990:16).

New Caledonia Museum

Location:
Noumea

History
In 1905 the Colonial Museum was established on one floor of the Blenheim Library in Noumea with the objective of collecting artifacts for colonial and international exhibitions in Europe. The New Caledonia Museum was opened in 1971. As well as its Pacific collections it had displays of ornithology and minerals. In 1984 the Museum was renovated and now exclusively displays archaeological and ethnographic material in permanent and temporary exhibitions. Many of the displays, including canoes and craft, a hut from Lifou and massive sculptures, focus on Kanak culture but, in the view of its present Director, Emmanuel Kasarherou (1991:165), it does not attract many Kanak visitors because 'the museum corresponds poorly with the ideas of traditional New Caledonian society'.
Ownership/control

Government owned, under the direction of the Services des Musees et Du Patrimoine (Museum and Cultural Heritage Department). Yearly attendance is around 2,000 school children and 17,000 other visitors, mainly tourists (no formal records kept).

Objectives:

Overall the Museum’s objectives are in accordance with those of ICOM. Elsewhere, the Director, Emmanuel Kasarherou (1991:166) stated ‘the Museum is a kind of bridge between the two main cultures in New Caledonia, European and Melanesian. It has to be the repository of Kanak culture and a place where Kanaks feel at home. It also has to be a place where Kanak culture is shown to others. The mission of the museum is to deal with this duality’.

The Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre, New Caledonia

Although it is still in the planning process, it is thought relevant to include this Cultural Centre here to bring up to date developments in New Caledonia.

Location

To be built on an eight hectare site in Noumea as a Kanak place.
History

The Agence de Developpment de la Culture Kanak (ADCK) is the result of the 1988 Matignon Accords, following a demand of the assassinated Kanak leader Jean-Marie Tjibaou (pers. comm. Deteix 1992). It has been operating since 1990 and will oversee the building of the cultural centre named after the Kanak leader. The cultural centre will contain exhibition spaces for Kanak and other Pacific cultures, a 400 seat theatre, a multi-media library and workshop space for visiting visual and performing artists.

Ownership/control

Funded by the French Government through ADCK. At present (1993) the Director is Marie-Claude Tjibaou (sister of Jean-Marie Tjibaou). According to ADCK publicity

the Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre is conceived as a tool to affirm the identity of the Kanak culture, but also as a way to symbolise this cultural identity. By intermingling Kanak architectural tradition with contemporary technology, it symbolises a culture firmly rooted in its tradition and opened towards the future (ADCK 1992:52).

Objectives:

Documentation, promotion and development of Kanak heritage, both inside and outside the country; promotion of contemporary forms of expression of this culture; study, observation and follow up of the development of cultural practices; promotion of cultural exchange, particularly within the South Pacific (ADCK 1992).
The Cook Islands Museum (operated by the Cook Islands Museum and Library Society)\(^1\)

**Location**

Avarua, Rarotonga

**History**

Araitia Tepuretu was an active supporter of the initiative to get a museum going in 1947.\(^2\) However the idea of a museum languished as the New Zealand administration did not come up with financial support for the Museum's construction for seventeen years. In 1964 (when the Cook Islands were preparing for self-government) the Museum was built. It was operated by volunteers of the Cook Islands Museum and Library Society until 1985 when the government appointed a full-time director. The Museum still relies on volunteer services for many of its needs. The few prize Cook Islands objects in its collection (less than 2,000 pieces ranging from archaeology to

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\(^1\) There are presently (1994) two national museums in the Cook Islands. The Cook Islands Museum, run by the Cook Islands Museum and Library Society, was operated by volunteers between 1964 and 1985. In 1985 a full-time staff member, Makiuti Tongia, was appointed as Director, a position funded by the Cook Islands Government and another staff position was funded in 1987. Funding was withdrawn in 1992 but this museum continued to operate with volunteer labour.

In October 1992, at the time of the Pacific Festival of Arts in Rarotonga, the Cook Islands National Museum (housed in the Sir Geoffrey Henry Cultural Centre) was opened. It is one of eight divisions of the Ministry of Cultural Development and its staff positions are funded by the government (A. Tongia 1993:4).

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\(^2\) Apparently Tepuretu, one of many Cook Islanders who served in World War II had seen and been impressed by museums abroad and wished to start one in the Cook Islands. The museum is on the land of the ariki Makea.
contemporary art) are on long term loan from overseas museums. In 1987 the Museum received assistance from the Bishop Museum with conservation and exhibition techniques and instituted bilingual labelling (Tutai 1991:201-203).

In 1991 to 1992 the Museum and Library Society had to increase their efforts to keep the institution afloat as political moves were made to withdraw government funding from it on the rationale that the Cook Islands Cultural Centre (including the new museum) being constructed would make the older Museum obsolete. However the Cook Islands Museum survives for the time being with increased local volunteer support buoyed up by moral support and assistance in kind from overseas museums.¹

Ownership/control
Cook Islands Museum and Library Society. In 1992 the Cook Islands Government withdrew its support which funded the paid positions. Money for the most important (museum director and librarian) was being raised locally and all other positions were filled by volunteers. Attempts to close it down were unsuccessful as the premises are on land donated for a museum and the collections are loaned to, or owned, and managed by the Museum and Library Society.²

¹ In 1992 Adrienne Kaeppler, Curator of Anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, volunteered to reorganise the displays. She was assisted in the re-organisation of displays by Benji Bennington of the East/West Centre, Hawai‘i, and volunteers from the Cook Islands Museum and Library Society.

² Members and volunteer staff of the Cook Islands Museum and Library Society expressed their concerns for the Museum to international visitors
Objectives
No particular objectives stated but 'we aim to have exhibitions relevant to our culture . . . . While the Museum has tried to cater for this visiting population (tourists) the emphasis is still on providing a museum for our people. Going bilingual in our labels is a step in that direction as also are the arranged school visits' (Tutai 1990: 204).

Sir Geoffrey Henry Cook Islands Cultural Centre

Location
Avarua, Rarotonga.

History
Plans for the construction of the Cultural Centre solidified in 1988 when the Cook Islands' bid for the 6th Pacific Festival of Arts to be held in 1992 was successful. Although it was stated by the Prime Minister\(^1\) that the Cultural Centre named after him was for the Cook Islands people to celebrate their cultural identity, it is likely that the Pacific Festival of Arts to be held in the Cook Islands in 1992 influenced the timing of the Cultural Centre's construction. The building was funded by a $NZ sixteen million loan from the wealthier Pacific nation of Nauru. It houses the Cook Islands National Museum (see including some curators of overseas museums and scholars visiting Rarotonga, at the time of the 6th Festival of Pacific Arts in 1992.

\(^1\) Referred to in his a speech at the opening ceremony, 20 October, 1992.
footnote below), a library/resource centre, 2,000 seat auditorium, offices and workshop areas.

Ownership/control
Cook Islands Government. Board of Directors and staff appointed by the Cook Islands Government. Entrance fees charged for performances.

Objectives
None officially stated, but the Cultural Centre is intended to provide Cook Islanders and visitors with exhibitions and live performances of Cook Islands and other regional cultures.

The role of the Cook Islands National Museum housed in the Sir Geoffrey Henry Cultural Centre is, according to its curator, Arerangi Tongia (1993:6): to collect, preserve and display its ethnographic materials; to maintain an educational program for school students and the public; to receive and relay information and assistance to regional and international museums. It also provides access to resources on Cook Islands and Pacific cultures and encourages research and scholarship and the Government anthropologist's office is now situated there (pers. comm. A. Tongia 1992).

The Cultural Centre and Marketplace of Fiji

Location
Pacific Harbour, Viti Levu.
History

The cultural centre complex was opened in 1978 as part of Pacific Harbour, a huge tourist development incorporating residential villas, resort, sports facilities and retail outlet. The fortified island surrounded by a canal, and the Fijian village and temple on it take up most of the nineteen acre site. The village, temple and fortifications are full-size reconstructions of a Rewa Delta village at the time of European discovery. All buildings, dance performances, and crafts had to be fully researched. Research and development is still encouraged to attract the interest and engagement of Fijians with the Cultural Centre, for example the project to build a full-size ocean going canoe and periodic invitations to davinicu (traditional dance owners) to pass on their knowledge in the prescribed manner (pers. comm. Rasigatale 1987).

Ownership/control

Leased by the corporation which owns Pacific Harbour to a company (Mak Production Ltd) who operate it on a five year lease from the Fiji Provident Fund who own the land and structures (TCSP 1990:14). The retail area is separately leased. The Managing Director, Manoa Rasigatale, is also Director of the Dance Theatre of Fiji, whose members provide the entertainment and demonstrate traditional skills and crafts for tourists and local visitors.
Objectives

To present the most authentic possible live interpretations and display of the historic Fijian way of life and develop knowledge of traditional crafts, at the same time generating a revenue surplus (TCSP 1990:14).

OPERATIONAL DIFFICULTIES FACING MUSEUMS AND CULTURAL CENTRES IN THE PACIFIC ISLANDS

The following section outlines some of the problems faced by museums in the sample group due to budgetary constraints, adequate staffing, lack of acquisition funds, difficulties with repatriation and so on. Sometimes partial solutions have been found to overcome particular problems. But short-term solutions do not resolve many of the fundamental long-term problems facing South Pacific museums.

Museums and cultural centres throughout the South Pacific have relatively small curatorial and other specialist staff and limited prospects of permanent positions being funded by their respective national governments (Swadling and Eoe 1991, TCSP 1990). The training of museum personnel usually has to be subsidised by aid agencies and assisted by museums overseas. Despite their goodwill in offering training, overseas museums may represent the traditions and values of indigenous people in a different context and manner than that required in the trainee’s home country.

Another problem affecting the small number of South Pacific Islanders trained as anthropologists, curators and conservationists is the overload that falls on people in these
positions. Persons in charge of national cultural institutions are subjected to some intense pressures arising out of their positions. Museum directors are sought after to represent their institutions at both national and international levels: for example, they are constantly called on to attend conferences and represent their government in cultural matters. Of necessity they are also involved in diplomacy and local politics in order to acquire and maintain adequate funding levels and project funds for their institutions (pers. comm. Eoe 1988, 1990; Makiuti Tongia 1987). The director of one national Museum attributed the failure of his marriage to his job - the necessity of frequent absences from home on museum business prevented him from adequately fulfilling family and kinship obligations.¹

In some instances it has proved difficult for museum directors to get governments to create new public service positions to comply with the objectives of the museum. In 1987 the then Director of the Cook Islands Museum, Makiuti Tongia, said he had been attempting for three years to have the position of Archaeologist established and a Cook Islander trained for the job (pers. comm. M. Tongia 1987).

In general in South Pacific nations, there is a lack of appropriately trained personnel to fill museum requirements for research, display and conservation. Volunteer labour does not necessarily provide a solution, as Fergus Clunie, then Director of the Fiji Museum explained (pers. comm. 1987). Local

¹ Name withheld by request.
people cannot afford to do unpaid work and, unless expatriate volunteers had special skills and could work unsupervised, the task of supervision further burdened the already overworked staff.

The activities of all the national museums in this review are severely restricted because of low budgetary allocations for their operations, generally because culture has a low priority in the perceptions of South Pacific nations' governments.\(^1\) The level of funding provided by government usually provides only for minimal operating, staffing and maintenance. Unforeseen circumstances, such as cyclone damage (Vanuatu) can bring Museum operations to a near halt, sometimes for years until funds are found for replacement. Museums are also discouraged from undertaking fund-raising activities, or raising revenue by other means (such as by charging entrance fees); for example, in the case of Papua New Guinea, the Museum's budget would be reduced by the amount raised in accordance with government regulations (pers. comm. Eoe 1993).

Enforced reliance on funding from international aid agencies to enable or complete projects can lead to frustrating situations. For instance the Solomon Islands Culture Fund, (Australia is the aid donor) was allocated to the building of a new wing and photographic studio for the Solomon Islands Museum. Cutbacks in aid meant funds for this project were held

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\(^{1}\) Every Pacific Island national museum and cultural centre attending the Cultural Heritage in the Pacific conference reported crippling financial constraints. See their reports in Eoe & Swadling (1991).
back and no progress made on the building for over a year (1988 to 1989). The $A five million Cultural Fund given to Papua New Guinea in 1975 by the Australian Government has been exhausted and has not been replaced by a further grant. This grant established the Papua New Guinea National Museum, the National Cultural Council and assisted other major projects such as the Gogodala Cultural Centre but, as the fund has not been topped up or replaced, the level of activity has not been maintained nor have new projects been developed.

It is difficult for national museums and cultural centres to develop plans for coherent progress of their institution. Most frequently project funding has to come from outside sources. Lawrence Foanaota, Director of the Solomon Islands National Museum commented that:

Although the National Museum is a government institution funded through the Ministry of Home Affairs, the annual allocations are not sufficient to cover all the activities and services . . . funding for extra projects/programs has come from outside donors such as the British, Australian, New Zealand, USA and Japanese Governments and other agencies like the Gulbenkian Foundation, South Pacific Commission and UNESCO (Foanaota 1991:110)

Although assistance from aid programs, cultural and philanthropic foundations is welcomed, these sources sometimes have their own priorities to which the museum has to be amenable in order to get any funds. However at times such agencies do respond to a project initiated by the museum.
A low budget for acquisitions is another difficulty faced by national museums. Fergus Clunie, when Director of the Fiji Museum in 1987, commented that museum personnel had to show dedication and initiative to acquire or repatriate important objects which they could not afford to buy on the international tribal art market. Some of Clunie's successes on behalf of the Fiji Museum are interesting solutions to the problem of acquisition and repatriation. In Clunie's estimation, the Fiji Museum's publication program has been of value in assisting people to recognise and appreciate Fijian artefacts and has led directly to several donations. The most significant of these was the return of a rare figure by the great-granddaughter of the Rev. John Hunt, an early missionary in Fiji. The figure, described as an 'ancestral idol' by Hunt, had been taken by him from a bure kalou (gods' house or temple) and kept in the missionary's family until its return was negotiated following the publication of Hunt's journals (pers. comm. Clunie 1987).

Exchange between museums is another effective way of acquiring specific objects when there is no acquisition budget. For example, the Fiji Museum could offer to an overseas museum a collection of relatively commonplace prehistoric Fijian pottery sherds in exchange for an object it wished to acquire. Overseas museums would generally be happy to comply, if they valued the offer of Fijian pottery sherds.

1 As well as the journal Domodomo, the Fiji Museum has reprinted early books about Fiji written by missionaries, traders and civil servants. These early histories often have illustrations, as well as text, that can help with the identification of important objects which are in collections outside Fiji.
However, in one particular case Clunie sought to repatriate a particular *waisekaseka* (whales tooth necklace) connected to Chief Cakobau from the Cambridge Museum of Anthropology. Although the Fiji Museum had none of this particular 'stubby-toothed' variety and the Cambridge Museum of Anthropology had several of these objects, Cambridge would not oblige. Clunie later determined that the *waisekaseka* had originated from the Methodist Mission and had been loaned to the Cambridge Museum of Anthropology by the Overseas Mission Board. Clunie approached representatives of the Methodist Mission who retrieved the loaned object and donated it to the Fiji Museum, proving to Clunie that, so far as early collections of Pacific Islands material are concerned, 'mission societies are the soft underbelly of many Museum collections' (pers. comm. Clunie 1987).

The most significant repatriation project to a national Museum to date has been the return of a major portion of the Macgregor Collection to Papua New Guinea. Named after the Lieutenant Governor of British New Guinea (1888 to 1898) who was responsible for its accumulation, the Macgregor Collection was sent to Australia for safekeeping, with the intention that it be returned.\(^1\) Papua New Guinea authorities began to investigate the possibility of repatriating the Macgregor Collection from Australia in the early 1970s and a commitment

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\(^1\) The Queensland Museum held a substantial part of the Macgregor Collection, but parts of the collection were dispersed to the Australian Museum and National Museum of Victoria. Macgregor also sent a collection of around 1000 objects collected between 1888 to 1898 to the University of Aberdeen Anthropology Museum in Scotland.
to return 60% of the collection was negotiated with the Queensland Museum in 1974 to 1975. A new building for the Papua New Guinea Museum and Art Gallery with adequate storage facilities was completed in 1979 and the five-year repatriation program commenced. 2,100 items have been returned and 1,697 retained by the Queensland Museum (pers. comm. Michael Quinnell).

The repatriation of objects from earlier periods fulfils ICOM's ideals, and recognises the importance of redressing the imbalance in collections between colonial and colonised countries. The objects being repatriated are significant because they represent the cultural heritage of the originating cultures, and also because they reflect the changing relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous cultures. However, whether or not major international museums feel they have a moral obligation to repatriate objects, they are unlikely to do so until adequate facilities for their storage and preservation exist in the museums designated to receive the items.

Separate cultural institutions dedicated to art, like art galleries in Western societies (see previous Chapter), do not exist in Pacific Islands countries. Some newer Pacific museums and cultural centres, such as the Papua New Guinea Museum also encompass the function of art gallery in their charter. But most museums and cultural centres are not in a position to extensively acquire, exhibit and otherwise promote the work of contemporary artists (in this context artists of the present day). Clunie (pers. comm. 1987) explained that this
is not because they lack the will or initiative to do so, but because they do not have the funds to initiate exhibitions or finance requisites such as framing, photography, producing catalogues and wall texts. As well, at the Fiji Museum, the positions for exhibition staff were discontinued, due to lack of funds. Eoe (pers. comm. 1989) pointed out that storage and conservations facilities are often inadequate or in poor condition, and, in most cases, there are no funds for acquisitions.¹

In 1974 to 1975, at the time the present premises of the Papua New Guinea National Museum at Waigani were being built, there were some funds earmarked from the Australian cultural aid grant for acquisitions. Some works by contemporary Papua New Guinea artists were collected between 1975 to 1980, but in an unsystematic manner. Barry Craig, an anthropologist who worked at the Museum during this period, was critical of the approach of then Director, Geoffrey Mosuwodoga, towards contemporary art. Mosuwodoga was a graduate of the National Arts School himself and, in Craig's view, should have been much more attentive to what his fellow artists were producing at the time (pers. comm. Craig 1992).

The following example of a recent exhibition of contemporary Papua New Guinea art, with which the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery was considerably

¹ Storm damage to the roof of the Papua New Guinea National Museum in the early 1980s (precise date not related) had caused leaks into the storerooms below. Successive governments ignored many requisitions for repairs and maintenance from the Museum. This delayed the repatriation of the Macgregor Collection until the requisite repairs were effected (pers. comm. Eoe 1989, B. Craig 1991).
involved, highlights some of the problems faced by South Pacific museums in their acquisition and representation of contemporary culture.

The planning, curating and touring of the exhibition *Luk Luk Gen! (Look Again!) Contemporary Art from Papua New Guinea* was initiated by the writer following the 1988 State of the Arts in the Pacific Seminar at the University of Papua New Guinea. At that conference a number of people interested in contemporary visual arts recommended that attempts should be made to develop exhibitions of contemporary art from Pacific nations to tour within the region and overseas.

A project team was formed, comprised of Susan Cochrane Simons (project manager), Marsha Berman (anthropologist), Hugh Stevenson (retired art educator and major collector of Papua New Guinea contemporary art) and Ace Bourke (gallery director). From the outset the project received the full support of the present Director of the Papua New Guinea National Museum, Soroi Eoe. Eoe provided the workspace for the members project team when they had to be in Port Moresby, and the use of a storage room to assemble, photograph and catalogue the works. As he said, while the Museum could provide space and some services (like use of the Museum's vehicle) it had no funds available for such projects and could not spare staff. But the enthusiasm and moral support of the Director was advantageous to the project in many ways. The exhibition can be categorised as an outside-funded project supported by the Museum.
One of the first tasks of the project team was to devise the best method of stacking and storing works in preparation, especially rare works on paper, and improving the storage system of other works in the collection. The cataloguing of the Museum's collection, which had been commenced as a volunteer task by a National Arts School lecturer, was completed by members of the project team. Prior to this, the works of contemporary art which had been collected by the Papua New Guinea Museum were stored in a museum storeroom where framed works were loosely stacked against walls and works on paper kept in a shabby set of map drawers. The works were not catalogued, nor were adequate conservation measures taken (such as interleaving the prints with acid-free tissue paper). None of the staff were specialised in collecting contemporary works of art.

All funds for the exhibition had to be raised from Australian agencies, or sources outside Papua New Guinea. With the exception of Kodak (Aust.), Australian corporations with major investments in Papua New Guinea declined to sponsor the project. On the other hand, Papua New Guinea corporations, Air Niugini and The Papua New Guinea Development Bank gave substantial assistance in kind. The University, Museum and National Arts School were very generous with every facility they could offer. The exhibition exists because of good will, it was substantially under-funded in many respects.

1 No-one on the team was a conservator, nor is there a conservator in PNG, but their previous curatorial experience was sufficient to provide basic knowledge of storage methods and minimum conservation techniques.
The 1988 Pacific Festival of Arts in Townsville had been a significant factor in generating Australian interest in contemporary art from the region. The Perc Tucker Regional Gallery in Townsville became the commissioning gallery for *Luk Luk Gen!*. As the Director, Ross Searle said, he wished to build upon the interest established at the Festival. The exhibition toured seven venues in Australia, an interesting (and somewhat deliberate) mix of regional art galleries, major museums and an Aboriginal venue.1

While the Australian tour was in progress the project team continued to negotiate with New Zealand and other Pacific venues for *Luk Luk Gen!* to get exposure in the South Pacific region. New Caledonia was the first to express its interest in the exhibition (Kasaherou pers. comm. March 1990), pending its ability to raise the funds necessary to import the exhibition. New Zealand responded and NZ Exhibitour arranged a tour of seven venues in New Zealand from December 1992 to October 1993. It took some time for the New Caledonia Museum to organise the funding, but *Luk Luk Gen!* was exhibited at there in 1994.

Other South Pacific museums expressed great interest in *Luk Luk Gen!*, and regret that they couldn't host the exhibition in their country. Going back to the museums and cultural centres described in this paper, the reasons can be briefly summarised:

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1 Perc Tucker Regional Gallery, Townsville; Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide; Ballarat Fine Art Gallery; Canberra School of Art Gallery; Brisbane City Hall Gallery; Australian Museum, Sydney.
Fiji Museum - no temporary exhibition space, no funding for touring exhibitions.
Cook Islands Museum - no temporary exhibition space, no funding for touring exhibitions.
Vanuatu Cultural Centre - cyclone damage to buildings required reconstruction of exhibition space which had not yet occurred.
Bishop Museum, Hawai‘i - no funds available.

WHETHER EXISTING INSTITUTIONS ARE CONSIDERED RELEVANT AND APPROPRIATE TO THE CULTURES THEY REPRESENT

This section distinguishes between the types of museums established in South Pacific Islands countries and museums in Western countries, such as the Australian museums discussed in the last chapter. It then investigates claims that there were precedents for museums in indigenous South Pacific cultures. Thirdly, it analyses how museums and cultural centres may, or may not, be relevant institutions for different groups within the communities they serve, and how they assist in the formulation of national cultural identity. In the last section the following groups are briefly considered in relation to the museums' activities to different groups' needs:
- politicians and others developing nationalist ideologies;
- groups maintaining traditional practises;
- provincial communities;
- urban dwellers, particularly youths;
- contemporary visual and performing artists;
- non-indigenous residents and tourists.

The establishment of museums in the South Pacific region

Before considering how relevant and appropriate museums and cultural centres are to the above groups, the background to the establishment of museums in the South Pacific region is explored a little further. Which interest groups established the museums and cultural centres in the South Pacific region, and what purposes they were meant to fulfill, has some bearing on their level of acceptance by different groups in Pacific societies.

One legacy of the colonial era in the Pacific is that there are different types of museums in countries with majority indigenous populations and those with minority indigenous populations. In the nineteenth century, and well into the twentieth century, the colonial powers France, Britain, Germany, the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand amassed vast collections of ethnographic material from the territories under their control. The colonial hierarchy is also reflected in the museums established in the South Pacific region in the mid-to late nineteenth century.

Museums in Australia, New Zealand and Hawai'i occupy prestigious purpose-built buildings. In comparison to most of the museums and cultural centres in South Pacific Islands nations, their exhibition, storage and conservation areas are well resourced and their staff levels and research projects adequately (if not ideally) financed. Until very recently the
ethnographic collections in museums in Australia and New Zealand countries reflected the interests and cultural domination of their predominantly European populations (see previous chapter for Australian examples).

There are significant differences between the nature and size of museums established in the countries which were colonial powers and those which were established in colonies. For example, in contrast to the wealth of cultural material in metropolitan France's ethnographic museums, there is one small museum in French Polynesia. The Musee de Tahiti et ses Isles is scarcely adequate to represent the various Polynesian cultures of the five main archipelagos of French Polynesia.

The Bernice P. Bishop Museum in Honolulu, Hawai'i is notable because, instead of being founded by colonisers, its benefactor was Princess Bernice Pauahi Bishop (1831 to 1884), the last of the Kamehameha family of chiefs which ruled Hawai'i. Childless herself, she passed on her considerable fortune and land (about one-ninth of the Kingdom) to educate the youth of Hawai'i and preserve the Kingdom's vanishing material heritage. The generous endowment of Bernice P. Bishop and the donation of Hawaiian antiquities and other articles from the last ranking members of the Kamehameha family formed the basis of its significant collection of Hawaiian antiquities. As well, the foresight of Bishop's husband and the first curator, William Brigham, to build a Polynesian Hall (1894) and a Hawaiian exhibition complex (1902) set the scope and direction of the Bishop Museum well into the 20th century. It has excelled as a research institution
and has an international reputation in fieldwork and publications on Polynesian societies and their forms of cultural expression (Rose 1991:227-230).

In several South Pacific countries with predominantly indigenous populations, national museums were started in the colonial era to serve the interests of amateur scientists and collectors, while others were the colonial power's parting gift to the new nation at independence. A number of Pacific countries, including Tuvalu, Nauru and Kiribati do not have either national museums or cultural centres. In two other countries they have been very recently established. Tonga's Cultural Centre, funded by the Japanese Government, only opened in 1989. Although the Cook Islands has had a small, privately operated museum since 1964, in 1992 the government-owned Sir Geoffrey Henry Cultural Centre of the Cook Islands was opened in time for the 6th Pacific Festival of Arts in Rarotonga.

In others the existence of museums is questioned by traditional communities to whom the concept of a centralised, state-run organisation, which takes the position of being the collector and purveyor of cultural truth, is foreign.

Samoa provides an example of the last situation. Samoa, first a colony of Germany, was divided in 1918 into Western Samoa, a colony of New Zealand until 1964, and American Samoa, which is still a territory of the USA. The Jean P. Haydon Museum on the island of Tuitula is the only one in both American and Western Samoa. According to John Enright (1992), Samoans have long proved indifferent to the
institutionalisation of their culture and this is reflected by
the present state of the museum. To quote Enright:

(The Museum's) exhibition wing is now entirely unusable, indeed
unsafe, because for more than five years now the (American
Samoa) government has refused to perform essential repairs . . . .
The museum's collection itself has dwindled drastically as
opportunististic administrators have treated it as a warehouse of
booty . . . . The current Governor, in his third year of office, has not
yet seen fit to appoint a new board of directors for the museum to
attempt to address these issues (Enright 1992:9).

The value of assembling collections of objects is
sometimes considered a questionable priority where customary
cultural activity is still being practised, according to Kirk
Huffman, Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (pers. comm.
1989). The Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VCC) has a collection of
objects representative of the material culture of all districts
of Vanuatu, but it does not have adequate temperature-
controlled facilities for the storage of the existing collection,
let alone for accumulating more. As many of the types of
objects in the collection are still being made in Vanuatu,
Huffman argued that the VCC should concentrate on acquiring
knowledge of local cultures, including the manufacture and use
of objects, through the media of audio and videotape. (Huffman
pers. comm. 1987).
At various forums and in several publications, some Pacific Islanders have suggested that museums and cultural centres had precedents in indigenous cultures, albeit of a different nature to the institutions of today. In a 1987 interview with Makiuti Tongia, then Director of the Cook Islands Museum in Rarotonga, Tongia challenged the notion that museums did not exist in Pacific cultures until they were introduced by Europeans. He pointed out that there were Polynesian institutions which fulfilled at least some of the roles now undertaken by museums. He also expressed this view at the Pacific Arts Association Symposium in Honolulu in 1988 and it has now been taken up by other Cook Islands scholars.¹ At the Cultural Heritage in the Pacific Seminar in 1989, Vaine Tutai, the Assistant Director of the Cook Islands Museum, said:

Going back to pre-contact times, the museum was known as the Are-Vananga, Are-Kariei, Are-Korero and Pia-Atua . . . .

Are Vananga referred to the house of esoteric knowledge, where astronomy was taught and also the history of the people . . . . Are Kareie was the entertainment house where the art of warfare was also taught . . . . Are Korero was where history was taught and the Pia-Atua highlighted religion.

The staff who manned these institutions were called Taunga or experts in their own right. They displayed our objects of mana and dressed and fed them on the marae or sacred grounds. The house

¹ Most recently in a paper given by Arerangi Tongia, Assistant Curator, Cook Islands National Museum, at the Pacific Arts Association Symposium, Adelaide 1993. Tongia nominates the Pre-Contact Institutions as Pia-Atua, Are-Korero, Are-Karioi, Are-Pana, Are-Toa and Are-Vananga and explains their various roles (Tongia 1993:2-3).
where these things were kept was tapu just like our storerooms are today. But the open ground of the marae was public and served as a kind of open-air display room (Tutai 1991:201).

Other Pacific Islanders have presented concepts of what may constitute a museum different to the ideas prevalent in Western culture. For example, the Governor of Easter Island (Rapanui), Sergio Rapu Haoa, stated at the Pacific Arts Symposium (part of the 1992 Pacific Festival of Arts in Rarotonga, Cook Islands), that the entire island of Rapanui was an open-air museum. It could be viewed as such not only because it was the site of cultural activities of the ancestors, but also because restoration, conservation, viewing and the other functions of a museum took place out of doors at the moai (massive stone figures) sites. Sidney Moko Mead (1984, 1990) and other scholars of Maori traditions (Hanson and Hanson 1990) have stated that the marae is the focus of cultural activity for New Zealand Maori. A marae (carved meeting house) is the home of an iwi (tribe) and, in particular a hapu (sub-tribe).1 Mead explains that marae characteristically belong to a hapu which

is the art-producing and art owning group . . . identity with this art is strongest, not only with woodcarving, but with traditional dances and music, with cloak-making, basketry and so on. (On the marae) tribal art is very close to the individual members of the hapu and it forms an

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1 The tribe, Ngati Awa, of which he writes, has several sub-tribes including Ngati Hokopu, Taiwhakaea, Ngati Pukeko, Patuawai, Te Rangihouhiri, Ngati Hikakino and eight other hapu (Mead 1990:272).
essential part of one's sense of being human and cultured (Mead 1990:269). Adopting more features of traditional structures and systems for the guardianship of culture and heritage, rather than having to adopt Western systems, may make museums more relevant to Pacific Islander communities.

Problems with the representation of cultural heritage in Pacific Islands museums at present

Colonial regimes showed little concern with the possible interests or requirements of indigenous people in museums. European interests dominated; for example, the Fiji Museum was established by and for European amateur scholars, and the New Caledonia Museum to collect objects of Kanak cultures for overseas exhibitions. The persistence of European interests over what indigenous people think appropriate for museums to contain and display, is now recognised as a reason why indigenous people were initially not attracted to museums.

Kasarherou indicates a specific difficulty for Kanak people with objects from their cultures on display at the New Caledonia Museum, even after it had been extensively renovated and impressive displays designed featuring aspects of Kanak culture. He comments that

the Museum still attracts few Kanak visitors. The reason is not lack of interest . . . it indicates that the museum corresponds poorly with the ideas of traditional New Caledonian society . . . .
Some of the objects exhibited are very strong and sacred. In traditional society it is a mark of disrespect to show sacred objects to everyone.

The objects called Kanak money, which are made out of small pearls of shell are a problem in this respect. These objects are still in use. They are not money, but a kind of seal. Exchanges between families must be sealed with these objects. They are kept safe by the family's elder and it remains in the family's patrimony . . . . A lot of elders think they must not be shown to the public. Others think that we should display them in a showcase with curtains. The curtains should only be opened by people who are prepared to see something sacred (Kasaherou 1991:165-6).

The actual custodial role, or the appropriateness of the custodial role of a museum is not the main area of disagreement. What is questioned is how, or if, certain objects should be displayed and who has authority to display them. Coming to terms with these objections means that the institution has to put the interests of indigenous people above Western museological practices and the interests of non-indigenous people. Only then will it become an institution which truly reflects indigenous culture and values.

In other situations, like in Samoa, the whole idea of a museum setting for displaying Samoan culture has seemed irrelevant to many Samoans. As Enright (1992:11) points out, institutional support for culture and the arts is not a Samoan concern, 'native Samoans rather naturally resist these well-intentioned attempts to enrol their fa'asamoa into - in
Marcuse's phrase - "the administered world" , that is, contained within a Western-style built environment and managed by a specially trained museum staff.

The influence of regional politics on the representation of national culture

Very recently, however, Western Samoa announced it will build a cultural centre. It is highly probable that the incentive for this is regional politics. The Cook Islands built a cultural centre for the 6th Pacific Festival of Arts, and in the (centuries old, but always new) Polynesian inter-island rivalry, Western Samoa will attempt to outdo the Cook Islands as it will host the next Festival. A cultural centre is now considered to be a requirement for the Festival in order to house major stage productions, dance theatre and exhibitions. At the Pacific Festival of Arts in Rarotonga Sir Geoffrey Henry, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, demonstrated the political worth of having built a cultural centre for the people of his nation, and of having it named after himself.

When political will drives the building of cultural centres, the interpretation of what is necessary for such a building may differ from what international museological practice may advise. The auditorium of the Cook Islands Cultural Centre can seat 2,000, probably an over estimate of audience size when the population of the Rarotonga is 9,000.

1 Announced by the leader of the Western Samoan delegation at the closing ceremony of the 6th Pacific Festival of Arts, Rarotonga, 27 October 1992.
The two exhibition halls are generous enough in size, but not backed up by adequate storage facilities, conservation and preparation areas and they are not air conditioned. This will, perhaps, limit the nature of exhibitions which can be put on there.

Although museums and cultural centres are ostensibly cultural institutions, social and political considerations are undeniably a factor in the establishment and changing nature of such institutions. In South Pacific museums and cultural centres, cultural objects and practises provide tangible and symbolic evidence of the people who were the original occupants of the land: where and how such objects are housed can indicate the interests of the regime which is in power for the time being. The context in which objects are presented can assist constructs of the indigenous character of the people, or be used to create the impression of a cohesive national identity.

In his summary of trends and ideas guiding Pacific Island nations into the twenty-first century, Ron Crocombe identifies, ‘the power of common ethnic roots as a unifying ideology’, and says that

(e)thnic identity is a feeling of common origins, culture and customs. The concept can be contracted or expanded, applying from the family to the clan, tribe, nation and beyond (Crocombe 1992:137).

The governments of today's Pacific Island nations feel they need to emphasise a common ethnic identity, such as 'Fijian', 'Papua New Guinean', or 'Cook Islander', for their people. This is because the present socio-cultural-political
identities of the Pacific region's independent nations, microstates and remaining colonies are largely the legacy of foreign domination.

In order to create an ethos of national identity, political leaders, intellectuals and creative people believe they need to adapt to new ideas while remaining fully conscious of the rich inheritance of their traditional culture. Even where the pre-contact cultural heritage of the people is disparate, as it is in the Melanesian states of Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, the fact that their tribes had established ways of life long before Europeans came can be used as a unifying factor in developing a national cultural identity. Another unifying factor is the experience the indigenous people of a country shared under the period of colonial dominion.

Addressing a Tourism Convention in Fiji in 1990, the Fijian Prime Minister, General Sitiveni Rabuka, described Fijian culture in the following terms:

Culture is the expression of ethnic identity, the way of life of a community
Culture is the characteristic which distinctly sets the Fijian people apart from all (others) in the world . . . . Fijian language, Fijian customs and traditions, Fijian values, Fijian religions, Fijian social structure and any other character traits that make a Fijian what he is (Rambuka cited in TCSP 1990:6).

Although 'Fiji' and 'Fijian' are constructs which came into being following Fijian-European contact, it is essential to Rabuka's philosophy to assert Fijian identity and establish a superior position for the indigenous people of the land.
The Fiji Museum has the largest collection of objects in Fiji which are characteristic of the indigenous peoples. Such objects are identified as 'Fijian' and provide tangible evidence of the material aspects of Fijian cultures over time. The Fiji Museum's collection also encompasses non-material aspects of culture, such as evidence of languages, religions, social structures, etc. As well as evidence of indigenous cultures, the Fiji Museum houses collections, archives and other evidence of post-contact society in Fiji and the other races - European, Indian, Chinese, and South Pacific Islanders - who have settled there. Collectively, the objects and accumulated knowledge is representative of the country's cultural heritage and ethnic mix.

Although the Museum building does not resemble Fijian architecture, and its forms of displaying objects accord with international museum practice rather than Fijian custom, the Museum says it can provide a 'Fijian experience'. One example of how this sense of 'Fijian-ness' can be evoked in a museum context is reported in a recent book of South Pacific museums and cultural centres:

Wood carving demonstrations and monthly story telling sessions are two of the most popular activities. Wood carvers produce traditional Fijian artifacts solely by using traditional tools. The monthly story telling sessions are held in the evening. Those present gather around a bowl of ceremonial kava and listen to a gifted orator tell a traditional story. On such occasions the museum is transformed into a Fijian meeting house (Fiji Museum report in Eoe and Swadling 1991:168).
Cultural experiences of Fiji are not only directed at visitors. Fiji is now a multicultural country and it is considered important to give Fijian citizens of other ethnicities (Indian, Chinese, Rotuman, European) a ‘cultural experience’ of Fiji’s indigenous culture. Forty percent of visitors to the Pacific Harbour Cultural Centre and Marketplace are school children and other local groups, and Rasigatale, its director, considers the historic replays at the Pacific Harbour Cultural Centre an important way of informing non-indigenous Fijians about Fijian culture. However, such reconstructions of ‘Fijian’ culture are limiting unless they reflect the diversity of Fijian cultures of the past and present. But it may suit the present political regime to perpetuate a stereotype of indigenous characteristics ‘that make a Fijian what he is’.

The survival of indigenous traditions, whether they be oral histories, forms of artistic expression, or technologies, is regarded as an essential part of a national identity. Where material objects, like ocean-going canoes, did not survive the incursions of European forms, efforts are now being made to revive not only the objects, but the skills and values they represented. The ideology of cultural renaissance is increasingly being used by South Pacific nations to reassert their pre-colonial history and values and differentiate their societies from Westernised global culture.

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1 Reviving the skills of ocean-going canoe building and navigation is now being strongly promoted across the Pacific. Since the Hawaiian canoe Hōkūlua was built in 1974, Tahitians, Maoris and Cook Islanders have all built double-hulled canoes which featured at the Vaka Pageant of the 1992 Festival of Pacific Arts and Polynesian Navigation societies have been formed.
In Papua New Guinea the desire for cultural revival, or renaissance, has been asserted at a provincial, as well as national level (Crawford 1980). In 1988, speaking of plans to develop a cultural centre at Kavieng, New Ireland Province, David Lasisi (then Cultural Officer for New Ireland Province) said that the characteristic forms of art production were languishing on New Ireland. In his own language group (Noatsi), one of the areas where malanggan figures were traditionally made, there were only four carvers still producing them (Lasisi pers. comm. 1988).

Lasisi considered that it would be imperative for the provincial cultural centre proposed for New Ireland to have a resource base in order to collect documents and photographic records of New Ireland cultures and develop a database of museum collections of New Ireland objects. This would be a way of 'feeding back written and visual information about the material culture and ceremonial life as it was in the recent past'. As well, the proposed cultural centre would provide encouragement, materials, training and a market for present forms of creative expression (Lasisi, pers. comm. 1988).

In 1988 Lasisi was looking at collections of New Ireland material culture in Australia and America with the intention of repatriating some characteristic New Ireland objects for the proposed cultural centre. He admitted that it was unlikely for a provincial government to raise funds for a building with the stable air atmosphere, storage and conservation provisions.

1 At the time Lasisi was on a lecture tour in the USA accompanying the exhibition Assemblage of Spirits.
required to preserve valuable objects. But, as he said, 'it is useless to have 'anti' feelings against collectors and museums who collected in New Ireland in the past. In fact, one should be thankful that they (malanggan figures) were taken or they would have been left to rot. In this way the metropolitan museums have done us a service and played a role which we should accept' (Lasissi pers. comm. 1988). Lasissi considered provincial cultural centres an essential and supportive link between local communities and the outside world.

In all of Papua New Guinea's provinces village-based art production sustains the socio-cultural needs of the local community. Provincial cultural centres are one avenue through which surplus production can be sold. Some provincial cultural centres, such as those at Enga and Kainantu, also provide resources, training and marketing for local artists producing traditional or non-traditional objects for outside markets and encourage traditional and contemporary groups to perform locally and tour. For tourists and other visitors, provincial cultural centres are accessible venues where local cultures are represented and objects may be purchased in a Westernised, familiar type of setting.

In urban centres across the South Pacific, such as Port Moresby, Suva and Auckland, urbanised youths probably have a different perception of the role of museums and cultural centres than do members of their parents' generation. Pacific Islanders who have grown up in cities away from their ancestral homelands may identify first with their national cultural identity, for example 'Papua New Guinean' rather than
Tolai, Motuan or whatever society their parents came from. For urban youths, excursions to museums are part of their school education, and an important part of the way they learn about their culture. Museums and cultural centres often provide the only opportunity for the increasing number of urban youths in South Pacific nations to discover the cultural heritage of their forebears.

As Kakah Kais notes of the circumstances in Papua New Guinea:

The trend in the urban areas today is that parents have less and less time to instruct their children properly on cultural values . . . their children (grow up with) other interests . . . . The introduction of electronic media and advanced communication systems makes matters even more complicated. We should, therefore, embark on programs of near indoctrination in order to instill into our citizens pride in our cultural heritage and our diverse linguistic groups (Kais 1991:17).

Museums and cultural centres can play an important role in educating local residents and visitors about the country's cultural heritage. The types of visitors a museum or cultural centre attracts, or who it aims to attract, are related to its perceived mission and the role it plays in society. One study of visitors to the Papua New Guinea National Museum (Waigani complex) recorded figures of 30,000 to 35,000 local visitors per annum between 1985 to 1990, 90% of whom were Papua New Guinea residents including a high proportion of school groups. A further 5,000 tourists from cruise ships or tour groups also visited the Museum. This contrasts with the Cultural Centre and Marketplace of Fiji at Pacific Harbour
which also attracts around 30,000 visitors per year, but 40% are local residents including schoolchildren and the remaining 60% are tourists.

The potential to attract local and overseas visitors to museums and cultural centres is a primary concern of the region's tourism councils, who generally regard museums as under-utilised assets which should be more attuned to giving cultural experiences to visitors. However, unlike the Cultural Centre and Marketplace of Fiji, most South Pacific museums are not established on an entrepreneurial basis and feel their primary obligations are towards the people of their country, and to research and scholarship rather than offering 'cultural experiences' for international visitors.

In 1990 a review of museums and cultural centres in the Pacific commissioned by the Tourism Council of the South Pacific (TCSP 1990) examined Pacific museums and cultural centres as existing and potential sites for cultural tourism. The briefing document for the study made the following points, among others:

(d) TCSP recognises that museums and cultural centres are first and foremost the natural and proper expressions of the cultural identity of the island populations. National Tourism Organisations (NTOs) wish to increase visitor's sensitivities towards, and appreciation of, their traditional cultural patterns and thus eliminate any adverse socio-cultural effects that tourism may bring about.

(e) NTOs are fully cognisant of the need to take effective measures, on the one hand, to inform tourists about local cultures and, on the other hand, to
enhance the overall visitor experience through cultural attractions. In this respect museums and cultural centres play a vitally important role. (f) Museums and cultural centres are seen as the main cultural visitor attractions in the region. Sadly, existing centres are generally under utilised . . . and their contribution to tourism is (thus) diminished (TCSP 1990:1).

The TCSP report was compiled by an outside expert (Victor Middleton) who assessed museums and cultural centres for their tourism potential. This contrasts with the focus of the Cultural Heritage in the Pacific seminar held at the University of Papua New Guinea in 1989, where papers were given by indigenous museum professionals. The overriding concern of this group is that they often cannot fulfill the basic objectives and obligations of their institutions because of the lack of funding, much less initiate new exhibitions or extensions of their programs (Eoe and Swadling 1991).

Museum professionals, in particular, feel uncomfortable when their institutions come under an umbrella portfolio of 'Culture and Tourism'. As Eoe explained, the entrepreneurial focus of tourism promoters and bureaucrats is often of limited value to museum operations. They generally want to design and promote spectacular 'cultural experiences' and are not overly concerned with the veracity of the experience. Nor are tourism officials interested in sustained research projects and scholarly pursuits of museums, functions which are a necessary part of the museum's operations, but which have no public face (Eoe pers. comm. 1990).
At present, most South Pacific museums find it difficult to achieve their objectives. As the organiser of the Cultural Heritage in the Pacific conference, Soroi Eoe, Director of the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery, noted, the negative perception of museums as the guardians of 'unimportant relics of almost forgotten cultures' is still pervasive among Pacific politicians and local people (usually from ignorance of their range of functions). Negative attitudes among scholars who prefer to remain elitist and find anything but strictly professional pursuits unimportant, were unsuited to museums which needed to be dynamic institutions and have a people-oriented role (Eoe 1991:1-2).

The main problems facing museums and cultural centres in the Pacific at present are their respective government's lack of coherent cultural policies and inadequate funding. The recommendations of the Cultural Heritage in the Pacific conference called for all governments:
- to introduce or revise legislation on cultural matters;
- to develop and implement policy statements and guidelines for all areas of cultural activity;
- to accept responsibility for adequate funding of the basic functions of their museums and cultural centres: to permit museums and cultural centres that are able to raise additional funds to use these funds for activities supplementary to their basic functions (Eoe and Swadling 1991:268-273).
In the process of conceiving cultural policies and implementing legislation, the value of museums and cultural centres should become more evident to government officials, bureaucrats, educationalists, tourism developers and others. Governments may then support the national cultural heritage and its contemporary expressions to a greater extent than at present.

Adequate funding would overcome many of the present deficiencies in the maintenance, preservation and presentation of collections, allow collecting activities to be resumed and new projects to be implemented.

The Cultural Heritage in the Pacific conference also assisted the region's museums and cultural centres to identify their problems and clarify their roles.¹ The participants agreed that their institutions could play positive roles in their respective societies:

- by acknowledging, and being responsive to, the knowledge of elders and developing appropriate displays and custodial arrangements for important objects;
- by recognising their responsibilities to youth in an era of rapid socio-cultural change, in particular by organising exhibitions and programs which appeal to, and address, the problems of youth in the country concerned;
- by assisting governments to project a positive image of the nation at home and overseas;

¹ The problems and roles mentioned here are only concerned with cultural heritage, not the environmental or other scientific interests the museums may also have.
- by promoting the achievements of local visual and performing artists in all fields of endeavour.

Further, it was recognised that South Pacific museums and cultural centres could play a more vital role in cultural exchange by providing venues for exhibitions, performances and workshops, especially for artists from within the region.

Despite their present difficulties, the personnel of the South Pacific region's museums and cultural centres are feeling optimistic. The continuing success of the region's major festival, the Pacific Festival of Arts, is prompting national governments to take cultural events more seriously. One factor is rising popular demand for centralised venues where cultural events can take place. Another significant factor is the growing awareness of cultural politics in the region. Political leaders are realising that they can advantage themselves by emphasising national cultural identity: museums and cultural centres are one way of providing tangible evidence of the government's support for national identity and creative expression.

As far as South Pacific museums' historical collections are concerned, museums and cultural centres are increasingly aware of the sensibilities of people still practising their traditional culture. As in the case of New Caledonia, sensitivity and respect for Kanak culture will replace francophile preoccupations and interests in the orientation of the planned Jean-Marie Tjibaou Cultural Centre and also in future displays at the New Caledonia Museum.
Museums and cultural centres now have to be mindful of their social responsibilities to urban youth. As the example of Papua New Guinea shows, where there are high concentrations of urban youth, museums provide one of the few avenues connecting this generation to its cultural background. Cultural institutions in Fiji are already providing non-indigenous youth with information about Fijian culture, but the present narrow focus could be expanded.

To the extent to which museums and cultural centres of the South Pacific region can more fully achieve the objectives listed, their future will be brighter than their past.
CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSIONS

... close to the end

meet an end

and there won't be an end

End. The end is never the end...

Lionel Fogarty (1986)

INTRODUCTION

The initial conclusions will be made by returning to the objectives of the thesis and finding if they have been achieved. The overall theme merits some attention: from the material presented in this thesis some conclusions may be drawn which indicate the advantages, disadvantages and mutual benefits of the relationships established between Pacific art and Western culture. It emerges that the indigenous arts of Pacific societies have accrued a history and a place in the Western art-culture system in addition to the roles they continue to play within their own societies.

REALISATION OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE THESIS

The aims and objectives presented in Chapter 1 will be reviewed, accepting that a knowledge of the relevant literature has been demonstrated and, throughout the thesis, art
theoretical and art historical approaches have been used. The objectives will be commented on below. To assist the reader they are repeated here.

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. 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. The main aim of this thesis has been 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. The main focus of the thesis has been on the period of greatest change, 1960s to the 1990s, and on Australian Aboriginal and Papua New Guinean visual arts.

The main aims of this thesis have been:

- To describe these changes, at least in broad outline.
- To explain, at least partly, 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.

Within the broad aims of the thesis the following particular objectives were pursued most extensively:
(1) During the period c1900 to 1960 students and collectors of the indigenous art of Africa, the Americas and the Pacific developed a conception of this art which may be called the paradigm of primitive art. They also developed a categorisation of this art. This paradigm is now largely rejected and the thesis showed why. Partly by drawing on the recent literature on South Pacific indigenous art, it offered a sounder conception of it more relevant to the 1990s. This 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.

(2) Western interest in South Pacific indigenous art forms, and the values attached to them in Western culture, may vary from the ways art objects and practices are valued by the indigenous communities which create them. The thesis described both phenomena and tried to explain what has led to them.

(3) During the past decades contemporary indigenous art has emerged among Aboriginal Australians, in Papua New Guinea and other Pacific nations. But some art practices have continued in their traditional forms despite the impact of Western culture. Both phenomena were described and tentative explanations for them given.
(4) The emergence of national and regional arts festivals has been another recent development in the indigenous arts of the South Pacific region. An attempt was made to explain the function of arts festivals, in particular their role in the formation of cultural identity.

(5) Within the period 1960 to 1990 contacts between indigenous artists and the Western art-culture system have greatly increased, although the spread and intensity of this development has not been even. This was demonstrated by an investigation of some of the activities and perceived roles of several Australian and 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 tried to establish whether indigenous artists, scholars and entrepreneurs have succeeded in gaining influence and control over these activities.

Review of the aims of the thesis

The thesis has endeavoured to make a contribution to the improved conceptualisation of the indigenous art of the South South Pacific region within the limits set.

(1) In art theoretical terms the thesis has attempted to achieve the following:
• It has formulated a model, the paradigm of 'primitive' art, as a basis from which the nature and degree of changing Western attitudes towards indigenous art from the South Pacific region could be observed. Although this model was prompted by the work of other scholars, it collated and presented concepts around the idea of 'primitive' art and society, including 'primitivism' in modernist Western art, in a new way.
• It has discussed the nature of categorisation, its benefits as a conceptual method for describing objects and relating them to the place and circumstances of production, and its shortcomings as a part of the Western art-culture system's method of collecting, naming and containing objects from other cultures.
• It has closely scrutinised the work of a number of theorists including Graburn, Clifford, Said, Appadurai, Morphy and Stanton, analysed their models and theses and applied them, when found relevant, to the circumstances of indigenous cultures of the South Pacific region and their art.
• It has identified and introduced abrogation, a step beyond appropriation, and demonstrated how it is exemplified in the work of urban Aboriginal artists.
• It has introduced, as far as possible, the insights and views of indigenous people on their art.

(2) In art historical terms the thesis has attempted to achieve the following:
• It has demonstrated the impact of the paradigm of 'primitive' art on Western concepts of art in the period 1910s to 1960s. In
particular, using the example of German Expressionists, it has shown how ideas of 'the primitive' affected modernist European artists.

- It has surveyed the period 1960s to 1990s, paying particular attention to the nature of the art produced in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea during that time. Where appropriate, attention has also been given to other South Pacific cultures and their art. Although it has not been possible to make a definitive survey of all the types of art produced in all circumstances, sufficient evidence has been provided to give the reader an overview of both characteristic art forms and innovations in art in the region in the period 1960s to 1990s.

- Several chapters have focused on the role of artists in their societies - roles which fulfill traditional needs and expectations; roles which respond to the challenges and realities of the modern world; individual artist's roles as innovators and social critics, and the collective role of artists in endeavours of cultural renaissance and the development of national cultural identity.

- It has emphasised the role of art in society, in particular the role of art in creating contacts and mediating relationships between indigenous and Western cultures. One way this has been followed is by considering the histories of some Australian and South Pacific Islands nations' museums and demonstrating that the changing attitudes of museum curators as well as the nature of museum collections, types of displays and accessability to indigenous people. This reflects essential
changes in the social and cultural relationships between indigenous and non-indigenous people.

- The chapters on regimes of value, the continuity of traditions, innovation in Aboriginal art and the formation of national cultural identity in emerging South Pacific nations, appreciated the existence of different social and cultural values than those held by Western society.

**Objective 1:** To describe the Paradigm of Primitive Art and show why it has been rejected. To critically assess attempts to categorise indigenous art.

Categories have two types of utility: (i) as an empirical methodology for describing the physical qualities of art objects and, (ii) as conceptual aids to facilitate the recognition of art styles. Categorisation, an aspect of both the disciplines of anthropology and art history, is Western system of classification, based on Western hierarchies and values. It was shown that indigenous societies have their own logical systems of classification, but these are not well known outside their own culture (section on bark painting, Chapter 3; Yolngu systems of classification recorded by Thompson and Morphy, Chapter 4; ‘contemporary’ art as used by Papua New Guinean artists, Chapter 7).

Several times in this thesis it has been said that perceptible changes in Western attitudes towards the acceptance and representation of indigenous art could be viewed metaphorically, because they accurately reflected
changes taking place in social, political and economic realms. This has been related to how the Western artworld names and classifies things.

At first, categorising art seems to be a natural and neutral part of the disciplines of art history and anthropology, providing empirical evidence of, and a methodology for sorting out, art styles and their distribution. But a more complex socio-cultural hierarchy lies beneath the surface. Chapter 2 outlined the paradigm of 'primitive' art and described its features. Until the 1960s, attempts to produce 'authentic' artistic identities for the indigenous cultures of the Pacific region, exemplified by 'masterpieces' of Oceanic art (generally those in Western collections, described in terms of Western aesthetics by Western scholars) was not only about a systematic way of describing art objects as part of the material culture of a group. This kind of taxonomy also validated and upheld the ideas and powers of the European colonisers. This paradigm was based on a system where Western aesthetics and cultural values were dominant, effectively meaning that Pacific art forms could only succeed in the Western art-culture system if they belonged to one of the 'authentic' categories of 'traditional' art within criteria established by Western scholars. This meant that there was an onus on indigenous art forms to doubly succeed, first within their own society, and then to be accepted as 'art' in the Western art-culture system. Categories, such as 'primitive' art, may have been devised to assist Western audience to conceptualise foreign art forms, their place in the originating culture and in Western culture.
But as 'primitive' art was consistently referred to as the art of 'low' cultures, made in small-scale societies with few technological resources, the stereotypes which accumulated around it reinforced notions of Western cultural superiority.

In the 1970s, the phenomenon of classification and the debate about it delved deeper into questions of the relationships between the makers, viewers and buyers of art. The systems of classification devised by Graburn, Kaeppler and others, discussed in Chapter 3, admitted a wider range of social and economic circumstances across which exchange took place. The effects of the commoditisation of indigenous objects for Western art markets, and the rapid development of new types of art for new (Western consumer) markets, meant that many more categories had to be devised to describe the nature of the art being produced. 'Transitional' art was one such category which seemed, for a while, to accurately describe the phenomenon of adaptations and new artforms. Although the term was discarded (for reasons given in Chapter 3), the period mid 1970s to mid 1980s was 'transitional' in terms of the development of relationship between indigenous artists and other cultural representatives and scholars, curators and representatives of the Western artworld. From both sides, the period was one of rapid acculturation, of the cross-fertilisation of ideas, the development of new art styles and the appreciation of new aesthetic realms.

A dilemma continually confronted the author during the research and writing of this thesis. It was necessary to comprehend and discuss earlier scholars' systems of
classification and the categories that had, from time to time, been devised to describe indigenous art. Reasons had to be given why a number of categories were found inappropriate and were rejected, and why some still appeared to be useful. I was reluctant to devise a new set of categories appropriate to the present circumstances of art production in the South Pacific region, but the weight of past Western scholarship and the thorough integration of systems of categorisation in the discipline of art history meant that it was necessary to investigate them thoroughly. The aim, therefore, was not to invent new terms, but to find those in current usage which are most appropriate. As well, when categories are used here they are understood to describe facets of the relationships between indigenous art and Western culture, and the people involved in determining those relationships.

The categories most widely understood and used in the current Western conceptualisation of indigenous art from the Pacific region, and found to be plausible in this investigation, are as follows.

(i) Following Graburn (1976), an initial distinction between 'non-commercial' and 'art made for sale' art, was upheld. The 'non-commercial' side of the distinction leads to a consideration of other values that indigenous societies attach to some of their art forms. Some types of 'non-commercial' art were briefly described, viz. secret/sacred objects, ephemeral art, items of cultural heritage, national monuments, religious art and public art. 'Non-commercial' art is not only traditional art restricted
to a non-commoditised zone, but also is evident in non-traditional contexts, for example Papua New Guinea's National Parliament House.

The 'art made for sale', side of the distinction was found to include a number of sub-categories: traditional art made for sale; original artworks in new media generally classified as 'contemporary' art; commercial art, in this context specifically items designed for mass production in print and textile media; replicas and souvenirs. Art objects which were not made for sale, but have subsequently been collected from users and become commodities in the Western art market, are not included in the 'art made for sale' category; they represent one of the types of objects which escape easy categorisation.

(ii) 'Traditional' art was found to be an appropriate term when used in the sense that tradition is a dynamic force informing the continuation of characteristic art forms and inspiring creativity and innovation. The term 'tradition' (even if other words were used for it) was found to be understood and accepted by indigenous people.

(iii) 'Contemporary' art was found to be used both in the wider sense of everything produced at the same time, and the narrower sense of 'new' art in non-traditional materials, or portraying non-traditional subjects.

Following the later investigations in Chapters 6, 7 and 8, it was found that, used in the wider sense, the term 'contemporary' art was too unspecific and may lead to confusion. It does not adequately distinguish between: (i)
innovative art forms which, although made in introduced media, are strongly attached to a specific indigenous cultural tradition ('Innovation in Aboriginal Art', Chapter 6), and (ii) art which is informed by Western culture and abrogates it (Chapter 8, 'Art and Aboriginality'). In Papua New Guinean circumstances the term 'contemporary' art has been confirmed by indigenous practitioners and spokespersons as appropriate for, and acknowledging, the emergence of an identifiable new art movement in that country (Chapter 7).

This very basic set of universal categories recognises the present hierarchies of taste and value in the Western art-culture system. It acknowledges the extent of the commodification of indigenous art which has occurred, particularly in the past few decades. It also acknowledges that it is valid and necessary for Western scholars and curators of indigenous art to have ways of organising material and presenting concepts to their audiences. This assists Western audiences to understand and appreciate unfamiliar types of art by using familiar systems of describing and presenting them.

However, the thesis has endeavoured to demonstrate that this set of categories, or any other devised by Western scholars since Graburn (1976), is also a response to the Western passion for collecting and consumer interests in indigenous art. A bias may occur if too much emphasis is placed on Western aesthetic values and on the extent to which modern Western art has influenced innovations in indigenous art. Equal emphasis should be given to the fact that such works belong to another culture
with its own distinctive aesthetic system, another realm of knowledge, symbol and meaning. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, examples of 'traditional' art made for ritual and other self-use purposes of a particular society were identified. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, new art forms were shown to have emerged which sometimes may be intended to support ideals of national cultural identity, or for religious purposes, or to serve community well being. This indicated that indigenous societies esteem the heritage and symbolic values of their own culturally significant art forms. Each indigenous culture continues to provide many of the stimuli for creativity among its own people.

One of the shortcomings of Western categories for indigenous art, when used to describe a particular art form, is that there may be ambiguities in the set of categories, or they may overlap. This was discussed, using the example of bark paintings, in Chapter 3.

It is intended that the categories used in this thesis should be useful conceptual aids, but it is not intended that they outlast or extend beyond that purpose. The focus should rather be on what is socially relevant to the artist - what are their reasons for producing a particular art form and what are their perspectives and thoughts about their art. Innovative forms often reflect significant changes in the circumstances of the group, or its perception of itself and its relations with the outside world.
Objective 2: To demonstrate the variation between Western and indigenous values

Ways of describing and valuing art, apart from systems of categorisation, have been brought to the reader's attention throughout the thesis. Theories about value systems developed by other scholars, in particular those of Appadurai, Clifford, Morphy and Stanton, have been applied and further evidence has been found to support them.

Appadurai's thesis was examined in Chapter 4, viz. that different 'regimes of value' exist in both Western and indigenous cultures, and that objects may move between them. As objects move between these regimes, they may at least partly lose one set of values and may accrue another. The ways art objects are valued is in accordance with the values predominant in the particular society which possesses them for the time being. Having established that regimes of value exist, a number of case studies described different types of value accorded to certain objects in particular Pacific societies, including the great prestige of prized shell valuables in the kula ceremonial exchange cycle; the mana of Maori taonga; the sacred properties of Aoriki presentation vessels; the symbolic value of Albert Namatjira's paintings as affirmation of the Arrente peoples' custodianship of their country. A number of other scholars' theses about value and different systems of value in indigenous and Western cultures were found to be complementary to Appadurai's thesis about 'regimes of value'. These included Kopytoff's 'cultural biography of things',
Clifford's semantic zones for the movement of objects in the Western art-culture system and Morphy's two 'frames' for Aboriginal art.

**Objective 3: To describe and partially explain the phenomena of continuity and change in indigenous art**

Rather than seeing developments in the indigenous arts of the South Pacific art, especially that of the period 1960s to 1990s, as a series of responses to Western culture, this thesis has held that art makers have also responded dynamically to the changing circumstances and needs of their own cultures. The recent art of indigenous people throughout the region reflects a constantly occurring reformulation of ideas and attitudes about forms of representation and a knowledge of the audiences for their art. Artists have responded to the ideas and influences of Western art, and the tastes and interests of outside markets, in many ways. When they have incorporated Western styles, techniques and materials into their repertoire, it has been done in ways which transform the character of the art to reflect the artists' own contemporary society and culture. Evidence for this has been presented in this thesis in the Chapter 5 on the continuity of tradition, Chapter 6 on innovation in Aboriginal art, Chapter 7 on contemporary art in Papua New Guinea and Chapter 8 on urban Aboriginal art.

In all societies of humankind, past and present, perhaps the most significant art arises from the commitment of its members to a shared ideology. Restricted access to knowledge
of the sacred and esoteric core of a culture’s art means that it retains a domain of value for the originating community that is not shared with outsiders or even non-initiates. This was discussed in relation to restricted forms of Yolngu art as discovered by Thompson and Morphy in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 also demonstrated the continuance of traditional art forms and the values embedded in them using the examples of the kula ceremonial exchange cycle in Massim society, body decoration in the Papua new Guinea Highlands and Central Arnhem Land and ngatu (decorated bark cloth) in Tonga.

Stanton’s thesis about innovation was examined in detail in Chapter 6. Innovation is considered to be a process which can occur in all art forms, and not require the creation of a category of innovative art. Stanton’s thesis about innovation recognises the dynamics of change and continuity in indigenous societies. Innovation was identified in the art of many individual Aboriginal artists, as well as in collective enterprises such as central and Western desert acrylic painting movements. In each case, internal influences were found to be at least as effective as external influences, and sometimes more so, in shaping the style and nature of innovative art forms.

Although contemporary Papua New Guinean art is a recent development and has a distinctive nature which reflects the transformations occurring in contemporary Papua New Guinean society, some aspects of individual artist’s styles were shown to be related to the characteristic traditional art styles of the artists’ home communities. As well, as Papua New Guinean
writers pointed out, and as is observable in some contemporary Papua New Guinean art, traditional social and cultural values are esteemed and upheld in the formulation of the country's emerging national cultural identity.

The example of the Boomali Aboriginal artists' cooperative in Chapter 8 showed the determination of a group of urban-based Aboriginal artists to make their own statements about their art and Aboriginality, and to manage their own exhibitions and the way their art was promoted. The strong desire for social justice and an end to discriminatory practices, in the artworld and beyond, has motivated many Aboriginal artists to challenge Western concepts about their art and their society.

Objective 4: To describe the role and explain the emergence of indigenous arts festivals

A more recent role for indigenous art has been to serve as a marker of cultural identity, whether for minority populations of indigenous people in Australia and New Zealand or for the citizens of new Pacific nations. One function of the arts is the physical manifestation of cultural character. Movements of cultural revival reflect the serious endeavours of communities who want to restate their distinctive identity and build it into the framework of their emerging nations.

Groups of people identify themselves as belonging to a specific culture and the arts provide many channels for communicating culture to people both within and outside the group (Chapter 9). Indigenous societies throughout the Pacific
region desire to emphasise the importance of their unique cultural heritages to themselves, their countrymen and the world at large. Local arts festivals and the Pacific Festival of Arts (previously the South Pacific Festival of Arts), held every four years, focus attention on the need of indigenous people to maintain, revivify, or even re-learn traditional skills and restore a sense of pride in their heritage. The goal of developing a national cultural identity emphasises the merit of artistic heritage and encourages the present generation to respect their ancestral heritage and make it part of their modern identity.

**Objective 5: To describe and explain the increased level of participation by indigenous people in the Western art-culture system, in particular in the museum context and the emergence of museums in South Pacific Island states.**

In response to the fifth objective of this thesis, two sets of circumstances have been discerned - those where indigenous artists are demonstrating increased control over their art, its promotion and interpretation (Chapter 8), and those where indigenous artists, curators, scholars and other spokespersons are gaining influence over the collections and representations of the art of today and that of their forebears in Western cultural institutions and the museums of their own countries (Chapters 10 and 11).

Since the 1970s there has been phenomenal growth in the acceptance of, and demand for, indigenous art in the West. This can be measured by the increase in the number and nature of
exhibitions of indigenous art, and in the expansion and diversification of Western markets for indigenous art. However, as the thesis has demonstrated, certain communities have fared better than others, and some artforms have found greater favour and more accelerated demand than others. In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, some comparisons were made between the opportunities and support Aboriginal artists have had for the promotion of their art since the late 1970s and the relative lack of opportunities and support Papua New Guinean artists have received in the same period.

Australia has a well developed arts support system, funded by the federal and state governments as well as private enterprise. Realising that Aboriginal art was a marketable commodity for remote communities with few resources, the Australian government funded arts centres and other arts related enterprises to assist the economic empowerment of these Aboriginal communities. But Aboriginal artists were after social and cultural empowerment as well as improved economic prospects, and have used their art effectively for these purposes. Australian and other Western audiences learned that art contained powerful messages about Aboriginal culture and rights as well as powerful aesthetics. The theory of abrogation, discussed in Chapter 8, envisages that some Aboriginal, Maori and Papua New Guinean artists have used their Western art training and knowledge of the styles, movements and ideologies of modern Western art in a sophisticated way to subvert their marginalisation by the dominant Western culture. Through mimicry, parody and irony, they both take issue with
the Western arts establishment and its discourse on indigenous art, and take up the issues of most concern to marginalised indigenous artists.

Papua New Guinea and other less wealthy Pacific nations do not have the infrastructure of major cultural institutions and government funding for the arts as exists in Australia, New Zealand and Hawai‘i. Although Papua New Guinean contemporary art was also developing at an accelerated pace from the mid-1970s, the support system which grew up around it was as much the effort of dedicated individuals as any promotional opportunities or institutional support provided by the government. Some teachers colleges and the Faculty of Creative Arts at the University of Papua New Guinea's Waigani campus (previously the Creative Arts Centre, then the National Arts School), provide art school training for some artists, others develop their own skills. After a difficult period in the 1980s when activities were constrained due to lack of funding and the suspension of the Museum Act, the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery has recently re-started its Art Gallery function. Since 1993 it has offered a few contemporary artists artist-in-residency and exhibition projects. But, in Papua New Guinea, contemporary artists must fend for themselves to promote and sell their work as best they can. A number of major projects, including the artwork for Papua New Guinea National Parliament House and a few large exhibitions overseas, have succeeded because of the collaboration between artists, expatriate patrons and promoters and some culturally-concerned members of the educated elite.
Chapter 10 considered the relationships between Australian museums and indigenous people and Chapter 11 the role of museums and cultural centres in Pacific Islands nations. In the 1960s all State (natural history) museums in Australia had substantial collections of Aboriginal material culture formed since the latter part of the nineteenth century. The Art Gallery of New South Wales began to form a collection of Aboriginal art in 1958 and Melanesian art in 1962, but the commencement and exponential growth of collections of Aboriginal art in the National and State art galleries did not commence until the late 1970s. The initial rapid rise in acceptance was due to the phenomenal success, in Western aesthetic terms, of the painting movements at Papunya, Yuendumu and other desert communities in central Australia. The success of the desert painting movements stimulated curiosity about other types of Aboriginal art, resulting in the steady increase in the variety of art collected and types of exhibitions held.

Museums in Australia, and in other metropolitan countries, have been slow in developing an active interest and wide ranging collections in the contemporary art of Pacific Islands nations. Because of the existence of a national infrastructure of cultural institutions and art support systems in Australia and New Zealand, Aboriginal and Maori artists have fared much better than artists in other Pacific nations. As well, the present policies of cultural institutions in Australia and New Zealand give priority to nurturing the arts of their own indigenous people, and this concentration is another factor
which makes it more difficult for Pacific Islander artists to succeed in Australia and New Zealand. However, as interest in the skills and insights of Pacific Islander artists continues to develop in Australia and New Zealand, the future may offer more prospects for them.

The growing acceptance and appreciation of Aboriginal art in Australian museums has raised the status of Aboriginal culture in the perception of non-indigenous Australians. In recent years the proliferation of exhibitions and publications on Aboriginal art have provided an accessible and thought provoking form of cross-cultural communication. Although the context within which the works are encountered by the mainstream Australian audience is still informed by Western cultural and aesthetic perceptions, exhibitions and their related publications now reflect a degree of active participation by informants of the indigenous culture they represent. Curatorial, liaison and education positions, specified for indigenous people, have recently been established within Australian museums because the governing bodies of these institutions are now aware of the value of the contribution fo indigenous poersons.

Museums in many Pacific countries face less fortituous circumstances than their counterparts in Australia, New Zealand and Hawai'i. Some museums in Pacific countries were established during the colonial era, primarily to serve the interests of the expatriate community. Museums, such as the New Caledonia Museum, have had to overcome the apathy of their local indigenous constituency who may still need to be
convinced that museums have a viable function to fulfill for their society. As well, the level of funding for Pacific museums is generally insufficient as the national governments with limited budgets have priorities in providing essential services and economic development. Although most of the staff of Pacific museums and cultural centres are indigenous people, specialised training in museum operations is generally not available in their own country and must be undertaken overseas. As well, because of budgetary constraints, staffing levels are low. This, in turn, limits the functions of the museum and the services it could potentially provide for the benefit of the local population, such as educational services for schools and undertaking extensive fieldwork to record the cultural achievements of the past and the present.

However, the merit of supporting cultural institutions has become more apparent to the leaders of Pacific Islands nations because of the role of such institutions in assisting the development of national cultural identity. The establishment of the Sir Geoffrey Henry Cultural Centre in the Cook Islands, in time for the 6th Pacific Festival of Arts held there in 1992, indicated the value of local institutions which supported and celebrated national culture to other Pacific leaders.

Also keeping with the Australian example, although similar situations have developed across the Pacific, it is demonstrable that indigenous people are increasingly gaining control of the management of the present artistic output of their people, as well as that of their forebears which has entered Western museums. Most directors and curators of
Pacific Islands nations' museums are 'nationals' (indigenous people of that country). In Australia, although there are not yet any indigenous directors of museums (which are much larger in scale and diversified in content than Pacific museums), there are a number of Aboriginal curators, education and liaison officers. Aboriginal curators, including Djon Mundine, Hetti Perkins, Brenda Croft and others who have been mentioned, are making a considerable contribution to Australian museology and the presentation and interpretation of Aboriginal art, as observed in Chapter 8.

Outside the realm of museums, artists, teachers, politicians and other activists continue to support the role of artists, especially as visionaries of the transformations occurring in contemporary society. This was demonstrated in Chapter 7 on Papua New Guinean contemporary art with evidence that writers and other members of the so-called 'educated elite' actively supported the careers of artists and facilitated their involvement in important projects.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE PRESENT SET OF RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN INDIGENOUS SOCIETIES AND THEIR ART AND WESTERN CULTURE

Some conclusions may be drawn from the material presented in this thesis that indicate the advantages, disadvantages, and mutual benefits of the relationships established between Pacific art and Western culture to date. These are summarised below.
The diversity of physical environments within the Pacific region, and the variation in the cultural, social, economic and political circumstances of the indigenous people have been referred to from time to time, for example in the case studies in Chapters 4, 5, and 7, and in references to the diversity of Aboriginal cultures in Chapters 6 and 8. Yet the Pacific region was selected as a region with a number of identifiable linking factors: it is a geographical region; there were pre-contact links between many island groups in the Pacific; all of the indigenous peoples of the region have experienced a colonial era, although they were dominated by different Western powers for varied periods; in the paradigm of 'primitive' art the Pacific region, often called 'Oceania', was perceived as an identifiable region in both the disciplines of art history and anthropology; at present there is a new concept of Australia as part of the 'Asia Pacific' region. The Pacific Festival of Arts (Chapter 9) is a major event where indigenous people display their cultural diversity yet discuss common concerns.

But the Pacific is not one place. Each island and mainland sub-region has its own specificities of environment, local history, religious beliefs, social structures and cultural forms: these inform the peoples' ideas and styles of art and shape the ways it is produced and received. The chapters of the thesis have focused on different sites throughout the Pacific region (in particular the South Pacific region), places where specific types of art are produced. Although brief, the case studies in Chapters 4 and 5, demonstrated that different socio-cultural conditions, material resources, physical environments and
technical skills have assisted the development of characteristic artforms. Prior to European contact each indigenous society had established social hierarchies, systems of belief, patterns of trade and ceremonial exchange. In the post-contact period indigenous societies have shared broad commonalities such as the experience of colonialism, the impact of Christianity, adaptation to Western systems of government, education and economy. But local differences persist despite the absorption of these influences and the transformations they effected in indigenous societies.

The Pacific region is one of great distances, which may be measured not only physically, but also culturally and symbolically. Throughout the region people have different vantage points - indigenous and non-indigenous, past and present - from which they observe, discuss and value art. Considerable conceptual distances between indigenous and non-indigenous cultures and their perceptions of art have often been barely explored. Where this thesis began, in an era of European dominance of the South Pacific region, ‘primitive’ cultures and their art were perceived as supine and, in this passive state, could be packaged and profits made at will from them by European scholars and connoisseurs. Now, having struggled for their intellectual as well as political independence, indigenous people proudly assert their different identities. Changes in the degree of acceptance of indigenous art by Western cultural institutions, and in the role of indigenous people within such institutions, were reviewed in Chapters 10 and 11.
Relationships between people of different cultures are restricted by language, the basis of exchange and understanding. My lack of Aboriginal or Pacific languages restricted what this thesis could achieve. All the information used in researching it was in the English language, even that derived from indigenous informants. The dominance of Western languages and institutions has created difficulties for indigenous people in their dealings with Western cultural institutions. Nevertheless, in recent years, these tensions have had some positive results, frank exchange has lead to clearer insights on the ways visual culture is (or should be) represented and helped focus discussion on issues considered relevant by indigenous people. This was particularly illustrated by introducing the theory of abrogation, and how some urban Aboriginal artists effectively abrogate the art, language and symbols of the dominant Western art-culture system in Australia to emphasise the problems of their relationships with it.

Another problem with language experienced in a thesis of this nature is the necessity to translate everything into the conventions of academic language. In some ways, working on a doctoral thesis such as this perpetuates the Western culture of superior knowledge and expertise. This may entrench the power relationship which has masked the voices of others. The writer has endeavoured to recognise that Western scholarship on indigenous people and their art is not the only source of information, but has sought other avenues, including personal communication with indigenous artists, writers and curators, field trips, being involved on collaborative projects and
working in an Aboriginal community, in order to learn about indigenous art through a number of experiences in a variety of settings.

In terms of relationships, this thesis has also encountered the roles of various mediators who have been involved in the collection and representation of indigenous art since the early twentieth century. It has included an overview of the roles played by some individuals (collectors, curators, theorists, artists) and some institutions, (museums and art galleries) in negotiating and implementing the collection and promotion of indigenous art in Western institutions and in the development of Western markets for indigenous art. Recent developments in museum collection, exhibition and organisational policies reflected changing attitudes towards how art might be mediated and represented (see Chapter 10).

Western cultural institutions are not the only power in the cultural field. Anthropologists, art historians and other scholars, collectors, dealers and patrons have, to some degree, conditioned the reception of indigenous Pacific art in the Western world. More in the past than at present, Western scholars have set the value criteria for entry into museum collections, access to art, and the discourse around it. Now that marginality, gender, ethnicity and cultural identity have all become issues in art production and responses to art, new criteria have to be addressed. Since indigenous artists, scholars and leaders have taken the responsibility of representing their art and culture in Western spheres, new relationships between indigenous artists and non-indigenous
audiences are being negotiated and different concepts of art are being explored.

By the mid-1990s, the advantages of the relationship to both indigenous and Western cultures appear to be some which are primarily to the advantage of Western culture, others which advantage indigenous cultures (some more than others), and advantages which accrue to both indigenous and Western cultures. These are perceived as follows.

- Evidence was produced in Chapter 2 that, at least until the 1960s, indigenous art from the Pacific region was part of the conceptualisation of 'primitive' societies and their art devised by Western scholars. This conceptualisation reflected the dominance of European powers and their assumption of cultural superiority. The paradigm of 'primitive' art, with its attendant features, was not favourable to indigenous societies. It has taken a long time for this paradigm to be deconstructed particularly because of the long-lasting nature of the stereotypes it established. The paradigm of 'primitive' art disadvantaged indigenous people for a considerable time.

Nevertheless the paradigm of primitive art provided a basis for scientific and artistic enquiry. Many individual European artists engaged in early modernist movements, whose genius is recognised within the Western art-culture system, were inspired by the indigenous art of the Pacific region. It has made an impact on Western culture, over time evoking a range of responses and encouraging intellectual discourse. The disciplines of anthropology and art history have gained from the
study of Pacific cultures and their art forms and led the way to a wider appreciation of the aesthetic forms of indigenous Pacific cultures by Western audiences. There is some degree of mutual benefit in this.

- The investigations in Chapter 3 centred on the Western categorisation of indigenous art and this was referred to in subsequent chapters. The disciplines of anthropology and art history have provided a framework of research, fieldwork, style analysis, documentation, conservation and systems of classification, all of which contribute to the identification and preservation of Pacific art forms. Although these systems were initially used to identify Pacific art objects which have entered collections in Western countries, they have nevertheless established a basis on which objects can be evaluated historically and aesthetically in terms of world culture.

All of the categories discussed in Chapter 3 were devised by Western scholars. Although Graburn's 1976 schema, for example, encompassed changing social and cultural circumstances of indigenous people in the 1960s to 1970s, several of his categories still contained a eurocentric bias. A closer examination of some categories showed that most had little meaning or utility for indigenous people, and the only two terms understood and sometimes used by indigenous people (apart from those with a sophisticated knowledge of the Western art-culture system) were 'traditional' and 'contemporary'. The shortcomings, in particular the ambiguities, of the existing widely used Western categories for
indigenous art became apparent when they were applied to a particular art form, bark paintings.

Research, documentation and conservation by Western institutions and scholars are now recognised as a valuable resource for Pacific cultures. There are some ways, albeit indirectly, by which Western scholars, artists and connoisseurs have been of benefit to Pacific societies; firstly, by documenting their cultures in written and visual records at a time when indigenous people did not have these skills; secondly, because the Western habit of collecting resulted, over time, in an accumulation of objects (many types of which are no longer made) which can provide a valuable resource to assist indigenous people to rediscover the past. Today, art history, as an active discipline with many inter-disciplinary links, can help explain art in its social and historical contexts. Its methods and systems of analysis can assist a discovery of the origins and influences which shape art forms. With the active participation of indigenous artists and other informants, accepting and relying on their knowledge and interpretations of their culture, art history can potentially encourage and support the development of art in the South Pacific region more than it has done in the past.

- Regimes of value were discussed in Chapter 4. One aim of this chapter was to indicate, by way of a few examples, the diversity of regimes of value in indigenous societies and the deep convictions on which they rest. There is insufficient recognition of indigenous values and value systems in Western culture, and there has been a tendency for the West to
prioritise its values over indigenous ones, both in museological practices and the art market. Western culture has developed its own regimes of value around Pacific art objects, not only as valuable commodities in the international art market, but also as cultural treasures of great importance. Nevertheless, the West’s growing interest in indigenous art, including the development of a diversified consumer market for it, has created new opportunities for indigenous artists.

‘Regimes of values’ covered different value systems within indigenous societies, as well as linkages between indigenous and Western culture and within the Western art-culture system. One of Appadurai’s findings was that, in intercultural exchanges, there may be either a very high or very low set of shared standards between the parties (Appadurai 1986:15). In the case of some urban Aboriginal artists, there is a very high degree of understanding (not necessarily sharing) of the set of standards and ‘regimes of value’ of the Australian arts establishment. Familiarity with Australia’s mainstream visual culture, and training in the special skills to work within its cultural institutions, has facilitated the entry of some Aborigines to work within their structures as artists, curators, and educationalists. However, such persons also bring with them an Aboriginal set of values, and constructive ways to demonstrate the different sets of values are presently being found.

The relationships of artists from remote Aboriginal communities with the Australian arts establishment are based on a shallower set of shared standards and greater disparities
in their respective regimes of value. In some circumstances Aboriginal groups have restricted knowledge about their images and symbols in order to protect them within their own regime of values. Restricting knowledge from exposure to outsiders protects the repertoire of inherited subjects, determined by land and kinship, the foundations of Aboriginal society. Stories or representations which are protected by non-revelation retain a vital personal importance for the artist and at the same time transcend the level of the merely personal. Both of these factors contribute to a quality of responsibility and integrity which helps counterbalance the effects of commercialisation.

On the other hand, making art for sale creates a range of new relationships with Western culture for these Aboriginal artists. It is important for Aboriginal people to take their place in contemporary Australian society as well as to maintain their own traditions, and their art often demonstrates this objective. Firstly, paintings made for sale do not circulate in a restricted context but in the Australian and international art market; the painters are aware of the requirements of this market and have responded positively to it by innovations in design and composition, and using materials and techniques which appeal to Western aesthetics and ideas about Aboriginal art. Secondly, Aboriginal artists have indicated that participating in wider society is part of their strategy for survival. They are aware that art is a way to transmit their knowledge to outsiders and through their art they can communicate their relationship to the land in the hope that other Australians will comprehend it.
• The study of the continuity of tradition (Chapter 5) revealed that some indigenous societies maintain a deep commitment and adherence to ancestral beliefs, social structures and relationships, and their physical manifestation in traditional art forms. Again the imbalance in the relationship was shown. The intricacies of kula have fascinated Western scholars since early this century and it has been investigated from aesthetic, economic, political and social perspectives. But neither Tongan ngatu (or tapa traditions in other Pacific societies), nor body decoration, have received the same amount of interest and coverage in the Western literature on Pacific art as has been accorded to the kula and some art styles such as Sepik or Maori sculpture. In Western terms, body decoration is ephemeral art and it is also non-collectable. For Papua New Guinea Highlanders it is an essential form of self-expression and marker of group identity, an inherent part of their culture which can be recreated at will.

The Western art-culture system recognises certain types of indigenous art objects and practices as significant in its terms. In particular, how deeply the art of Aboriginal and Pacific cultures has penetrated Western culture has been largely controlled and vetted by the West as the dominant partner in this exchange. This does not lessen the importance of other culturally significant, deeply embedded, indigenous art forms and practices in their own realm. From its position of dominance in the colonial era Western society neglected, or did not sufficiently recognise and acknowledge, the diverse cultural traditions of indigenous people. The relationships
between indigenous cultures and Western culture are improving as this is more fully realised in the Western art-culture system. Although much progress has been made to redress the imbalances in the relationship, there are still aspects of it which are basically eurocentric and uncommitted to the needs of living indigenous cultures.

- Innovation in art was considered as a process of change (Chapter 6). It is not only an outcome of Western influences on indigenous cultures, but was also shown to have occurred prior to European contact. In the examples of Aboriginal art given, innovations were often motivated by factors internal to Aboriginal culture. Insofar as innovations in Aboriginal art reflect external (Western) influences, for example the adoption of Western materials, new opportunities for exchange or sale of art works, conversion to Christianity and so on, a degree of reciprocity in the relationship may be discerned. The secularisation of traditional art forms, as undertaken by Pintupi, Warlpiri and other Aboriginal peoples in the desert region, protected restricted information from outsiders but enabled the artists/custodians to engage in a dialogue about their land and culture and its representation in art with Western audiences for their art. Rather than attempting to find adequate categories for new developments and subsequently confining objects to them, which may impose artificial restrictions on the dialogue between Western and indigenous people, viewing developments as a process of innovation allows an open-ended dialogue to take place.
As Papua New Guinea emerged from its colonial status to become a new nation, contemporary Papua New Guinean art and literature reflected this important turning point in the relationships between an indigenous nation and the West (Chapter 7). The anti-authoritarian stance of Papua New Guinean writers in the early 1970s reviewed the bitterness felt towards the colonial regime. But the making of a new nation, envisaging its ideals and goals, rapidly became the focus of attention for visual artists, writers and idealogues. For the past two decades (1970s to 1990s) contemporary Papua New Guinean artists have contributed to shaping their country's modernity, based on a conjunction of traditional values and Western systems. Perhaps because of the loss of economic and political power over their previous colony, Australia has taken little interest in recent artistic developments in Papua New Guinea. This reflects the lack of interest by other past colonial powers in the contemporary art of other Pacific nations. When contrasted with the level of Australian interest and investment in Aboriginal art over the past three decades, a disadvantage to indigenous artists from Pacific Islands states clearly emerges.

In the same two decades (1970s to 1990s), urban Aboriginal art has emerged as a strong political force, as well as a powerful aesthetic one. A significant number of artworks by urban Aboriginal artists are critical of other Australian's ignorance of, or indifference to, the Aboriginal history of their country and the inequalities suffered by Aboriginal people. The theory of abrogation was introduced to illustrate how Aboriginal artists who had attained a sophisticated
understanding of the canon of Western art, its methods of representation, visual codes and various forms, use these to their advantage to respond to the dominant culture in its own terms. As well as criticising the marginalisation of Aboriginal people throughout Australia's (white) history, urban Aboriginal artists and curators now refuse to be marginalised by the Western art-culture system. They do not perceive the Western art-culture system to be the only centre of influence, but direct their art and its messages to a multiplicity of audiences, including Aboriginal people and other indigenous minorities.

Another focus for indigenous artists of the South Pacific region is cultural communication with each other. This is exemplified with the Pacific Festival of Arts, the largest regional indigenous festival which takes place once every four years (Chapter 9). The PFA celebrates the cultural diversity of the peoples of the Pacific region and, at the same time, emphasises their common concerns. Art provides many excellent channels for communicating experiences, knowledge, insights, and symbols. An appreciation of each others' culture and lifestyle can be shared and explained through images and performances. Indigenous people are becoming more vocal and more involved in issues of their cultural heritage. The involvement of Aboriginal and Pacific Islander artists and cultural leaders in events such as the PFA, assists in the wider dissemination of the ideas envisaged in the arts presented at such festivals. The PFA provides an opportunity for the restatement of each participating country's cultural identity, both to the indigenous audience and to the world at large.
More in the past than at the present, Western responses to indigenous art were governed by Western aesthetic tastes and perceptions of value. Europeans were more oriented to their own perceptions of what constituted Pacific art, directed by a nostalgiac vision of the purity of form in the pre-contact past. Until the 1970s this led to an selective recognition of art from all the forms of creative expression practised by the indigenous peoples of the Pacific region. Within the band of art objects considered desirable in the West, a high proportion of the cultural property of Pacific cultures remains in Western collections. The Western art-culture system has been slow to accept the emergence of new art forms, although the level of acceptance for innovative and/or new art forms has accelerated since the mid-1980s. These aspects of the relationship are evidenced in the history of Australian museums and their collections (Chapter 10).

Recent theoretical, critical and curatorial developments in the Western art/culture system, especially in the last decade, augur well for the future of Pacific art and its relationships with Western culture. For example, the increased attention paid to the role of women in society and their contributions to visual culture, as well as the fact that more women are participating in research and curatorial roles, indicates that substantially more attention and interest will be paid to the creativity of indigenous women and their art forms.

The majority of Aborigines and Pacific Islanders still do not have sufficient access to the collections representing their own artistic and cultural heritage which are in the possession
of the major Western museums and art galleries. In Australia art galleries and museums are rapidly developing policies enabling the participation of Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders in all aspects of their operations, and scholars of indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds are engaged in the development of astute and viable theories and constructive critiques with regard to the collection and representation of their art. It is most likely that Western museums, art galleries and art historians will soon give greater recognition to the diversity of contemporary art emanating from other South Pacific cultures and recognise that its present forms are as valid and interesting as those of the past. New art forms from Pacific islands cultures will become more accepted in the West as Western scholars, curators and artists adjust their perspectives to these new dimensions of creativity and seek information from their indigenous counterparts. A more closely shared interest may also help scholars to devise better and more useful categories and classification systems for Pacific art which would be recognised as valuable across cultures. It is also likely that some types of cultural aesthetic objects which have previously been classed as artifacts or 'tourist' art will, eventually, become accepted as art in Western culture.

The Western institutionalised art system previously provided very few opportunities for indigenous art producers and cultural leaders to have a direct input into the development of museums and their collections, as demonstrated by the histories of Pacific Islands museums set up during the colonial era (Chapter 11). One reason for this was that people from
indigenous cultures were not considered to have the right background of training in and knowledge of Western systems to be able to contribute. However, as Pacific nations achieved their independence the enormity of this presumption was realised and policies revised; now the majority of museum directors and staff of Pacific Islands museums and cultural centres are indigenous persons. An example was given, from the New Caledonia Museum, of how a display of treasured Kanak objects installed by expatriate designers without consultation with the appropriate cultural leaders, was considered to be offensive to them and caused Kanaks to avoid the Museum until the display was rectified. Having a participatory role encourages indigenous people to take a greater interest in the resources and operations of their museums and cultural centres, which may otherwise be considered to have little relevance to their appreciation of their own cultures. Many museums and cultural centres in the Pacific Islands nations lack sufficient financial and human resources. This greatly impedes their operations and makes it difficult to implement programs or services which may better suit their local constituencies. Although promoting cultural tourism may be high on their country’s national agenda, offering ‘touristic experiences’ has a lower priority for most Pacific museums’s directors than engaging in research and projects of primarily local interest. Pacific Islands museums alone provide a fertile field of study of the ambivalent nature of the present relationship between indigenous societies of the South Pacific region and Western society.
The present relationship is ambivalent because it is on shifting ground. Since the 1970s indigenous people have achieved a far greater level of acceptance for themselves and their cultural priorities in the Western art-culture system. The economic power of the West, represented in this context by the size and reach of the art market, still operates on the basis of self-interest. It is often testing for indigenous artists (as for any other artists) to put artistic and cultural integrity before economic gain. The influence of Western cultural institutions, in this study represented by Australian museums, is powerful and they exercise a considerable degree of control over the cultural agenda of the nation. It is laudable that Australian museums have recently reached a consensus to implement significant policy enabling Australia's indigenous people to take their rightful place at all levels of museum operations, including decision making. In the mid-1990s, although they have gained influence in Australia's Westernised art-culture system, it is probable that Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders are wary of whose interests are best served in this milieu, and seek to restate the importance of their cultural identity at every opportunity.

In most Pacific Islands nations, artists often have to rely on their own resources, as support from their own governments is minimal. Artistic success is matched by the individual's enterprise in selling and promoting their own work. In Papua New Guinea, for example, this has engendered loyalty among the contemporary artists to the local market for their art, as the majority of commissions for major works have come from
government departments, local corporations and private individuals within the country. Invitations to exhibit overseas, and large scale acquisitions by international cultural institutions, are still rare.

Australia's interests in the Pacific region have waned since the 1970s as Pacific Islands nations have gained their independence and become less reliant on Australia as a regional power. In the 1980s and 1990s the desire of Pacific nations to engage in cultural exchange or obtain support for museum or other art projects has generally been met with indifference by Australian authorities.

The arts need to be sustained first by their own cultural system to remain a dynamic force. Although international recognition is welcome, what is fundamentally more important to practising indigenous artists is acceptance and recognition by their own societies, coupled with self confidence and stimulated by a high degree of awareness of the importance of their contribution to their own living culture.