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Family footprints: tracing the past in the  
present through curatorial  
autobiographical practice

Anthony R. Bourke  
University of Wollongong

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# FAMILY FOOTPRINTS

## Tracing the Past in the Present through Curatorial Autobiographical Practice

Master of Arts by Research

from

University of Wollongong

by

Anthony Bourke

Faculty of Creative Arts

2008

## Certification

I, Anthony Bourke, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Master of Arts by Research in the Faculty of Creative Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Anthony Bourke

Date:

## Acknowledgements

Elizabeth Ellis, Keith Vincent Smith, Peter Emmett, Jo Holder, John Darling, Patricia Bourke, Belinda Bourke, various family members, the late Michael Riley, Tracey Moffatt, Hetti Perkins, Brenda Croft, Jonathan Jones, Djon Mundine, Diana Wood Conroy, Amanda Lawson, Michael Rolfe, Daniel Cunningham and staff at the Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre, David Corbet, Mitchell Library Staff, Jennifer Leahy of Silversalt Photography, Marise Williams and Ross Murray.

## Abstract

The research is a study of a curatorial development, process and practice over ten years and three exhibitions that culminated in the exhibition *Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770*, in 2008.

The accompanying written text charts the evolution from a 1998 exhibition *Flesh & Blood: A Story of Sydney, 1788-1998* where for the first time I synthesised various strands in my life: my career as a curator in Aboriginal art and relationships with several of the artists, an exploration of my own colonial family history, and a growing interest and expertise in colonial material.

*Flesh & Blood* has been described as a new form of curatorship (see Lawrenson): an exhibition that was both traditional and innovative, in which the past was brought into the present by the juxtaposition of appropriated images, and the weaving of Aboriginal and personal settler narratives for the first time. The inclusion of artworks by Aboriginal artists disrupted a linear European telling of history.

The concept I developed for the second exhibition in 2006, *EORA: Mapping Aboriginal Sydney, 1770-1850* was to identify and examine where possible the Aborigines dispossessed in those first years of settlement. This was a counterbalance to my family history and provided the opportunity to bring into the public arena the extraordinary scholarship of Keith Vincent Smith, the biographer of *King Bungaree* and *Bennelong*. The exhibition demonstrated how much information is now known about the Eora people and provided an opportunity for the Mitchell Library to showcase for the first time their colonial Indigenous material. While curatorially conservative, it was the most comprehensive exhibition of the subject matter ever assembled.

In 2006 I also commenced my Masters of Arts by Research at the University of

Wollongong in order to examine the third phase of my research: specific encounters between my family and Indigenous people. I started with Philip Gidley King, my maternal great-great-great-great-grandfather, as he was a First Fleeter as Second Lieutenant to Captain Arthur Phillip in 1788. Both these men experienced the first encounters with Aboriginal people in Botany Bay and their documentation has provided the official historical record, as the other better known and subsequently published journal writers arrived in Botany Bay several days after them. While I have other encounters to examine between my family and Indigenous people, the events of 1770 and 1788 are so fundamental as foundational narratives, that they have become the entire focus of this thesis.

As my reading and written research progressed, the visual images I discovered, or were familiar with, became an indispensable element of the project. With my background as a curator and the variety of visual imagery available, an exhibition emerged as the most effective means of articulating my thesis. *Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770* also evolved into a quest to identify and articulate the Aboriginal perspective and voice, where possible, on the events of 1770 and 1788, and reflected the latest scholarship. The Aboriginal point of view has undoubtedly been best expressed by artists, particularly Gordon Bennett, and a younger generation such as Daniel Boyd and Jonathan Jones. Also incorporated again has been the most recent research of Keith Vincent Smith who has identified or verified several of the Aboriginal participants and eye witnesses of those first encounters.

In 2006 I moved to Bundeena in the Sutherland Shire, and was subsequently invited to propose an exhibition for the Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre. As the southern shore of Botany Bay is part of the Sutherland Shire, an exhibition about the responses to the events of 1770 and 1788 in Botany Bay was the logical outcome.



This provided the opportunity for me to present my ideas and research findings through a curatorial process that had been evolving over ten years. Rather than “conclusions”, my curatorial thesis illustrates how many different narratives contribute to a national narrative, and that there are many ways of interpreting and understanding history.

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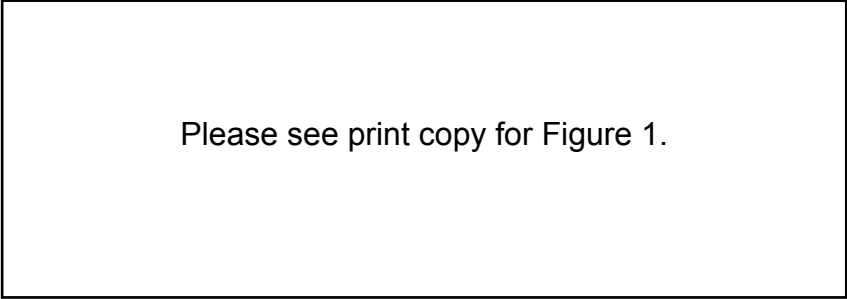
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## INTRODUCTION



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Figure 1. Daniel Boyd, *Untitled*, 2006. Sandpit (sand, wood), model ship (wood, felt, cord). 300 x 300 cm. Courtesy the artist and Mori Gallery, Sydney.

This thesis will illustrate the evolution of a unique curatorial practice over a ten year period that culminated in the exhibition *Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770*, staged at the Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre 28 March - 11 May 2008. We are all still living with the reverberations from when Captain Cook on the H.M. *Bark Endeavour* sailed into Botany Bay in 1770. With colonial ancestors as participants from 1788, experience in Aboriginal, colonial and contemporary art, and intensive historical research, I am able to examine in a distinctive way and primarily with visual imagery, aspects of our colonial history, and the responses to the events of 1770 and 1788.

Curatorship is a weird beast and my computer does not even accept it as a word: curated survey or retrospective exhibitions can make or break an artist's reputation; it can be a form of story-telling or a forum for ideas; the curator can play a passive role in the selection and presentation of artworks or ruthlessly utilise artists' images for a narrative, set an agenda, or further their own career ambitions. It can also leave you feeling personally without talent and dependent on the creativity of others. While the

Oxford English Dictionary gives several definitions of a curator, Wikipedia (as of 15<sup>th</sup> August 2008) actually provides a better account of the activities, defining a curator in contemporary art as one “who organizes an exhibition. In this context, to curate means to select works of art and arrange them to achieve a desired effect. This might involve finding a strategy for display. Thematic, conceptual, and formal approaches are all prevalent”. (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curator>).

The title *Family Footprints* refers to the research into my colonial ancestors that started with *Flesh & Blood* in 1998 and was the starting point for *Lines in the Sand* because Philip Gidley King left our first family footprints on the sand at Botany Bay. In addition to examining their lives, as a later generation I am also following in their footsteps. Some were leaders or early entrepreneurs, typical of the larger than life individuals that were attracted to the opportunities the colony offered. I am more an inheritor of the artistic and intellectual aspects of their characters, or more like my great-great-uncle, the bibliophile David Scott Mitchell, although I am not comparing myself to their achievements.

From an early age I was drawn towards artistic people, and art and music, although I exhibited no inclination (or facility) to practise myself. I grew up in a middle-class family in Newcastle where sport was more important than art, although my mother could draw and was interested in ceramics, but these were viewed as hobbies and my father rather humoured her about them rather than encouraged her. Her home-decorating style was conservative and of the period, but she had a very good eye for colour and hung paintings, prints, mirrors, etc., in a symmetrical, evenly balanced way which influenced me. In the early 1960s I was sent to boarding school in Sydney where I was first made aware of Marimekko designs, the fashionable interior designer Marion Hall Best, and I remember visiting Florence Broadhurst with my mother and purchasing



an orange wallpaper which, in retrospect, was particularly garish. In my last years at school I began visiting galleries and purchased a Robert Dickerson charcoal portrait from Barry Stern Gallery and a Donald Friend sketch from Artarmon Galleries.

After graduating with a Bachelor of Arts from the Australian National University in the late 1960s, and unsure of my career path, I travelled overseas for several years as many in my generation did and was based in London. After various adventures, I returned to Australia in the early 1970s when Photorealism and Pop Art were very dominant in Europe and America, but the art world in Australia had only just embraced Abstract Expressionism. With no relevant gallery experience or art school education, I opened *Ace's Art Shop* in Sydney to show the variety of interesting and primarily figurative artists I knew - many of them friends, who seemed excluded at that time from the commercial galleries.

The 1970s were an exciting time to enter the art world. It was a period of emancipation in many respects, for women, Aborigines, and gays, to give just a few examples. Art absorbed and reflected this. What was “art” was redefined with new hierarchies and was presented in new ways to new audiences. I cannot remember being especially influenced by any particular exhibitions or curators, but those early Biennales of Sydney (the inaugural Biennale was in 1973) provided examples of imaginative curatorship and themes, and invaluable international influences in the days when we were more isolated from the world. My main influences were the artists I knew or exhibited like Martin Sharp (born 1942, Sydney) who was cutting up art books for collages, “using the language of art to make new images” (Waterlow 18). Peter Tully, one of the first “gay” artists, made sought after jewellery out of any kitsch and amusing objects he could string together, making plastic precious. William Yang was photographing Sydney’s exciting and outrageous social life. I liked artists whose work

reflected and commented on the times and was ironic, humorous, imaginative or political.

I have been part of the art world ever since, although for over the last twenty years I have specialised in Aboriginal art at a time when it has become recognised as one of the more extraordinary art movements of the late twentieth century. While I staged many exhibitions by Aboriginal artists from the remote Central and Western Deserts, and Northern Arnhem Land, I have been most interested in working with artists such as Tracey Moffatt (born Brisbane, 1960), Gordon Bennett (born Monto, QLD, 1955) and the late Michael Riley (born Dubbo, 1960-2004), in the initial stages of their now internationally recognised careers. The emergence of urban Aboriginal art has been a fascinating phenomenon in which I played a role, staging in Sydney at the Aboriginal Artists Gallery, for example, the now historic first exhibition of Aboriginal photography *NADOC '86 Exhibition of Aboriginal and Islander Photographers*, which was when urban Aboriginal art in particular entered the mainstream gallery art world.

Over the years I have successfully exhibited and promoted many artists, and I have been effective in presenting their work to advantage, and have been commercial and businesslike enough to survive. I would like to have worked as a curator at one of the major public art institutions, but these positions have been occupied by an extremely talented generation of Aboriginal curators such as Hetti Perkins (currently at the Art Gallery of NSW), Brenda Croft (currently at the National Gallery of Australia), and Djon Mundine (currently at the Campbelltown Arts Centre).

In commercial galleries, most work is more about promotion, representation, dealing or connoisseurship than curating. But from early on I was asked to curate exhibitions and I realised that this is how I could tell stories and express myself. I was good at selecting or presenting overviews or surveys, and I was an effective exhibition

co-ordinator. Exhibitions I curated in the 1980s include *The Bowl*, a 1982 international touring exhibition of works in different media; *Living in the Pacific* (Crafts Council of Australia Gallery, 1983, Sydney), designed to make Australians more conscious that we reside in the Pacific; *Art & Aboriginality* that travelled to the Portsmouth Arts Festival in 1987; and another survey, *Contemporary Aboriginal Art 1990 - from Australia* in Glasgow.

In 1997 I was offered an interesting invitation: Peter Emmett, Senior Curator at the Museum of Sydney asked me to propose an exhibition. He hoped I would curate an exhibition from the Aboriginal artists I worked with, or other artists who are now an important but sometimes neglected part of our art history - like Martin Sharp, or Peter Tully and David McDiarmid.

I am descended from two families who had lived on the site of the Museum of Sydney when it was First Government House - Governor King (1800-1806) on my mother's side and Governor Bourke (1831-1837) on my father's. I immediately knew I had to respond to this, although until this time I had not examined my family history in any detail. I realised I could tell the story of the early development of Sydney through my colonial ancestors, and to represent my lifetime, I would include specific "Sydney" works by Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists I had worked with.

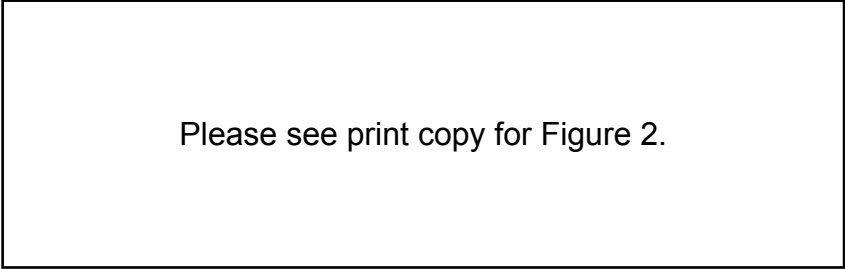
For the first time I researched my family history and curated an exhibition at a public institution. As I will be discussing, it was criticised by some (for example, Peter Emmett in preparatory meetings for the exhibition) as too traditional and an exhibition of the "master narrative," the type of exhibition the Museum of Sydney had been seeking to avoid as it was at odds with their post-modern, post-colonial approach to museology. To others, however, like Anna Lawrenson, it was innovative and a new form of curatorship, and my career took a new direction.

## Chapter One

### *FLESH & BLOOD: A Sydney Story 1788 - 1998*

Museum of Sydney, 28 November 1998 - 14 February 1999

“In a sense Ace has broken the mould for exhibitions. He is the first to do it; perhaps he is the only one who could do it”. (Watson 244)



Please see print copy for Figure 2.

Figure 2. Poster for *Flesh & Blood: A Story of Sydney 1788-1998*.

Growing up in a middle class family in Newcastle, NSW, my illustrious colonial relations and Australian history were never discussed, although my mother is very interested in British history, and is the sort of person that can name all the Kings and Queens of England. It would have appeared snobbish to talk about one's relations, and in the family, a governor on each side rather neutralised any one-upmanship. While it is said that no-one who came to Australia was aristocratic (except possibly the Blaxlands,

although they had fallen on the proverbial hard times), the Bourkes can be traced beyond William Fitzadelm de Burgo, Viceroy of Ireland (who settled in AD 1199). Governor King's father was a draper from Devon, which made his achievements all the more admirable.

When I was educated in the 1950s and 1960s there seemed to be a view that Australian history post-1788 was not old enough to be interesting, and was dominated by Governor Macquarie. There was scarce reference to Aborigines. When I enrolled at the Australian National University in the mid-1960s, historians such as Professor Manning Clark were beginning to appreciate and articulate the complexities of Australian history, and were retrieving the reputations of some of the overlooked governors such as Richard Bourke, my great-great-great-grandfather.

From 1984 I was involved in the marketing and promotion of Aboriginal art and witnessed it merging into the mainstream Australian contemporary art scene, and becoming the art from Australia of most interest internationally. I staged many exhibitions on a regular basis, from most of the bark painting communities in northern Australia, and communities in the Central and Western Deserts. What especially interested me however, was the emergence of an exceptional generation of mostly art school trained Aborigines from urban areas, which included Tracey Moffatt, the late Michael Riley and Fiona Foley. They exhibited in the inaugural exhibition *Koori Art '84*, at Artspace in Sydney and went on to establish Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative in 1987. I formed close friendships with several of them, and wider relationships among the Aboriginal community. This had the effect of reinforcing many things for me: the importance of family and extended families, the complexities of kinship, the centrality of story telling, the documentation of oral histories, the preciousness of family photographs, attachment to place, memory, history and its

various narratives and interpretations, acceptance, generosity, reciprocity, belonging, obligations and payback!

These friends were genuinely interested in my colonial relations and modern Australian history and were the first people I really discussed my ancestors with, even though these European settlers had dispossessed their Aboriginal ancestors. Their interest encouraged me to tell my family story at the Museum of Sydney and the invitation to propose an exhibition was an extraordinary opportunity. It was career if not life changing. I produced a unique exhibition I had never ever contemplated or thought I was capable of. I do wonder what extraordinary exhibitions are lurking unwittingly in people, and will never be realised?

In the 1970s and 1980s I had watched how other neglected voices were finally being heard - the convicts, women, Aboriginal people and a wider variety of immigrants etc. My family represented the master narrative, and where did we fit into this new paradigm?

The Museum of Sydney, which opened in 1995 on the site of First Government House, and is part of the statutory body Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, had adopted a new and bold approach to museology, determined to present history in a new way - not the victors' version, but the shards and fragments, sounds, the more everyday untold stories that provided a more multi-layered and pluralistic history and interpretation. In the process the Museum had alienated the Friends of First Government House and many others who had fought to retain the heritage of the site. In 1995 there had been a symposium as the Museum opened entitled *SITES: Nailing the Debate: Archaeology and Interpretation in Museums*. Many archaeologists, historians, curators, architects and heritage consultants attended and spoke. Unfortunately I had not attended, and as I worked in another discipline, I was not fully aware of the opposing

ideological differences underpinning the project.

The Museum had to commemorate the site, address the politics of a national identity and history, display, interpret and conserve the heritage items and artefacts, and acknowledge an Aboriginal presence. A proposed giant statue of Governor Phillip was jettisoned for the evocative contemporary installation *Edge of the Trees* by Janet Lawrence and Aboriginal artist Fiona Foley in acknowledgement of the contested nature of the site.

Historian Professor Ann Curthoys said:

The Senior Curator of the Museum, Peter Emmett, sees the Museum as not about a building, but a place, Sydney. His approach generally, I think, he would describe as revisionist, post-colonial, post-modern, conceptual, and interdisciplinary (221).

The archaeologist Tracey Ireland commented:

The Museum of Sydney has deliberately abandoned the search for unified national history and is attempting to present a range of voices from the past. They risk being heard only as a cacophony, but it is a risk taken in an attempt to increase awareness of the plurality of cultural values and perspectives in our society. I welcome the opportunity the Museum of Sydney has provided to debate these issues (104).

Peter Emmett, the Senior Curator, and the person who had invited me to propose an exhibition there, responded by wondering if Tracey Ireland wanted to start the colonising project over again, with the hindsight of 'History':

Surely we're tired of national myths and stereotypes; history is so much stranger than fiction; those imperial narratives of self-

fulfilling intentions, as if history is a stage with a play waiting to be performed, the city a model waiting to be built. This museum is not a staged diorama history. It responds to site, to place, to associations with place (111).

Emmett went on eloquently: “How to curate the relation between things, fragments, survivals, the absences, the imaginings, the poetic, profound, the people places?” (114) and “our medium and methodology is about the poetics of space, the choreography of people, the relation of things and senses, spatial and sensory compositions, to exploit the sensuality and materiality of the museum medium”(115). Emeritus Professor John Mulvaney responded however with “Here, it seems, no ordered thought is intended. Perhaps this museum is the type specimen of the post-modernist age?” (238).

By 1997, despite the excellent role the Museum had played in raising the debate about interpretations in museums and the approaches to historical narratives, attendances were below expectations and the approach was regarded by some as too subtle or narrow. There was an increasing reliance on the exhibition program, many of which had been exceptional.

How was I going to approach my family Sydney story in this quite hostile ideological environment? Ultimately, as one always should, I just had to tell my story my way, and no-one actually ever discussed with me alternative ways of approaching the curatorship. It has turned out to be the story I have felt most comfortable telling, as it is my story and I owned it, and I ignored a few relations who were uncomfortable with my emphasis, particularly in relation to Aborigines. I had so many different branches of my family that it risked being a tangle if I attempted to be too postmodern and fractured about it. It needed the basic structure of the family divisions, and also



illustrated how by going back a few generations we are related to so many people. My selection and groupings of objects would be what gave the exhibition individuality.

The Focus Gallery of the Museum of Sydney is a long thin gallery (26.876 x 5.650 metres). I divided the show into maternal and paternal family branches - with one long wall each. Bourke, Mitchell, Merewether, and Hickson families occupied one wall, and King, Macarthur, Brown, and Docker families occupied the other. At one end I hung a giant portrait of Governor Bourke (by Andrew Morton c.1841), that used to hang on the staircase at his house "Thornfields" in Ireland, and now hangs in Government House, Sydney. At the other end I hung the fifteen photographic images from Michael Riley's 1993 *Sacrifice* series, in the shape of the cross. This poignant work addresses conceptually, loss of religion, culture, land and language experienced by Aboriginal people from the prism especially of mission life, supposedly in exchange for Christian values and eternal life. I used it as a more general metaphor for the loss suffered by all people - black and white, not only my dead relations represented in the gallery and the families and life they had left in Europe, but the Aborigines we had dispossessed. In a glass case in front was a family bible (c.1770) that had passed through several generations and at the other end of the gallery was the portrait of Richard Bourke who had believed in the civilising power of the Bible.

The Museum of Sydney had a professional team of exhibition co-ordinators, editors, installers, media liaison/public relations, designers etc. The designer ensured all works I had selected would be accommodated, where I wanted them and under the required museum conditions (lighting, temperature control, etc). In the installation, one section was crowded, and it was suggested removing one item. The whole section then came to life. The item was placed in the outside foyer area where I hung all the contemporary "Sydney" works by artists I had worked with, to illustrate and express my

life time in this family story of Sydney. These works included a poster *Tiny Tim at the Opera House* by Martin Sharp, a painting of Sydney Harbour by Brett Whiteley, and Jeannie Baker's *A Walk Through Hyde Park*.

Walls were painted different shades to differentiate family branches, and a shelf-wedge was created below artworks on the wall, and between glass cabinets. On this shelf-wedge with text and images, I could "talk" people through the exhibition with more information and a contemporary commentary in addition to the exhibition item captions. For example, in the King section I included a newspaper photograph of Tracey Moffatt being escorted away by police in Portsmouth, U.K. in 1987 (where we were both attending the Portsmouth Arts Festival), for protesting at the flying of an Aboriginal flag by ships in the First Fleet Re-enactment, led by my cousin Jonathan King.

All family sections had a variety of material from various generations, and the shelf-wedge for more text ensured the exhibition scope extended from 1788 to 1998. Originally there was not going to be a catalogue which indicated reservations about the exhibition. But as the selection of the works crystallised, and the staff could more accurately visualise the exhibition, suddenly a catalogue was required and justified. This was prepared in haste, and my catalogue essay was badly edited on deadline, with no time to correct it. I felt particularly honoured however, that Joan Kerr, the late art historian, wrote the Foreword.

In 2006 when I was preparing the exhibition *EORA: Mapping Aboriginal Sydney from 1770-1850*, the exhibition team informed me that their surveys at the Mitchell Library had concluded that people are said to zigzag through exhibitions to what catches their eye, and spend, on average, about fifty minutes in most medium sized museum exhibitions. Their clientele were primarily over fifty, female, and residing on the

Sydney North Shore. With *Flesh & Blood*, people could dip into the different levels - the visual material, the display case items, the captions or the commentary, to the extent they wished or time permitted.

For the selection of material, I located family members in different branches. While in general women were the custodians of family information and material, most of the obsessed family historians were men, enthralled by one outstanding individual male who had usually married a wealthy woman. It was extraordinary what had remained in families throughout generations, usually through eldest sons, or unmarried daughters who had looked after their parents. People were sometimes surprised with my choices and some others were offended by my objective comments.

My immediate family was not wealthy. There were no Conrad Martens paintings hanging on our walls, unlike other branches of the family. My mother's collection did however provide a model for the show. Above a desk in her office/sewing room hung a cheap print of *The Vineyard*, her great-great-grandparents' house, as well as their portraits, a print of a painting of the King family in 1799, a print of Richard Bourke, and a portrait of his wife Elizabeth.

Most often we were descended through the women or younger brothers. People had many children, and some of them were spoiled and lazy, and fortunes soon dissipated. Family finances were obviously tied to Australia's economic fortunes, with some spectacular bankruptcies and the subsequent dispersal of possessions.

The most important contact I made was with Elizabeth Ellis, then the Curator of Pictures at the Mitchell Library. So much family documentation and material resided there that it was the most loans they had ever made to another institution, and the exhibition was presented in association with them. Like much archival material, many items raised issues of handling, presentation and conservation. At first Elizabeth Ellis

interrogated me about my knowledge and background reading, but I was just beginning my research. Fortunately I resemble Richard Bourke in one particular portrait she showed me - and there is an uncanny resemblance jumping several generations, and since noticing this, she was entirely cooperative.

Every Monday afternoon for several months I would go to the Library and she would have selected a variety of items from one family branch and we would discuss the items, handle them, and she would also tell me what else was in their collection. I was successful at gaining cooperation from people because I was so genuinely interested, and I was good at recognising a telling or emotive item and imagining a grouping of them.

The most extraordinary moment for me was when she showed me Richard Bourke's military uniform hat which she gently removed from its box and turned upside down to reveal his sweat marks. There was the perspiration of my great-great-great-grandfather, which seemed even more intimate, for example, than his handwriting or signature. I was extremely fortunate to have the assistance of a leading specialist who was familiar with the collection. Her ultimate compliment to me was that I presented the material in a "fresh" way.

Elizabeth also illustrated to me how "modern" Sydney had begun to be visible by about the 1820s, and how with the rise of the multi-nationals by the 1970s and 1980s the hold of families like mine dissipated, although we were never particularly successful in the business or mercantile world. Actually my relations had dropped out of the Dictionary of Biography by the turn of the twentieth century and had been absorbed into the middle class.

There was enough material in *Flesh & Blood* to create or recreate a feeling of other periods, such as paintings of the time, items of furniture, Anna Josepha King's

tiny 1805 muslin and silver thread dress, and King family dinner plates. These plates and a few other items however, proved to have an incorrect attribution, and I learnt a lot from the experts who came to the exhibition.

The collection of David Scott Mitchell, my great-great-uncle, formed the basis of the Mitchell Library. It was the largest personal collection about a specific area (Australasia and the Pacific), ever assembled by an individual. An effective grouping of items included three photographs of his house with books stacked up to the ceiling and lining the corridors, his armchair, revolving book case, and his gold framed pince-nez. I also included a book he had coveted very badly and finally purchased just before he died, Barron Field's 1819 *First Fruits of Australian Poetry*.

In this Mitchell section I also included a flattering portrait of David's seemingly handsome looking father, Dr. James Mitchell who had married a wealthy woman from the Scott family and had been extremely entrepreneurial. However I also included a hand-tinted ambrotype photograph (c.1855-65) that showed him to be rather a plain man.

Growing up, I could never take seriously the name of my great-great-great-grandfather Hannibal Macarthur who was John Macarthur's nephew, and married Philip Gidley King's daughter, Anna Maria. John Verge built them the "finest house in the colony" which I could illustrate with an 1840 painting of it by Conrad Martens. I was fascinated to learn that "The Vineyard" had an Indian cook, a Negro butler, peacocks in the gardens, and visitors such as Charles Darwin and the explorer Leichhardt.

"The Vineyard" was demolished in the 1960s to become a car park for Rheem. Although unsuccessful, the protest against this demolition galvanised the newly formed National Trust, and led to the listing of heritage buildings. So another grouping was the 1961 photograph of the house's *Colonade* by Max Dupain, clippings about the

demolition including a photograph of a crane lifting a column, and the reuniting of a capital, pedestal, and architrave that had been scattered over Sydney, and my mother's plate and teapot from the house.

Phillip Parker King, Philip Gidley King's son, completed much of the mapping of North-Western Australia. Matthew Flinders had been accompanied by Bungaree in 1802 when they were the first to circumnavigate Australia. Phillip Parker King took Bungaree on his 1817 voyage and formed a quite close relationship with Bungaree, and drew what is regarded as the first portrait of him.

I used Augustus Earle's portrait *Bungaree, A Native Chief of New South Wales* (c.1826) as the central image of my show. It is the image of Bungaree taking off his hat in a greeting gesture. It was the first image seen on entering the gallery: it greeted visitors to the exhibition, as he had greeted visitors to Sydney. As it was also used on the invitation and poster, it certainly signalled that this was to be an unusual, even subversive colonial history. While in some respects it was a curatorial device, it demonstrated an Aboriginal intersection with my own family. With Bungaree dressed in what may have been a Governor's uniform jacket and his well known mimicry of the governors he had known, it was a potent parody or symbol of colonial pretensions. I had written that while my family had so many descendants, Bungaree appeared to have none. Fortunately, just before text deadlines I met Keith Vincent Smith who had written the biographies of Bungaree and Bennelong and he informed me that there were descendants, including Bungaree's sons Bowen and Toby. Sydney Aborigines objected to words like "annihilation" as some Aboriginal families claim descendancy from Sydney's clans, even the Cadigal. I realised how recent research and scholarship was revealing an Aboriginal history that was embedded in the primary colonial sources, not yet in the public arena, and I began to think how this could form the basis of the next

exhibition.

Given the plethora of my family material I thought it was important to assemble some items relating to Bungaree and we borrowed his wife Gooseberry's rum mug, an evocative item, and at considerable expense flew a wooden fighting club attributed to him from the Pitt Rivers Museum in the U.K. This club was treated with enormous reverence and carried a powerful - and different - symbolism for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Keith Vincent Smith later confessed to me that he seriously doubted the provenance and attribution.

At the entrance to the gallery I also signalled my curatorial intent. On one side I had Gordon Bennett's *Metaphysical Landscape 11* (1990) and Joseph Lycett's *North View of Sidney, New South Wales* (1824) from which Bennett had appropriated a section and transformed the image into an Aboriginal perspective. These images were also the front and back cover of the catalogue: "Such juxtapositions provided an extremely succinct method of signalling larger debates around historical revision and how different perspectives resulted in different modes of production and indeed views" (Lawrenson 121).

On the other side of the entrance I hung Governor Bourke's nullification of Batman's Treaty with the Aborigines, like a proclamation, and paired it with Gordon Bennett's *Untitled* (1989) with six images that were an Aboriginal history entitled, "Dismay", "Displace", "Disperse", "Dispirit", "Display", and "Dismiss". Opposite in display cases, as an antidote, I exhibited handsome photographic portraits of Hetti Perkins, Adam Perkins and Djon Mundine, taken by Michael Riley, to represent an extraordinary young generation of Aboriginal people.

In the foyer area I had a variety of works about Sydney by artists I had worked with. This included a painting of Sydney Harbour by Brett Whiteley, Jeannie Baker's A

*Walk Through Hyde Park* collage, and posters by Martin Sharp which included the Opera House. In the Viewing Cube exhibition space I installed the *Field of Dreams: Message Sticks for Native Title* created in 1997 by Australian Artists Against Racism (AAAR!). We were an informal group that first made and installed these artworks originally at the S.H. Ervin Gallery, Observatory Hill, Sydney in 1997, and this concept gave birth to the very successful and widely travelled *Sea of Hands* installation in support of Aboriginal Native Title claims.

The exhibition was successful. Attendances were above average (12,562 over seventy nine days), and it received extensive media coverage. Inexplicably, as a “story of Sydney” it was not listed as an event in the Sydney Festival by the Director Leo Schofield. Fortunately it had opened earlier on the 28 November 1998, but in January it had to compete against the Festival. The exhibition succeeded in making people think about their own histories, and their family contributions to their communities, or what images personified Sydney for them.

The exhibition was unorthodox, idiosyncratic but a coherent realisation of what I visualised, and a reflection of the various ingredients in my life and world view. We are all a unique convergence of inheritances and experiences and I synthesised mine to tell a story both intellectually and intuitively. It was not a reflection of a curatorial agenda or any particular ideology. I had no idea how *Flesh & Blood* would be received or interpreted, but knew it was a strong narrative that I could illustrate superbly. In her Foreword to the exhibition catalogue the late Joan Kerr commented:

At a time when history has been proclaimed dead, when art history has rejected the unalterable canon created by, and for, dead white European men, this exhibition offers a new, localised and personal way of making collective sense of the pluralism of the past by



starting with a singular present (7).

She went on to say that my career in Aboriginal art:

legitimises the inclusion of the Indigenous visual commentaries which undercut unthinking pride in white possessions. Since Ace exhibits his own family possessions, the story becomes nicely ambiguous in a complex, post-colonial way. In this collision of two of Ace's own families, the old is not devalued but revalued by the oppressed drawing on the oppressor's past. That the meeting brings together such a splendid range of art from white and black, past and present leaders in the profession, is a tribute to Ace's inherited (white) taste and scholarship, but it is also a life story told blackfella-style to his friends (5).

Nearly a year after the conclusion of the exhibition, a review appeared in the first *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art*. It was by Ken Watson, the then Aboriginal assistant curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the Art Gallery of NSW. His response to the exhibition was so insightful that I felt he revealed layers of it to me, and that my work was simply intuitive:

What appears on the surface to be an exhibition based on Ace's family and friends contains some of the most complex associations of any historical/personal/narrative exhibition of recent times: between generations, between Indigenous and non-indigenous people, gays, lesbians and the wider community, artists of all persuasions. The more one ponders on just exactly what was seen the more unexpected themes emerge and questions arise. (Watson 243)

In fact western culture promotes the cult of the individual over the

needs of the community. An Indigenous perspective would focus on the community and social connections as Ace has done in this exhibition (Watson 244).

What particularly interested me was how Joan Kerr and Ken Watson both drew a parallel between my storytelling and Aboriginal storytelling. Having grown up at a time when I was not encouraged to talk about my family history, it had been my involvement with Aboriginal art, so much of it story based, and the interest and encouragement of my friends such as Tracey Moffatt, Michael Riley, and Hetti Perkins, that led me to research and tell my own story. They were all interested in Australian history, although it was a national narrative still told in a way that marginalised them. They were concerned with correcting history, and challenging it, even creating it, but their interest in me was an identification with family primarily, and how in my case it provided a documented link to the past, it personalised the past, and brought the past into the present.

Recently, at the conclusion of the exhibition *Lines in the Sand*, I received an email on 22 May 2008 and an attached thesis from Anna Lawrenson: “Firstly, thank you, without your show *Flesh & Blood* I wouldn’t have had a thesis - it really provided a catalyst for my way of thinking”. Her thesis, for a Doctor of Philosophy, was to my surprise, entitled *Flesh & Blood: Appropriation and the critique of Australian Colonial History in Recent Art Practice*. It was extremely comprehensive, and she argued that:

Australian artists have used appropriation as an effective means of engaging in a discourse on colonialism, of communicating with the past, and of ensuring that the past remained a highly visible concern of the present (Lawrenson iv);

*Flesh & Blood* was essentially a white, colonial version of history that

used the work of Indigenous artists to disrupt that narrative. It achieved this through unconventional juxtapositions, which saw colonial paintings hung alongside their contemporary revisions. In this sense it presented a potent critique of colonialisation through acknowledging the presence of a perspectival shift between colonial history painting and the contemporary appropriative history. It was at once extremely innovative and profoundly conservative. Its innovation lay in the disruption of the standard chronological hang criticized in shows like *Colonial Post Colonial* (Lawrenson 120).

In the *Colonial Post Colonial* exhibition staged in 1996 at the Museum of Modern Art in Heide, Victoria, the Colonial and Post Colonial artworks had been separated.

Anna Lawrenson goes on to say however, that my exhibition was highly problematic. My “white” perspective, as we have seen, was adversarial to the Museum aims, and she asks why this combination of work (colonial and contemporary history paintings) needed to be under the guise of an explication of family lineage? Why privilege my family history that had already been the basis of much scholarship? But I think she answered her own questions:

This is the very conundrum of the show - from an extremely traditional starting point, one which focused on the privileged individual, came a uniquely multi faceted exhibition which dealt with the complexities and contradictions of Australian history. It highlighted in very clear terms that the past of this country is indeed our very own flesh and blood. Unlike John Howard’s version of Australian history, where the past was seen as a distant murmur, for which people in the present had no responsibility. Ace Bourke

demonstrated that within a few generations the past of colonisation, settlement, massacres and disease became the present world of land rights, stolen generations and reconciliation. This was achieved primarily through his non-linear approach to the display of history - through the fact that appropriated works were used as points of intervention. They disrupted what would have otherwise been a story of development and progress depicted by those powerful enough to be able to recount their stories (Lawrenson 122).

As a curator, it was the ultimate compliment that my work could provide a “catalyst” for a thoughtful and thorough doctoral thesis. It is part of my curatorial intention that exhibitions have an educational possibility, that they generate and provoke other ideas and lines of inquiry.

For all the criticism of my “privileged” position, it did give me access to material I was associated with that enabled me to illustrate my “thesis” effectively, and I could do it in a way that was accessible and made people think about their own family contributions to the growth of communities, cities, and country. My family links give me an entry point to examine Australian history. I could understand some resentment and criticism but not that I should be silent about my background at a time historically when all other voices had finally been acknowledged and given expression. All voices need to be heard and none at the expense of any other.

## Chapter Two

### *EORA: Mapping Aboriginal Sydney 1770 -1850*

Mitchell Library, State Library of NSW, 5 June – 13 August 2006

Co-curated by Anthony Bourke and Keith Vincent Smith



Figure 3. Entrance to Mitchell Library during *EORA: Mapping Aboriginal Sydney 1770-1850*. Photograph by author.

### BACKGROUND

This chapter explores the development of my ideas and research from the exhibition *Flesh & Blood*. *EORA: Mapping Aboriginal Sydney* was a curatorial project focused on the Eora Aboriginal people of Sydney, who first bore the brunt of European settlement. The exhibition identified many of them, and illuminated their lives for the first time. I now envisaged three historical areas of my research: *Flesh & Blood* (family), *EORA* (the Aborigines dispossessed), and family encounters with Aboriginal people, which resulted in the exhibition *Lines in the Sand*.

*EORA: Mapping Aboriginal Sydney 1770 - 1850* was a summary of the most extensive research of primary and secondary sources related to the Eora people in Sydney, and represented the cutting edge of contemporary scholarship. It was the first time much of the material this research had been based on had been exhibited, and it demonstrated the extraordinary depth of the Mitchell Library collection and archive. An exhibition of this scale may not be repeated again for many years.

Bungaree, accompanied a relation, my great-great-great-uncle Phillip Parker King in circumnavigating Australia in 1817-1818, and I included him as an example of an Aboriginal narrative within my family narrative in the exhibition *Flesh & Blood*. He was also a symbol of the Aboriginal absence in the telling of Australian history. In comparison with the sketchy information about the original inhabitants we had displaced, I seemed to have many relations with very well documented lives.

Through the exhibition I had met Keith Vincent Smith, author of biographies on Bennelong and Bungaree, and I began to realise a few exceptional researchers and academics like Keith, Associate Professor Jim Kohen and linguist historian, Jeremy Steele, who were all based at Macquarie University, were retrieving a history of the Sydney Eora people, of which the general public were not really aware. It was like the various pieces of a jigsaw puzzle were emerging, and I wanted to assemble as much information as was known about the Eora. Who was entitled to speak on their behalf? I did know that this was also a highly contested debate within Sydney Aboriginal groups from Western Sydney, Redfern and La Perouse, and the Metropolitan Land Council.

In 2003 I attended some Workers Education Association (WEA) lectures on the Eora by Keith Vincent Smith and was astounded at the extraordinary detailed information that was being retrieved, and that so few people were interested. A picture was emerging, and many images and locations could now be identified, and family

relationships over generations traced. The Aboriginal ability and preparedness to adapt to changed circumstances was apparent, while their saltwater economy and use of the harbour had continued for many decades. Linguists like Jeremy Steele, were attempting to reconstruct the language, and were discovering more information about Aboriginal place names. Much was tantalising information, some mysteries were being solved, and Aboriginal informants and information was emerging from the government records and other primary sources.

So I developed the concept for an exhibition to illustrate this extraordinarily comprehensive body of research. It would be based on Keith Vincent Smith's Masters thesis on the Eora, and staged at the Mitchell Library, the repository of most of the information. We would be co-curators. Keith and I first met with Elizabeth Ellis, the Director of the Mitchell Library, and it was interesting watching her realise the extent of his new research, and the point at which his expertise in this area surpassed her own. We then prepared an exhibition proposal which proceeded to go through several exhibition committees. The staff at the Mitchell Library/State Library all realised that this was an opportunity to showcase much of their collection relating to Indigenous people most of which had never been exhibited before. Keith's scholarship was verified, and a call was made to the Museum of Sydney to check what I was like to work with! The Mitchell Library had lent the Museum of Sydney so many items for *Flesh & Blood* that the Library was credited with "presented in association with the State Library of New South Wales".

The Museum of Sydney would have been very interested in staging this second exhibition, but I felt I owed it to the Mitchell Library: for my great-great-uncle David Scott Mitchell (1837-1907), and for the invaluable assistance of Elizabeth Ellis on *Flesh & Blood*.

We were all anxious not to provoke or be involved in any controversy. In the initial conceptual stages the photographer Michael Riley was involved before his death in 2004. In 1995 he had directed the most beautiful elegiac video commission for the Museum of Sydney called, *Eora* and was very familiar with the material. Hetti Perkins was also asked for advice and at her instigation we notified the Madden family about the exhibition. The Madden family do most of the “Welcomes to Country” on behalf of the Metropolitan Land Council in Sydney. Keith and I also visited the Museum at La Perouse for research purposes and to find out who should also be informed about the exhibition.

The Aboriginal staff at the Mitchell Library – Ronald Briggs and Melissa Jackson – were enthusiastic about the exhibition which was very important, and were involved once the proposal was finally accepted. They liaised with the Aboriginal community, and we staged a meeting for all Aboriginal stakeholders to brief them about the exhibition. Fortunately the breadth of the expertise and strength of the collection interested most people and there were no objections that were drawn to our attention. The period 1770 -1850, with 1850 as the cut-off point, was partly to avoid any current disputes within the Aboriginal community about ancestry. While I have had honest, humorous, and normal relationships with most Aboriginal people, I have usually deferred to them in relation to descendance issues and not wanted to look like I am disputing their version of a particular history. Keith Vincent Smith is not so inhibited and quite bluntly says what he thinks based on years of research. At first this worried me, and as co-curators of the exhibition I did not want us to be seen to be contradicting Aboriginal people. I think you have to be careful not to be too dogmatic about the ancestry of some people when Aboriginal histories have not been well documented, oral histories can be unreliable, and there were migrations over long distances, and the chaos



of displacement. Ultimately I relaxed about this and I thought perhaps it is time for Aboriginal people to directly debate the records with researchers like Keith Vincent Smith, although this rarely happened,

Like the Museum of Sydney the Mitchell Library had a professional exhibition team. The assigned designer worked well with us and we ended up with a very straightforward and didactic design, which was appropriate for the colonial material, a conservative institution, and vaulted ceilings. There were no ideological conflicts or arguments about the presentation: there was no argument that the material be installed in a post-colonial way. The staff, designer, and Keith were all very familiar with the material and I again had the opportunity to work and learn with experts. I was more involved with the aesthetic selections, the groupings of material, and the overall look of the exhibition. A few design ideas did have to be tactfully rejected. Keith and the designer worked very closely on the selection of works and the framing and conservation requirements. Keith wrote the catalogue essay and the exhibition didactics.

Again we needed to divide the material into defined spaces, and this time it was into the different language groups that made up the Eora, and their geographic direction: East/ Cadigal, West/Wangal, North/Cameragal and South/Kameygal.

There were several key works that we wanted to borrow from other institutions such as the National Library of Australia, but we especially wanted to borrow the first 1770 sketches of Aboriginal people by Sydney Parkinson and Tupaia from the British Library. We also wanted several Thomas Watling pencil portraits from the Natural History Museum, London and two paintings by the unidentified Port Jackson Painter. These rare works were expensive to courier (accompanied) to Australia, and fortunately I was able to find the sponsorship to facilitate this. The exhibition contained over 145 items that included paintings, etchings, journals, diaries, old newspapers, artefacts,

quotes and some especially exquisite items such as the dictated letter by Bennelong to Mr. Phillips in London in 1795. Many Eora people were identified in portraits and descendants were referred to. Through a number of the images a portrait of colonial Sydney was painted. It was easy to visualise: the Library is actually on Cadigal land, many Aborigines, including Bungaree camped in the Domain next door, and the last initiation ceremony in Sydney was held nearby in 1795. Many of our roads – to Botany, for example, are based on traditional pathways. At the time of the exhibition, the State Government was also considering renaming many of the sites with their original Aboriginal names, although there were quite a few inaccuracies, and this has not been implemented to date. Bangaroo, who gives her name to the recently proposed development at Darling Harbour, was actually from the North Shore.

Paintings and etchings by many of the leading colonial artists were included, among them Charles Rodius, Nicolas-Martin Petit, William Bradley, John Eyre, Augustus Earle, Joseph Lycett, George French Angas, while the only contemporary work was the video *Eora*, by Aboriginal artist Michael Riley that was shown in the foyer. There was a very unobtrusive family narrative through the exhibition. This included Philip Gidley King's journal, and the information relating to the granting of a lease for Maroot at Botany by Governor Bourke, material that I also included in *Lines in the Sand*.

Phillip Parker King's ink and watercolour drawing of Bungaree was included, and quite a few of the items had actually belonged to David Scott Mitchell. I enjoyed thinking about the collection he had amassed and spending time in the building that carried his name. He could see the library being built from his house in what is now Kings Cross, although he died in 1907 several years before it opened in 1910.

The exhibition was documented by a catalogue with an essay by Keith Vincent

Smith, illustrations and an Item List. As Wilma Norris, the Acting Chief Librarian says in her Foreword in the exhibition catalogue, this exhibition is “the beginning of a conversation: a catalyst for discussion” (iii). This was one of the most seminal exhibitions the State Library had hosted, and the “discussion” will be documented for the archives and on-going. The exhibition should stimulate another generation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers and scholars, and the collection will continue to yield more pieces of the settler and Indigenous jigsaw. At the Press Preview on 2 June 2006, the Aboriginal performer Leah Purcell asked a question many asked “why can’t we – Aborigines, Sydney-siders or visitors – see this incredible material somewhere on a permanent basis?”.

The exhibition was accompanied by an Events Program which included floor talks, events such as *Regarding EORA*, (26 June 2006) a forum to discuss the exhibition with Indigenous and non-Indigenous experts, which included author Tom Kenneally. This was an opportunity for any opposition to Keith Vincent Smith’s suppositions about the Eora people to be aired, but it was a productive and interesting discussion without any controversy. There was also *My Sydney: Now, Then and Always* (10 July 2006) which was an opportunity for Aboriginal people living in Sydney, sometimes over several generations, to share their experiences. Another event was *Patyegarang and Mr Dawes* (1 August 2006), to discuss the Sydney language and the relationship between William Dawes and his “informant” Patyegarang, by a panel which included the writer Louis Nowra. Some people objected to a panel of middle aged white men discussing Dawes and his lover and linguistic informant, a fifteen year old Aboriginal girl.

Apart from a few press references to this Event Program and brief listings of the exhibition, and two “news” stories about new research uncovered by Keith Vincent Smith, there was practically no press or media interest, and no exhibition reviews. For

*Flesh & Blood* I had been interviewed in *The Bulletin*, and the *Sydney Morning Herald* prior to the exhibition, and the exhibition was very well promoted in the press, and reviewed in *The Australian*. I was interviewed on several radio programs. While the Museum of Sydney/Historic Houses had a very effective publicity/media team, the State Library/Mitchell Library were ineffective on this project. I think they regarded Aboriginal subjects as too difficult, and of no interest to the media. They had not expressed any interest in the exhibition at any stage, and despite the wealth of images had not placed one image in the media in the lead up to the exhibition, or during it. I was profoundly disappointed as I felt this was a very important exhibition. The exhibition coincided with the 2006 Biennale with the theme *Zones of Contact*. I thought an imaginative press person could have linked the *EORA* exhibition as Sydney's initial "zone of contact".

In fairness, libraries have other priorities to their exhibition program, and they were very preoccupied with putting their collections on-line and advertising them. Attendances through word of mouth were well above average however. Despite the wealth of material, some people did express reservations to me about the very traditional installation of the show. Given the nature of the material and the institution however I did not argue for a more innovative presentation, and preferred to allow the wealth of material to "speak for itself".

The exhibition was an affirmation of Aboriginal ownership of their land and their relationship with it, revealing a glimpse into the everyday and ceremonial lives of the original inhabitants of Sydney, and the dispossession and disease that ensued after 1788. While it was the most comprehensive collection of Indigenous material ever assembled, I still found it hard to hear the Aboriginal voice, something I was more successful in achieving two years later with *Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770*.

## Chapter Three

Philip Gidley King in Botany Bay, January 1788:

First Family Encounters with Aborigines

### BACKGROUND

After beginning to seriously research my family history and tell a story of Sydney with *Flesh & Blood*, at the Museum of Sydney, in 1998-99, I had next looked at the Aborigines from the Sydney region who had been dispossessed, with *EORA* at the Mitchell Library in 2006. The subsequent stage was to look at specific, documented encounters between my family members and Aboriginal people, to examine how they behaved in the context of the times, and if possible, to personalise, even identify the protagonists. What could this reveal about our shared histories?

The exhibition *Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770* grew out of this next stage of research. Our family history in Australia began in 1788 with my great-great-great-great-grandfather Philip Gidley King (1758-1808), second Lieutenant to Captain Arthur Phillip on the First Fleet. I had his journal as a reference. There are two versions in the Mitchell Library, now online, and a facsimile published in 1980. As I researched Botany Bay in depth, I remembered many images – colonial, contemporary, appropriated, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – that were illustrative. Other images were located through research or drawn to my attention. I could imagine my telling of this history being illustrated very effectively by these artworks. It was a way of reinserting omissions into the Australian narrative, and presenting a more accurate “Australian” history, and a way to retrieve the Aboriginal voice that had still proved elusive in

*EORA*. So the exhibition *Lines in the Sand* evolved, and my family's history and their relationship with Aborigines was just one of many narratives.

As I kept seeing my research through the prism of the relevant visual images, I became more interested in the process of curatorial practice involving my expertise and interest in colonial and contemporary art, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous art. However, I did want the evolving exhibition to be underpinned with serious historical research and interpretation, and I immersed myself in Botany Bay, and particularly Philip Gidley King's journal. He and Captain Arthur Phillip (1738-1814) both recorded the first encounters with Aboriginal people after arrival on the 18 January 1788, although Phillip's account got rewritten into the third person for publication. Both accounts became the historical record, and were used by the other journal writers who arrived in Botany Bay on ships several days after the *Supply*.

Many historians have examined these events, and I am more interested in looking as objectively as possible through the eyes of a relation, and examining areas or questions they have overlooked or not been interested in, specifically in the now highly contested and politicised settler/Indigenous history. As a relation I look critically at behaviour and actions from a different perspective, and with my working relationships with Aboriginal artists and friends, I have been aware of multiple viewpoints that have given my curatorial work a particular edge.

The reasons why the First Fleet sailed, and to unsuitable Botany Bay, have been comprehensively written about. I am interested in the facts that haven't been sufficiently examined, as well as the new research that historians are doing presently. I am extremely fortunate that my ancestor wrote a journal that survived, and by studying it I have uncovered facts I did not know. Port Stephens, for example, was regarded by Cook as an alternative settlement site; although interestingly, King wrote in the more official

copy of his journal that Cook listed Port Jackson as the possible alternative, without visiting either.

I don't feel the initial encounters between the Aborigines and First Fleeters have as yet been exhaustively examined by either Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal historians or writers. Were some confrontations actually part of a protocol? Were they even "first" encounters?<sup>1</sup>

## BOTANY BAY

My great-great-great-great-grandfather Philip Gidley King was Second Lieutenant to Captain Arthur Phillip on the First Fleet, and became the third Governor of New South Wales (1800-1806). Philip Gidley King's father was a successful draper in Launceston, Cornwall, a business he had inherited from his father. His mother, Utricia, was the daughter of an attorney from the nearby city of Exeter. Born in 1758, his family decided on a career for him in the Royal Navy, and at the age of seven he was sent to Mr. Bailey's school in Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight, then famous for its naval schools and near to where Captain James Cook set sail in the *Endeavour* in 1770 on the voyage that "discovered" the east coast of New Holland. Philip received an education that included, in addition to maritime subjects, general studies, languages, business and theology. By the end of that year, King was on board his first ship, as a captain's servant, aged 13.

Arthur Phillip (1738-1814) had also begun as a ship's boy and had risen through the ranks. His German father was a teacher of languages, who lived in London with his English wife, and Arthur attended the Greenwich Hospital School. He and King shared a similar background and education in that it was not privileged, and they were not as

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<sup>1</sup> Earlier European contacts are discussed in Peter Veth, Peter Sutton and Margo Neale, *Strangers on the Shore*.

‘classically’ well educated as some of the other journal writers and officers on board.

King’s career owed much to the patronage of Captain Arthur Phillip who he first worked with when he was transferred to HMS *Ariadne* under Phillip’s command in January 1780. Phillip was very loyal over an extended period to a small coterie of men, and King was included in this group. In 1782 Phillip was placed in command of HMS *Europe* and brought King with him. In October 1786 Phillip was chosen as Commodore of the First Fleet and he requested that King be appointed Second Lieutenant of his flagship HMS *Supply*. King was very conversant with the condition, histories and suitability of all the ships that made up the First Fleet. Much of this information is on the historical record, and is verified in the early chapters of Jonathan King and John King’s *Philip Gidley King: A Biography of the Third Governor of New South Wales*.

My cousin Jonathan King was the driving force behind the 1988 First Fleet Re-enactment, a quite extraordinary achievement especially as it did not receive government funding. Ironically I was actually in Portsmouth in 1987 when it set sail, attending the Portsmouth Arts Festival which had included an exhibition of Aboriginal art I had curated. I was accompanied by one of the participating Aboriginal artists, Tracey Moffatt. She was subsequently escorted away by police for protesting against the First Fleet re-enactment flying an Aboriginal flag, although apparently it had some Aboriginal endorsement. It created a brief furore in Sydney’s *Daily Telegraph* newspaper as our participation in the Festival was government funded (Herd and McLean 9). In Botany Bay in 1988, the Aborigines refused a request to land at Yarra Bay, La Perouse, where Jonathan King wanted to re-enact the landing by King and Phillip.

Leaving Cape Town on the 13 November 1787, Captain Phillip and Philip Gidley King changed ships from the *Sirius* to the *Supply* in order to reach Botany Bay ahead of



the fleet in order to assess its suitability to support a settlement.

*The Journal of Philip Gidley King: Lieutenant, R.N. 1787-1790* was edited in 1980 by Paul G. Fidlon and R.J. Ryan and published by the Australian Documents Library, Sydney. The original was described as a ‘rough’ copy not intended for publication, contained in two notebooks, and was a continuous narrative from late 1786 to April 1790. Some additional information was added in 1793 and early 1794. Volume One covers the period 24 October 1786 - 12 January 1789. Volume Two is a “Continuation of a Daily Journal....on Norfolk Island” and covers the period 13 January 1789 to 17 April 1790 with additional material 1790-1792. In 1933 this “private” journal was purchased by the Mitchell Library from the Philip Gidley King estate.



Please see print copy for Figure 4.

Figure 4. First contacts in Botany Bay: April 1790: Philip Gidley King, p. 113, “Remarks and Journal kept on the Expedition to form a colony: 1786-December 1790”: fair copy, compiled 1790. Ref: MLMSS C115/safe 1/246)  
Collection: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

This journal is in King’s rather attractive, strong handwriting, with crossings out, additions, lines not too straight, and uneven ink consistency. It is dated most days, and

written continuously without spacings (that is, not as a diary or log book), probably because paper was a valuable and often scarce commodity.

In his introductions to the two notebooks, King states:

As I write this Journal for my own satisfaction, I do beg & request, that, into whatever hands it might fall, (in case of any accidents happening to me) To give or forward it into the hands of His Excellency Governor Phillip, or in case of his demise, to Lieut. William Dawes of the marines, who I instruct to destroy it; if any of the materials can be of service to the latter he is perfectly welcome to them.(4)

In the second notebook “This Book to be transmitted to His Excellency Governor Phillip in case of any accident happening to me - Norfolk Island Jany Ist 1789”. I have failed to find anything in the journal I would consider contentious enough to warrant the instruction to destroy it - although it is left to the discretion of two friends he could trust. Perhaps he should not have made this version as journals were handed to the Admiralty. Perhaps this is what he means by “for my own satisfaction.” Reading this “rough” journal it reads like an official information handbook. Tides, winds, latitudes, longitudes, altitudes etc. with very little “every day” information, especially about life on board or any other people. He refers occasionally to particular birds, or a whale or turtle. There are descriptions of landings at the Canary Islands, Rio and Cape Town, but again they read like a useful travel guide – to sights, protocols and official visits, provisioning etc.,. He was very thorough – lists of what was purchased and the costs, population estimates etc.,. There was no expression of concern for convict well being.

Inga Clendinnen has pointed out in *Dancing with Strangers* that:

Cook’s journals had set the style and established the taste for

dramatic doings in exotic places which could be elevated to science by the inclusion of a flow of observations of curiosities encountered along the way: of birds, plants, animals and savages, usually in that order. (135)

The writers' "laconic recording of events in stern chronological order derived from their habituation to the grid-form of ship's logs" (Clendinnen 386). King's journal is thoroughly impersonal and unemotional. He does not express relief at finally leaving for the journey after the delays, and merely says on the 4 January 1788 "we were satisfied with seeing Van Diemens Land" (Fidlon and Ryan v) after nearly seven months at sea. Christmas Day passes without comment. He expresses no emotion or even comment at arriving at Botany Bay, especially compared to Watkin Tench the author of *1788*:

Ithaca itself was scarcely more longed for by Ulysses than Botany Bay by the adventurer who has traversed so many thousand miles to take possession of it. To us it was a great and important day, and I hope the foundation, not the fall, of an Empire will be dated from it. (37)

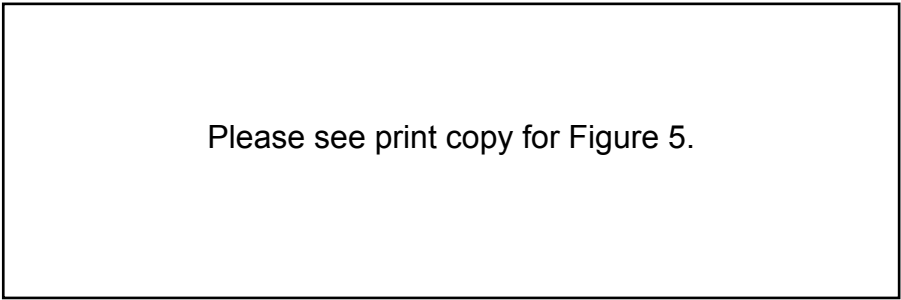
Naturally, people were circumspect in their journals about everyone on board. Their promotion often depended on the endorsement of their superiors, but they were also setting the record straight from their point of view. People expressed their personal opinions more freely in letters, or if they were not part of the service hierarchy, like Arthur Bowes Smyth the surgeon on the ship *Lady Penrhyn*.

There is also an "official" journal by Philip Gidley King, a version of the other journal but in a more formal handwriting. According to the 1980 editors of King's journal, this copy contains some information not in the other, but lacks details of "everyday life", which I found largely absent anyway (P.G. King v). This journal was

purchased in 1898 from Francis Edwards in London for the Sydney Public Library, and is now also in the Mitchell Library. I presume that this is the version given originally to the Admiralty, which I would have assumed they should have retained.

There is an informal introductory page in a different hand writing, and it would be interesting to know who wrote it. It states in part “the handwriting closely resembles that of King and is probably a copy of his original journal made by himself”. It is described in the front pages as a “Fair copy of Remarks and Journal kept on the Expedition to form a Colony”. The dates it covers are 1786 to December 1790. Compiled in 1790 this version contains more material than was previously recorded by King in his journal.

ARRIVAL: A sequence of events in January 1788



Please see print copy for Figure 5.

Figure 5. Thomas Medland after Richard Cleveley, *A View of Botany Bay*.  
Etching Published 17 June 1789, by J. Stockdale. The Supply etc at anchor,  
and the Sirius with her Convoy arriving.

I think in *A View of Botany Bay* (Figure 5.), the ships are closer to where the *Endeavour* had been anchored in 1770. According to my interpretation of King's

journal, the *Supply* was closer to the northern (La Perouse) side of the bay so the rest of the First Fleet could see them on arrival at Botany Bay. There is considerable conjecture as to whether the first landings were at Yarra Bay, Frenchman's Bay or Congwong Bay: "we came to an anchor on the Northern side of the Bay, that the Ships which were following might not miss the harbour" (P.G. King 32).

### **18 January**

HMS *Supply* sailed into Botany Bay at 2.15pm. And "when abreast of Point solander (sic) we saw several of the natives running along brandishing their Spears" (Fidlon and Ryan 32). Almost immediately Captain Phillip, Lieutenant Dawes and King went looking for water on the north side of the bay, where they had anchored. They did not find any water, but on returning saw a group of natives and two canoes and:

they immediately got up & called to us in a Menacing tone & at the same time brandishing their spears or lances, however the Governor shewed them some beads & ordered a Man to fasten them to the stem of the Canoe, we then made signs that we wanted Water, when they pointed round the point on which they stood & invited us to land there; on landing they directed us by pointing, to a very fine stream of fresh water, Governor Phillip then advanced toward them alone & unarmed, on which one of them advanced towards him, but would not come near enough to receive the beads which the Governor held out for him, but seemed very desirous of having them & made signs for them to be lain on the ground, which was done, he (the Native) came on with fear & trembling & took them up, & by degrees came so near as to receive looking

Glasses &c, & seemed quite astonished at the figure we cut in being cloathed & I think it is very easy to conceive the ridiculous figure we must appear to those poor creatures who were perfectly naked, we soon after took leave of them & returned onboard. (P.G. King 32-33)

Courage was exhibited on both sides. Phillip was courageous in advancing unarmed, no doubt emboldened by a blind belief in British/European superiority. He was acting out “protocols” that had been successfully utilised by Europeans in the Pacific where there was more scope for exchange. Nails from the ships, for example, were highly desirable trade items, possibly in return for sexual favours. But these were a very different people. The visitors were to find out that to their surprise they had very little that the Aborigines wanted, and as Captain Cook had observed in 1770, the Aborigines “live in a Tranquility” (Parkin 453-54). They were only momentarily interested in beads and looking glasses, which were often discarded. Ribbons or baize were temporarily wrapped around their heads. The Aborigines wanted utilitarian items like hatchets.<sup>2</sup> Neither the British nor Aborigines were particularly attracted to each other’s food, although the British were surrounded by sustenance that could have been life saving over the next few years. The European concept of “work” was unknown and one there was no desire to adopt. The convicts were envious of them.

Despite making it obvious they were unwelcome, the Aborigines still showed them where to find water. Perhaps they were hoping they would then leave, as others must have done. King exhibits a rare sense of humour or irony about how their clothes would be regarded as “ridiculous”, especially in the summer January heat.

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<sup>2</sup> For an essay on cross cultural exchange and the changing nature of trade over time see Isabel McBryde’s “The Archaeology of Difference: Negotiating Cross-cultural Engagements in Oceania.”

## 19 January

At dawn they went on shore to haul in a fishing net, and “the natives came down & were much more confident than they were the night before” (P.G. King 33). The British did not understand the concept of Aboriginal sharing or reciprocity, and did not understand when Aborigines requested, expected or demanded a share of a catch.

The *Alexander*, *Scarboro* and *Friendship* ships arrived and later King was in one of three boats that set off “to explore & examine” (P.G. King 33). They went up what is now the Cooks River for six miles then south into the first inlet of the south/west side along the upper part of the bay: “Here we went onshore & eat our salt beef & in a glass of Porter drank the healths of our friends in England” (P.G. King 33). This is the only reference I have seen to friends or family in this supposedly more personal journal. Walking along the shore they saw “several huts and lances but no natives” (P.G. King 33).

## 20 January

At 8am the *Sirius* and all her convoy arrived. King had had two days advantage over the ultimate principal journal writers, and he had participated in the first encounters, providing with Phillip the only first hand accounts that became the historical record. King and Dawes were ordered to: “explore all the South side of the Bay & trace the two inlets on the south side as high as possible” (P.G. King 33). After examining the first inlet, they crossed to a point “which from what happened there I gave it the name of Lance point” (P.G. King 33). This was the first (re) naming of a site by a relation in Australia, although I have found no further reference to this name or site. King walked up a hill and saw:

a red fox dog, & soon after discovered a number of natives who

halloo'd & made signs for us to return to our boats, having only 3 marines with me & Lieut Dawes I advanced before them unarmed presenting some beads & Ribbands, two of the Natives advanced armed, but would not come close to me, I then dropt the beads & baize which I held out for them & retreated, they took it up & bound the baize about their head they then in a very vociferous manner desired us to begone & one of them threw a lance wide of us to shew how far they could do execution, the distance it was thrown was as near as I could guess about 40 Yards & when he took it out of the ground where it struck; it required an exertion to pull it out, as I took this as a menace that more could be thrown at us if we did not retreat & being unwilling to fire amongst them, there being 12 of them, I retreated walking backward till I came to the brow of the hill, where I halted and again offered them presents which they refused, on descending the hill they showed themselves on the top of it & were ten times more vociferous & very soon after a lance was thrown amongst us on which I ordered one of the Marines to fire with powder only, when they ran off. -with great precipitation, I embarked. (P.G. King 34)

It is interesting that King was not successful like Phillip had been in their first shared encounter with Aborigines. There was a demonstration of strength, and a tactical withdrawal by five people against twelve. Perhaps the Aborigines were disappointed the British had not yet left, as some would have remembered that Captain Cook did leave, although it was after eight days.

Back on board King was joined by Governor Phillip who had returned from



examining the more easterly section of the south side where he had found the “natives very sociable and friendly” (P.G. King 34). They both now re-landed at the newly and briefly named Lance Point and the same group of natives appeared:

brandishing their lances & defying us however we rowed close in shore & the Governor disembarked with some presents which one of them came & received thus peace was re-established much to the satisfaction of all parties; they came around ye boats & many little things were given to them, but what they wanted most was the great coats & Cloathing, but hatts was more particularised by them, their admiration of which they expressed by very loud shouts, whenever one of us pulled our hatts off, when they found us so very friendly they ran up to the man who had thrown the lance & made very significant signs of their displeasure at his conduct by pointing all their lances at him & looking at us intimating that they only waited our orders to kill him, however we made signs for them to desist & made the culprit a present of some beads & c. (P.G. King 34)

Why was Phillip successful again? He was older than King. Phillip was now fifty years old and King was thirty. He probably exuded authority, and the others would have deferred to him. He may have exhibited facial hair making others younger than him look clean-faced and effeminate. The Aborigines had probably noticed his missing tooth, the upper right incisor, which very significantly was the exact tooth these Aborigines had removed in initiation ceremonies, and this no doubt helped him later to be drawn into their kinship systems. The items that were most attractive to the Aborigines in this encounter were clothing and hats which would be useful in the cold

winters.

Phillip and King separated. As King travelled further up the inlet, he realised the Aborigines were following. At the head of the inlet the Aborigines waded over. King wrote:

we rowed up to them & many of them came up to the boat, we made them a few more presents, but found it necessary to put a stop to our generosity as they were increasing fast in numbers & having only a boats crew with me I was apprehensive that they might find means to surprize us as everyone of them were armed with lances, & short bludgeons. (P.G. King 35)

This must have been frightening, despite their firearms, and it is hard imagining what followed, all conducted while still sitting in a boat and very vulnerable:

I gave two of them a glass of Wine which they had no sooner tasted than they spit it out, we asked them the name of a number of articles, which they told us & repeated our words & had already learnt so much English, as to express their want for anything by putting their finger on it gently looking me in the face & saying 'No'? I must do them the justice to say that I believe them to be conscientiously honest. When they found we were not disposed to part with any more things, they entered into conversation with us, which was very fully interpreted by very plain Signs they wanted to know of what sex we were, which they explained by pointing where it was distinguishable, As they took us for women, not having our beards grown, I ordered one of the people to undeceive (sic) them in this particular when they made a great shout of

Admiration, & pointing to the shore, which was but ten yards from us we saw a great number of Women & Girls with infant children on their shoulders, make their appearance on the beach (P.G. King 35).

It is interesting that in King's other, more official, journal the references to alcohol on this and the previous day were edited out. Did King, as Manning Clark asserts, have his own problem with alcohol (Clark, *Manning Clark's History* 30)? Although there are accounts of Aborigines drinking fermented indigenous nectar plants, presumably King was the first European to offer them alcohol (Gibson 2).

Within two days they had "learnt so much English" (P.G. King 35)? I find this extraordinary. Most Aborigines were multi-lingual and skilled at languages and mimicry, but the memory of Cook seventeen years before does not explain the trust or the extent of the communication. They do not appear to be "first contacts". These encounters do not read as dramatic or threatening, but more a clumsy exchange of protocols. While people are now less convinced about the theory that Europeans were perceived as the returning dead of Aborigines, there is increasing scholarship about the first European and Macassan contacts with this continent. Between the arrival of Willem Jansz in the *Duyfken* in 1606 and Phillip in 1788, there have been forty five other documented actual landings, mostly on the western Australian coast, and Tasmania. Other visitors to the east coast cannot be discounted. Whaling and sealing contact, from documented evidence so far, seemed to start early in the nineteenth century (Warden 224).

Protocols definitely existed with visitors from other language groups, and other Aboriginal nations, and Marea Nugent, in her essay "The Encounter at Botany Bay in 1770 Reconsidered" in *Strangers on the Shore*, examines the role of meeting protocols

in traditional Aboriginal society, and how inappropriate much behaviour by the Europeans was. She quotes Sylvia Hallam who summarised the sequence of behaviours local people would have used for any uninvited and unauthorised visitors as “highly structured affairs, with elements of ceremonial preparedness for conflict, formal peacemaking, reciprocal exchange of gifts, and sometimes actual conflict and resolution of conflict” (qtd in Nugent 201), or as Marea Nugent summarises “Avoidance, nonchalance, repulsion, retreat” (Nugent 202).

Most encounters can be seen in this context. King’s encounter does seem to have been an unusually successful one, perhaps facilitated by the sexual overtones. The exhibiting of genitals was no doubt an easy way to communicate information, and I wonder if, except for Phillip, they were regarded as women the day before, which was possibly another reason he was better received. The women appear on cue as part of customary accepted formal behaviour, and all:

in puris natural bus pas meme la feuille de figeur - those natives who were round the boats made signs for us to go to them, & and made us understand their persons were at our service; however I declined this mark of their hospitality but shewed a handkerchief which I offered to one of the women, pointing her out, she immediately put her child down & came alongside the boat & suffered me to Apply the handkerchief where Eve did the Fig leaf, the Natives then set up another very great shout & my female visitor returned on shore - As the evening was coming on fast & we were 12 miles from the fleet it was time to return, we wished the natives, good be wi’ye which they repeated, we got onboard about midnight when we found the Governor preparing to go the

next Morning at day break in some long boats to explore broken  
bay & port Jackson. (P.G. King 35)

In the earlier 2003 edition of *Dancing with Strangers* Inga Clendinnen mistakenly placed King in the Pacific, as another King has sailed with Cook. In the 2005 edition it had been changed to “Having heard stories from the happy survivors of Tahiti’s sexual delights, he was constantly pressing for closer contact with Australian women” (Clendinnen 11).

I have found as yet no evidence that King was a serial sexual offender. On Norfolk Island King formed a relationship and had two children with a convict, Ann Inett. It is King’s interpretation in this encounter that women were offered to them. I am not sure this was traditional custom. King singled out a particular woman, and so hypocritically and lasciviously attached a kerchief - to what? He was with Dawes who did end up having a relationship with Patyegarang his fifteen year old linguistic ‘informant’, and Hunter also made a similar gesture on another occasion. White refers to an incident later in the year when “Every gentleman singled out a female and presented her with some trinkets” (Clendinnen 48).

## **21 January**

King explored the upper part of the bay with Dawes while Phillip, Hunter and Collins sailed to investigate Port Jackson as a better settlement site, and Botany Bay was subsequently abandoned. William Bradley recounts an unusual incident two days later which is also a reminder of the many different nationalities that were on the First Fleet:

23<sup>rd</sup> jan

A black man was landed among the working party with whom the

Natives were very much pleased and seemed astonished that he did not understand them, they wished him to stay and followed the boat that he was in as far as they could, as the Boat left the shore they returned apparently as well satisfied as if the Man of their own complexion had remained with them. (Bradley 62)

Who were these Aborigines? What do we know about the Aboriginal point of view, through oral histories, interviews, information in historical records and contemporary responses?

It appears likely that there has been a conflation between the 1770 and 1788 experiences, but more Aborigines who have so far been identified witnessed the events of 1770 rather than 1788. Keith Vincent Smith gives a comprehensive account in his catalogue essay for *Lines in the Sand*: the Reverend John Joseph McEncroe, a Catholic Priest at St. Mary's in Sydney was told in 1833 by the son of an eyewitness that at first they thought it was "a big bird that came into the bay, and they saw something like opossums running up and down about the legs and wings of the bird," but on closer inspection thought they were human (13).

This may have been Boatswain Maroot, who in 1845 gave a very similar account to the *Report from the Select Committee on the Condition of Aborigines, New South Wales Legislative Council Votes and Proceedings*. His father Maroot was an elder of the Kameygal (spear clan) from the north shore of Botany Bay who died in 1817 so it is conceivable. Boatswain Maroot described himself as the last of the Botany Bay Aborigines. Incidentally, my great-great-great-grandfather Governor Bourke gave him a lease on land at Botany Bay in 1832 where the very entrepreneurial Maroot rented huts and boats to fisherman. Macquarie had given Bungaree land at Evan's Head, so this is possibly the second granting of land to Aborigines, although this was a lease.

The Timbery family maintain that an ancestor saw the ships, and like many other families at La Perouse, the Timberys originally came from somewhere else. Their traditional lands are the Five Islands in the Illawarra, but they may have married into the Kameygal or moved around through seasonal migrations or ceremonial obligations. Their association with Botany Bay may be, like most of the other families, an historical rather than a traditional one.

In “Voices on the Beach” Keith Vincent Smith writes that also observing the arrival in 1770 was Yadyer at La Perouse (Kooriwall) who went and alerted Bullmayne, Dolmike, Kurruk and two brothers Blueitt and Potta, according to the historian Samuel Bennett (13). Obed West reported that Cruwee (Creway or Krooi) had been observing from Kurnell (Smith “Voices” 13). Two Gweagal men confronted Cook’s landing, and one has been identified as Cooman, as his shield, most likely, is in the British Museum (Smith “Voices” 15). Joseph Banks noted how many of the Aborigines continued their lives, fishing in this instance, with a studied indifference to them and “scarce lifted their eyes” (Banks 22).

Marea Nugent in her book *Botany Bay* writes very well about the complexity of the early encounters and recounts stories from Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives, and the sub-title of her book, “*Where Histories Meet*” is extremely apt. While many local people today claim an association with eyewitnesses, Nugent points out they were also “seriously engaging with the stories that the new settlers and their descendants told about that new era” (31).

On the 24 January, in very unsuitable weather conditions, and in an extraordinary coincidence, La Perouse ships *la Boussole* and *l’Astrolabe* were sighted trying to enter Botany Bay as the English ships were trying to leave for Port Jackson. On arrival in Port Jackson, King merely gives his usual practical description of the physical features,

(although differing in both his journals) compared to Surgeon White's description of it as "The finest and most extensive harbour in the universe" (120).

On 1 February 1788 Governor Phillip informed Philip Gidley King he was to be sent to found a settlement on Norfolk Island, but the next day he and Lieutenant Dawes were sent "To visit Monsieur de La Perouse on the part of Governor Phillip & to offer him whatever he might have occasion for..." (P.G. King 37). La Perouse had provisions for three years but was hoping to be in France in fifteen months so offered them whatever they wanted. They stayed the night and as La Perouse was subsequently shipwrecked and never seen again, King's journal recorded valuable descriptions and information about the ships and crew, their work, and their defensive stockade on shore. They discussed his travel and explorations, and King gives a very detailed description of an attack on the Island of Mauna (one of the Isles des Navigateurs) where the captain of *L'Astolabe*, eight Officers, four men and a boy, and thirty "Natives" all died (P.G. King 39). King was probably thinking of his own recent encounters and the dangers they faced in Botany Bay. King took a letter to Phillip, and despatches that La Perouse had wanted sent back to the French Ambassador at the London Court were sent over on 8 February. These were his last communications. The French ships were so well equipped, on the King's instruction, that La Perouse "could not think of any article that he stood in need of" (P.G. King 39). King noted on board an astronomer, a botanist, a draughtsman and an extensive collection of natural history. The Abbe who subsequently died and was buried at La Perouse was described as a collector of "Natural Curiosities" and had a great number of "Philosophic" instruments, and there were three time keepers (P.G. King 39). On shore was an established stockade, guarded by two small guns, and an observatory tent with an Astronomical Quadrant:

Monsieur De La perouse informed me that at every place where he



has touched at or been near that he has found all the Astronomical & nautical works of Capt. Cook to be very exact & true & concluded by saying.... “Enfin, Monsieur Cook a tout fait qu’il n’a me rien laisse a faire, que d’admirer ses oeuvres”. In the evening I returned on board the Boussole & was shown all the Drawings made on the Voyage & the next Morning at 5 I took leave of them.  
(P.G. King 40)

The French had a very different attitude to the Aborigines compared to the English, after the recent attack on them in the Pacific. Phillip however, strictly adhered to King George III instructions to him on the 23 April 1787: “You are to endeavour by every possible means to open an intercourse with the Natives and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in Amity and Kindness with them” (Barton 485). Unfortunately, he had to kidnap two Aborigines in order to “open an intercourse”, but Bennelong proved to be an extraordinary catch as an informant and mediator. He had escaped and then returned to the settlement once Phillip had been speared as part of a pay-back at Manly. He had been wounded when he could have been killed, and as Phillip did not order any retaliatory action, he seems to have fully comprehended the encounter. Phillip seems to have been an exceptionally perceptive person, and did try hard to fulfil the paradoxical instructions in relation to Aborigines from King George III.

On the 15 February 1788 King sailed to found the settlement at Norfolk Island. He wrote a most complete account of the first two years there, and this was included in both Phillip’s and Hunter’s publications. In April 1790 King returned briefly to Sydney Cove for the first time on his way to England via Batavia.

Perhaps the most valuable information in his journal covering the nearly two week

period back in Sydney was his copying of the “very Correct” vocabulary of the Eora language that Governor Phillip and David Collins had collected. This was the first Eora vocabulary to be taken to the U.K. where King arrived in December 1790. There were 160 words, and it gave an accurate description of the different groups and territories that comprised the Eora. This vocabulary was soon with Sir Joseph Bank’s friend, noted linguist and Secretary of the Admiralty, William Marsden. This vocabulary (enlarged to about 300 words) was printed in Captain John Hunter’s *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island* in 1793.

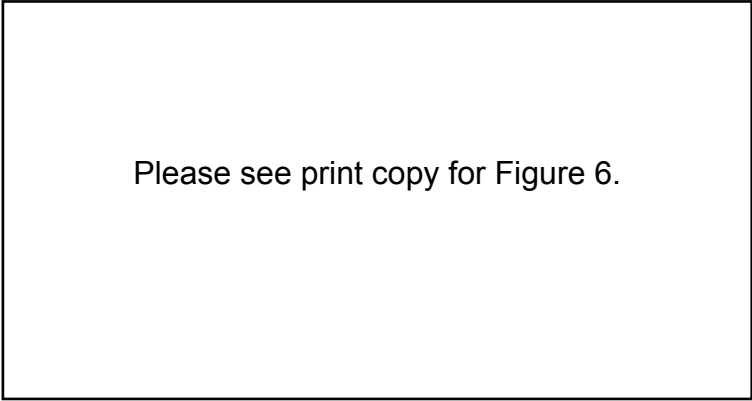
The drawing on the left in Figure 6 is one of a number of drawings previously attributed to King, all stylistically related to the others, but now of uncertain provenance. King accompanied Bennelong and Phillip on a walk from Prospect to Parramatta, and observed Bennelong closely in the settlement. While bearing no facial resemblance to Bennelong, Keith Vincent Smith thinks that King’s description of Bennelong matches the drawing:

He is a stout well made Man about five feet six inches high & now that the dirt of his skin is removed, we find his colour is a dark black, his features are large & his nose flat, the hair of his head is the same as the Asiatics but very coarse & strong, he is a very good natured fellow, & has a great deal of humour. (P.G. King 393)

More interestingly, King described Bennelong’s dancing:

He dances when asked with great readiness, the motions at first are very slow which are regulated by a dismal tune which as the dance advances grows quicker, till at length they throw themselves into the posture represented in the drawing striking the ground with the

greatest force & shaking their arms which gives them the appearance of being in a fit of Madness. (P.G. King 396)



Please see print copy for Figure 6.

Figure 6. Clinton Nain, *Two Natives Dancing* (1998).  
Photograph (diptych), 45 x 64 cm. Collection of the author.

Clinton Nain (born Melbourne, 1971) chose this image, which may be the one referred to, for incorporation into his artwork as it was a dance and stance he could mimic. More importantly, it was typical of the depiction of Aboriginal men as sexual and physical, and it had an element of the grotesque or beast. I included the work in both the *Flesh & Blood* and *Lines in the Sand* exhibitions.

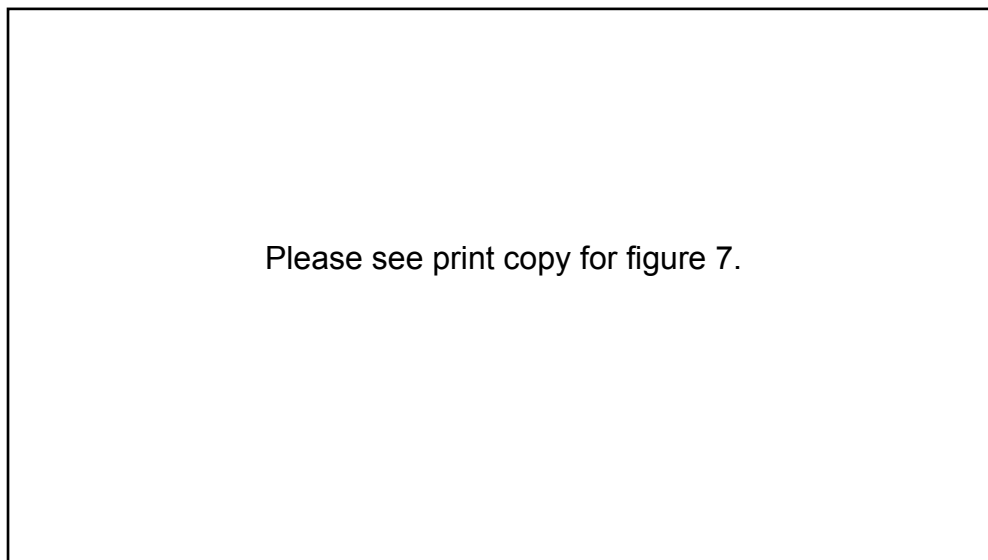


Figure 7. "A description of a wonderful large wild man, or monstrous giant, brought from Botany Bay", c.1790, printed broadsheet. Collection: Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

King's journal was never published in his lifetime, except for extracts in other journals such as Arthur Phillip's *The Voyage of Governor Phillip to Botany Bay* (1789) and John Hunter's *An Historical Journal of the Transactions at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island* (1793). Extracts were also published in the *Historical Records of New South Wales, Australia and New Zealand*. In 1790 King, as was customary, presented a copy of his journal to Philip Stevens, Secretary to the Admiralty. The journal was then

made available to John Stockdale for inclusion in John Hunter's journal. Unless there is a third copy, this must be the copy that was bought from the London book seller Francis Edwards in 1898 by the Sydney Subscription Library, and is now in the Mitchell Library.

While always in competition with one another for promotion, the friendship of Hunter and King ended with the incorporation of King's information into Hunter's book. It seems King had definitely not given permission, and in severe financial straits and ill health, he had intended to have it published himself, and now could not. In 1992 in London Sotheby's staged a major auction of colonial material with many of these early New South Wales journals offered for sale. It included King's copy of Hunter's book, with annotations by King and with occasional notes by Phillip Parker King and his son. The catalogue entry notes that Hunter had included material from King without acknowledgement, and "as can be seen from the long and detailed annotations, there were other matters of dispute" (Sotheby's 65). Consequently King felt he had to defend certain decisions he had made, and wrote letters to both Banks and Henry Dundas expressing his dissatisfaction. Both men wanted to succeed Phillip as Governor of New South Wales. Hunter was appointed first but King succeeded him in 1800.

Hunter used all of King's Norfolk Island material from his first period there. He also included in addition to his own journal, despatches of Phillip's, material from Lieutenant Ball, and as Inga Clendinnen points out, Lieutenant Henry Waterhouse's account of the spearing of Governor Phillip at Manly, but only acknowledged him as "someone who was there" (317). Incidentally, David Collins's second Volume consists mostly of other people's accounts, and is actually primarily based on Hunter's papers.

Inga Clendinnen writes perceptively about the journal writers, especially the "Big Five" (18). Arthur Phillip, Watkin Tench, John Hunter, and John White were all

commissioned to write prior to departure. David Collins became the fifth published writer. Tench, the lowest ranking but most imaginative and best writer, outsold them all and is the only one still selling today. The journals:

admit us to an unknown culture: the close-knit world of serving British naval and marine officers overseas. Habituated to maintaining solidarity against lesser men, subordinates or foreign, they saw their colony-planting endeavour as unitary - 'for England' - and their individual narratives as expressions of a collective enterprise. Patriotism and caste loyalty routinely trumped competitiveness, with borrowings being generously offered and acknowledged. (Clendinnen 13)

King may not entirely agree. He had to compete with an extraordinarily talented group of men:

The collective assumed its competence over a wide range of scientific and artistic endeavours. Some painted, most sketched, some botanised; some sang, some studied the stars; some constructed lexicons of Australian words. (Clendinnen 16)

Other First Fleet journal writers included Surgeon Bowes Smyth and William Bradley whose beautifully illustrated journal is in the Mitchell Library but who was also never published at the time. Letter writers included Assistant-Surgeon Worgan's writing to his brother Dick, Marine-Lieutenant Ralph Clark writing to his wife Alicia, Lieutenant Daniel Southwell, and Major Ross, a most difficult man whose behaviour was commented on in other people's private letters, rather than the more public journals. Thomas Gilbert (Master of the *Charlotte*), John Marshall (Master of the *Scarborough*), William Crompton Sever (Master of the *Lady Penrhyn*), and Lieutenant

John Shortland (of the *Alexander*), all had their accounts of their return journeys published in *The Voyage of Governor Phillip* (Smith and Wheeler 102).

## CONCLUSION

As a journal writer King was extremely unlucky to have to compete with such a formidable group, and not to be published on his own. He was very fortunate that he arrived in Botany Bay several days ahead of the other writers, and he was the only writer other than Phillip who participated in and wrote full accounts of these very first encounters. Their descriptions of these days appear in nearly all the other journals, sometimes acknowledged and sometimes not, and became the accepted historical record.

King's copy of the Eora vocabulary was the first to arrive in Europe, and he was later to collect one of the first vocabularies of Maori words. King also provided the most comprehensive and final details of La Perouse in Botany Bay, and his account of the early settlement of Norfolk Island was again widely used and unique.

These men do seem to have been an extraordinary generation of people, and most of them should be proud of their achievements, including King, who had even greater personal challenges ahead of him. I think he did mostly comprehend the wider significance of his actions, if not all the repercussions. James Warden in his essay "The Conciliation of Strangers" in *Strangers on the Shore* articulated the intellectual context which underpinned these European encounters with the Aboriginal people, a people of which they only had the most meagre information: "If the Bible and the chain explained the origin and natural hierarchy of men, then the labour theory of value explained how natural man could come to own anything" (222). With their understanding of human origins being derived from the Old Testament, the Great Chain of Being explaining the

hierarchy of all non-sentient and sentient physical beings, and the influence of John Locke's *The Two Treatises* on property ownership, it is clear that these ideas were "catastrophically contrary to a partnership with the Australians, whose structures and needs were then only able to be accommodated as charity or amity" (Warden 224). The catastrophe was the end not only of a traditional lifestyle, but also of many Aboriginal lives, a fact that is insufficiently acknowledged today. The settler/Aboriginal relationship remains just as unresolved over 200 years later.



## Chapter Four

### *Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770*

“We know we cannot live in the past, but the past lives in us”.

Charles Perkins, quoted by Hetti Perkins at the opening of the *Lines in the Sand* exhibition. (See Appendix B)

#### CURATORIAL RATIONALE

I had been locating and thinking about many of the European and Aboriginal first contact images for a long time. As I was researching my ancestor Philip Gidley King in Botany Bay, I was aware of a range of art works illustrating the events of 1770 and 1788. The concept for an exhibition of the responses to these events by the colonial artists for an interested audience in Europe, and by contemporary non-Indigenous and Indigenous artists, evolved. There was also a recognition by me that I am foremost a family historian or a family-orientated historian, and although this has required a general grasp of Australian history, several very good professional historians such as Inga Clendinnen and Marea Nugent have been examining aspects of the same subject matter with excellent scholarship and insight. With my background as a curator, my strength is in my knowledge and arrangement of visual images. The emphasis of my Masters research changed into describing the evolution of a unique historical/contemporary, Indigenous/non-Indigenous curatorial practice.

I had moved to Bundeena on Port Hacking and had begun discussions with Michael Rolfe, the Director of the local Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre, about possible exhibitions. The gallery is in the Sutherland Shire which includes the

southern side of Botany Bay, so given my current research, an exhibition on Botany Bay was an obvious choice. It would be a local exhibition of national significance. Michael Rolfe applied for appropriate funding from Arts New South Wales, and with the Exhibition Co-ordinator Daniel Cunningham we began work. Compared to staffing at the Museum of Sydney and the Mitchell Library, the three of us were a small but effective team, working on an exhibition that was just as large in scope as the other two. The exhibition cost \$85,700 which included an \$8,000 curator's fee and \$30,000 for a substantial ninety six page catalogue. (See Appendix D for budget details).

The title *Lines in the Sand* helped crystallise my thoughts about the exhibition. It came from two newspaper articles in my Botany Bay archive I had been collecting, about sand mining at Kurnell, both carried the headline pun "line in the sand" (Dick 5). *Lines in the Sand* was a useful title with a wide application - the beach and sand were central to the events and first encounters in Botany Bay, and there are many key examples of protests, demarcations, and ultimatums etc., in our subsequent history.

## RESEARCH

I was now much more familiar with colonial art and the relevant collections after the *Flesh & Blood* and *EORA* exhibitions. I had had two expert mentors in Elizabeth Ellis at the Mitchell Library and Keith Vincent Smith. I had been interested in first contact / first encounter works since the 1980s, particularly by Aboriginal artists, and I had worked with several of them. I was familiar with many of the images, and just had to locate them.



Please see print copy for Figure 8.

Figure 8. Gordon Bennett, *Australian Icon (Notes on Perception No. 1)* (1989).  
Oil and acrylic on canvas, 76 x 57 cm. Private Collection.

Gordon Bennett's touring retrospective was imminent at the National Gallery of Victoria, with most of his major works committed to it. Fortunately his Cook portrait, *Australian Icon (Notes on Perception No. 1)* (1989) was not selected and we located the painting in Brisbane. I had carried this image in my mind since 1989 and it seemed to encapsulate this proposed exhibition: an Aborigine in Cook's mind's eye, confined and defined by the limits and inflexibility of Western rationality, and ultimately an absence rather than a presence.

On behalf of the Historic Houses Trust, I had bid for and purchased *Possession Island* (1991) by Gordon Bennett at a Sotheby's auction in July 2007 for \$384,000, a record for an urban Aboriginal artist. They wanted it for the main entrance wall in the foyer of the Museum of Sydney. I think it is one of the most imaginative and important Australian paintings. At its unveiling on the wall in August 2007 it was described as "a powerful interpretation of contact and colonisation", which "encapsulates the complexity of ideas that underpin the Museum of Sydney" (Invitation). I had tried to make a condition of bidding on behalf of Historic Houses that I could exhibit Bennett's

artwork in *Lines in the Sand*. However, it was required for the Bennett retrospective at the National Gallery of Victoria, and was anxiously awaited back at the Museum of Sydney. Gordon Bennett's wife Leanne Bennett suggested the *Study for Possession Island* (1991) that belonged to a Queensland State High School. I requested the loan which took months of negotiation. The art teacher understood how the loan was good for the provenance of the painting, but the Headmaster was not enthusiastic until I had the painting valued for them, and the loan proceeded.

The only other major omission was an original plant specimen - ideally a *Banksia Serrata* - collected by Banks and Solander. I had seen examples in the collection of the Royal Botanical Gardens, Sydney, but unfortunately, one specimen had been damaged on loan to an exhibition in Canberra, and the plants were never going to be loaned out again. The friction of any movement on plants now over two hundred and thirty eight years old could be very detrimental. While waiting months to get a final negative response, I even missed the opportunity to borrow a *Banks Florilegium* (1973) as the insurance indemnity had been finalised.

By 2007 I was much more familiar with the collection at the Mitchell Library, and staff members were very patient when I examined all relevant Botany Bay material. The amount of information now online enables much preparatory research. Institutions have long lead up times for requests to be considered, and there are loan fees. I requested twelve items which all had to be cleared by conservators and the demands of other exhibitions. William Bradley's journal *A Voyage to New South Wales* (1802), for example, had been exhibited too often in the last few years and needed to be rested.

I had never really worked with the National Library of Australia before and compared to the Mitchell Library, they did not know me and I received no personal advice or assistance. Again I could check their collection online. There was no chance

of borrowing Cook's *Endeavour* journal, the jewel in their collection. Luckily most of what I would have wanted was duplicated in the Mitchell Library collection. Exhibition demands on a painting by George Raper (1791) of approaching the entrance to Botany Bay from the sea meant I had to use a scan which was included in the catalogue. Several other key items that could not be borrowed were also reproduced in the catalogue.

I checked the State Library of Victoria (La Trobe) and the National Museum of Australia, who were cooperative, but ultimately I did not need to borrow anything. I visited the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney, especially looking at La Perouse material - shell work, etc. and made a selection. I visited the Australian Museum and was interested in several items, particularly shell fish hooks from the area, but while Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre operates at museum quality environmental condition levels, the Museum's conservators were very unwilling to loan.

The selection of items was a mixture and balance of budgetary considerations, core works, availability, fees and costs involved, transportation logistics and conservation requirements - such as temperatures, humidity, and light levels etc. I relied on the staff, familiar with the wall space and capacity of the gallery, to advise me on the number of artworks. There was a degree of flexibility: spaces between works could be varied, or additional interior walls could be utilised in the Hazelhurst Regional Gallery exhibition spaces. When installing exhibitions, it feels quite miraculous when there is the exact number of artworks, the relationships between the works are meaningful and complementary, and that an overall atmosphere is created.

All the artists I invited agreed to participate. This is mostly attributed to relationships going back many years, and an awareness of my curatorial track record and reputation. It was interesting, however, when I was approaching younger artists who I had not met, like Daniel Boyd (born Cairns, 1982), and I realised I had to sell

myself and the concept of the exhibition. My reputation was also a factor in the preparedness of institutions to loan, although Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre also has a very professional reputation.

## INSTALLATION

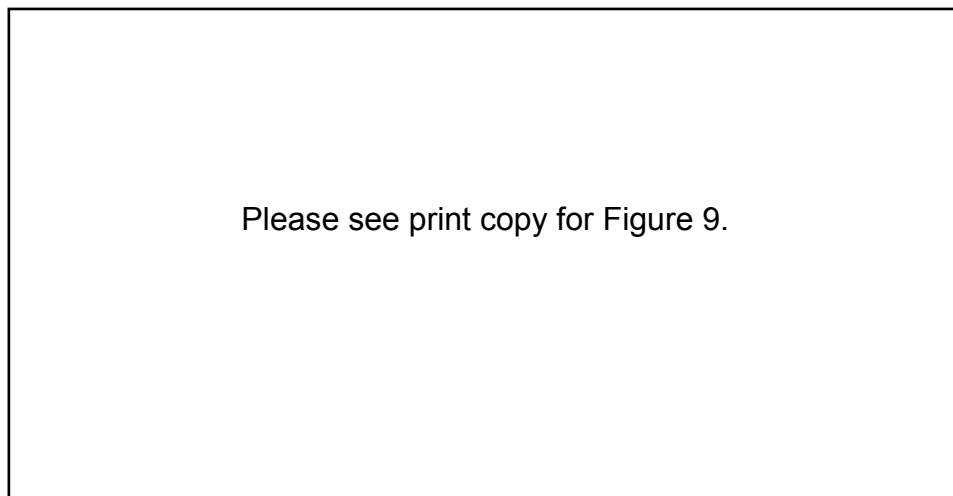


Figure 9. Entrance Foyer Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre: Enlarged “*copy of the original plan of Sting-ray Bay on the east Coast of new Holland, by the Master of H.M.S. Endeavour, Captain James Cook 1770*” and *Untitled* flag by Boat-people.org. Photograph by Jennifer Leahy.

In the outside foyer area we installed an enlargement of Cook’s map of Botany Bay (called Sting-ray Bay), and a flagpole to evoke the imperial objectives of the expedition. The flag, however, by a political activist group called Boat-people.org had

several people standing at the cliffs of Botany Bay, their faces wrapped and disguised/blinded/silenced by the Australian flag, in a protest against post 1770 occupation and legitimacy, and the 2005 immigration policies. I used the flagpole for visual effect, but it did signal a political viewpoint.

In fact people read the exhibition as intensely political. My intent was to illustrate the variety of foundational narratives associated with Botany Bay, primarily the Aboriginal one. Marea Nugent's title for her book *Botany Bay: Where Histories Meet* is a succinct description of what has happened there. I wanted to give a variety of people an opportunity to express their views. Guan Wei pointed out in his Artist Statement in the exhibition catalogue that his painting *Echo* is "a reminder that we are living in an historical arena where cultures from many regions and races are much more integrated than in the past" (42).

Another example of a narrative was my own. My family connections are discussed in the catalogue essay, and my family research was the starting point of this exhibition. The exhibition contained Philip Gidley King's journal which would have been included in the exhibition anyway for historical reasons. Joan Ross, with my encouragement, turned an exchange of letters between Joseph Banks and King about the resistance leader Pemulwuy's head arriving in London, into an art work, and I included Governor Bourke's instruction to give a lease of land in Botany Bay to Maroot in 1832. In a small exhibition within an exhibition section, in addition to my working references, I included more family information, personalising the events and illustrating the idea of the future generations that eventuated.

The Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre is a large classic white rectangular space, with high ceilings and a system of flexible interior walls. I divided the gallery and the material into 1770 and 1788. The 1770 end was curated to evoke an

atmosphere of exploration and discovery, collecting and “The Enlightenment”. The 1788 end represented early encounters and the imminent settlement and colonisation.

There were two entrances to either end of the gallery and I installed an introductory wall as you entered. The 1770 entrance featured a painting *Captain No Beard* (2006) by Daniel Boyd which references Nathaniel Dance’s portrait of Cook, with added black eye patch, Boyd’s leitmotif signifying his portrayal of Cook as a pirate. This portrait of Cook is the Sutherland Shire logo, even on the garbage bins, so it had an eerie familiarity for the local community. For the 1788 entrance there was a new work by Joan Ross (born Scotland, 1961) a portrait of Arthur Phillip in crayon on kangaroo fur entitled *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*. I had seen an earlier portrait of Phillip by Joan Ross, but it was too fragile to transport from Melbourne. As such a key figure, the exhibition needed a major representation of Phillip. On expressing my disappointment, luckily, unsolicited, Joan “felt another Phillip coming on”.

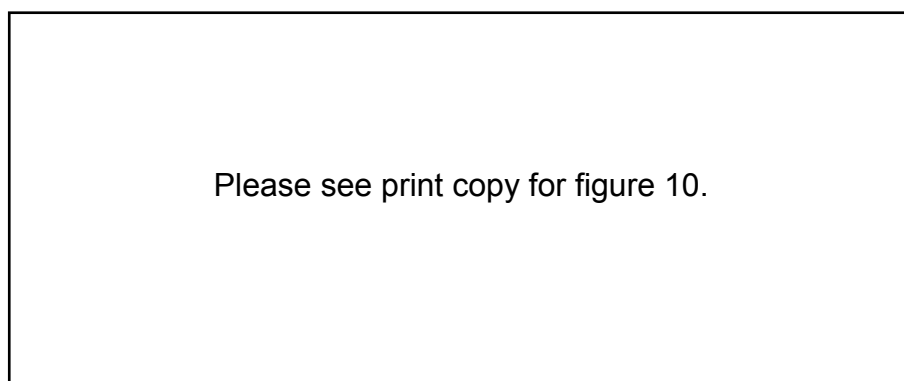


Figure 10. Gallery entrance 1770: Daniel Boyd, *Captain No Beard*.  
Photograph by Jennifer Leahy.



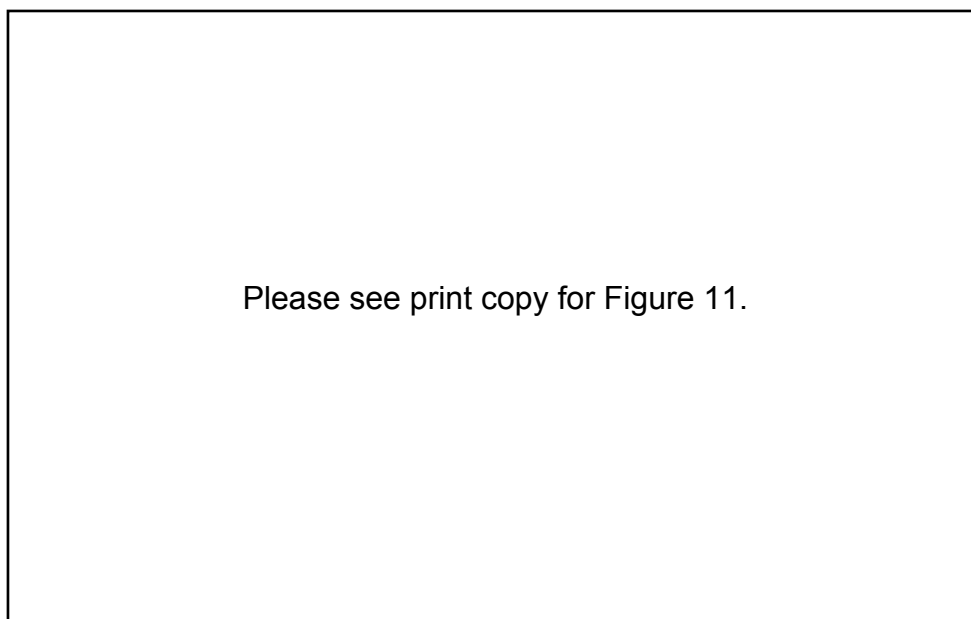
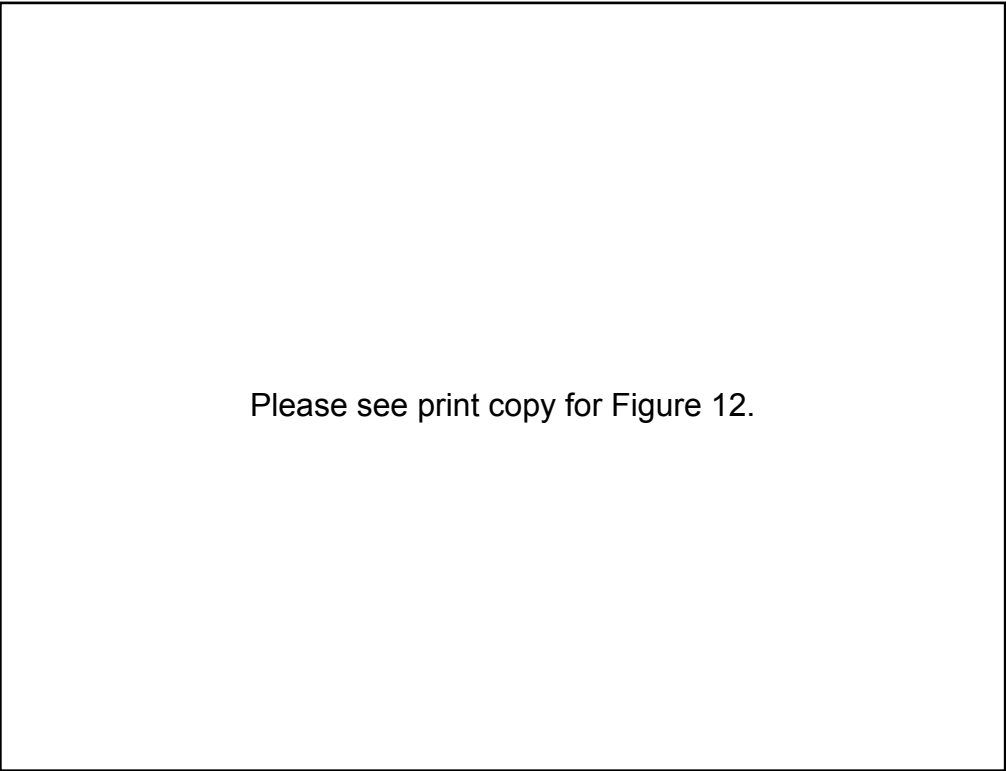


Figure 11. Gallery Entrance 1788: Joan Ross, *Mad Dogs and Englishmen*.  
 Photograph by Jennifer Leahy.

I wanted the gallery and installation to evoke Botany Bay, with wide open spaces and the sea. I wanted the gallery to have this feeling at either end with no interior walls. Daniel Boyd, a young Aboriginal artist, was extremely central to the look, mood and branding of the show with four major works. An expensive gamble was the loan of the E. Phillips Fox *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay 1770* (1902) from the National Gallery of Victoria which I wanted to hang alongside Daniel Boyd's appropriated version *We Call Them Pirates Out Here* (2006), loaned from the Museum of Contemporary Art. Fortunately, while I knew they were a similar scale, they looked very complementary side by side, and the appropriated image brought the past into the present, again a deliberate ploy, and again with Cook with a black eye patch, so that the painting was a strong political statement. The other large painting at this end, Guan Wei's *Echo*, also referenced the Fox painting.

I had first seen Boyd's *Untitled* (2006) sand installation of a model of the *Endeavour* in a "sea" of concentric circles at Mori Gallery in 2006. This I sited in the middle of the space, created by Boyd out of actual Botany Bay sand, and it helped evoke the sea and beach, setting the mood for the exhibition. While referencing Central and Western Desert sand paintings and sculpture, the circles were the ripples and repercussions of the 1770 events that reverberated throughout the show and through our lives today. As Gordon Bennett's portrait of Cook was the precursor to the exhibition, Daniel Boyd's installation became the central metaphor for the exhibition, especially given that the title was *Lines in the Sand*.

While I could visualise the exhibition very early, it was interesting how I grew in confidence articulating, indeed fully comprehending the multi-layered exhibition myself, from the first tentative exhibition proposal, to the early press release, to the ease and enjoyment I had discussing the exhibition and delivering floor talks.



Please see print copy for Figure 12.

Figure 12. Installation 1770 end of gallery: E. Phillips Fox, *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay*, Daniel Boyd, *They Call Them Pirates Out Here* and *Untitled* installation. Photograph by Jennifer Leahy.

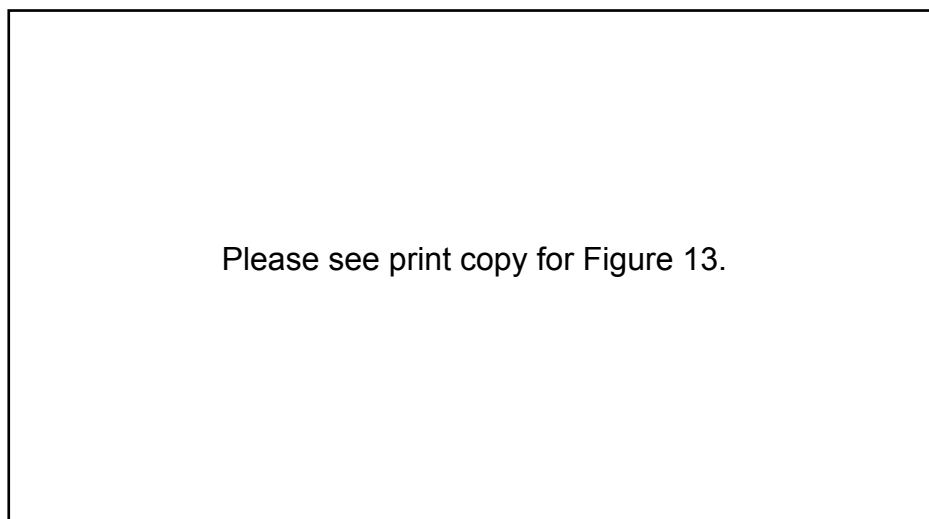


Figure 13. Daniel Boyd, *Untitled* in front of *Echo* by Guan Wei.

Photograph by Jennifer Leahy.

The expansive, open or at sea feeling in the gallery was enhanced by the extremely large and beautiful painting *Echo* by Guan Wei. Based on an 18th Century Chinese intellectual painting by Wang Yuanqi (1642-1715) about the harmony of nature and human kind, it opened up the gallery with its panorama of the sea, mountains and distant horizon and sky. Apart from the delicately beautiful tones and aesthetic beauty of the painting, it has serious import. As a curator I used it for its theatrical power, like a stage set, but it provided a reminder of the Pacific context for Cook and the exhibition. It represented nine incursions into the Pacific by “civilised” Europeans who Guan Wei viewed as bandits, and his Artist’s Statement - on the wall and in the catalogue, was a fascinating dissertation on “otherness”, and a non-linear approach to the telling and interpretation of history. To re-inforce the Pacific context, I included two paintings by Michel Tuffery, a Samoan artist resident in New Zealand where other identities were

grafted onto head shots of Cook.

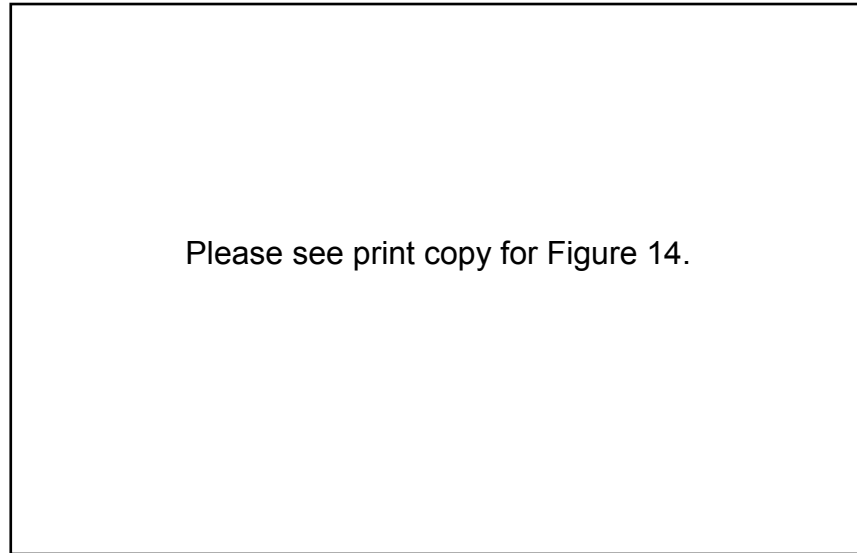


Figure 14. 1770 small gallery/cabin. Photograph by Jennifer Leahy.

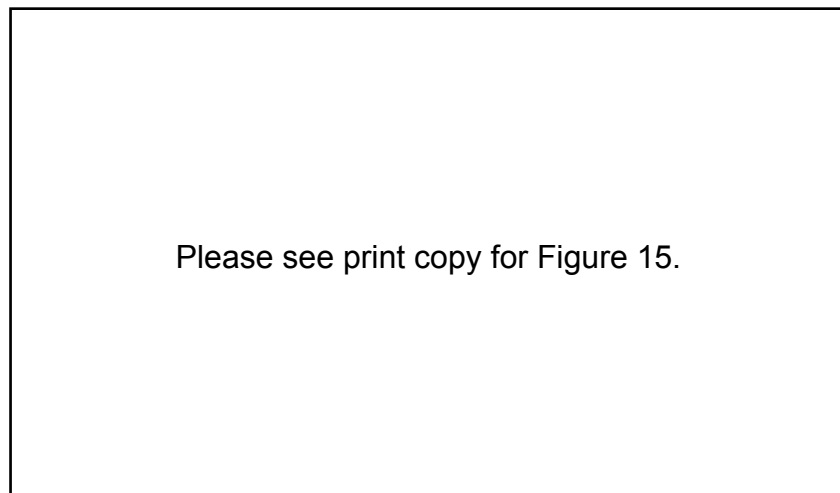


Figure 15. 1788 small gallery/cabin. Photograph by Jennifer Leahy.

The colonial material, small images and journals, required more intimate spaces, display cases, and heightened security and lower lighting levels. I created these spaces with the moveable interior walls in the centre of the gallery, leaving either end open. This had the unexpected effect of creating smaller, darker “cabins” from which you emerged to the brighter “decks” of the ship. Material in these two spaces included Philip Gidley King’s journal, Thomas Chambers’s engraving *Two Natives of New Holland Advancing to Combat* (1773), Dianne Jones’s *LHOOQ ERE!* (2001) referencing the John Webber portrait of Cook that I wanted represented, and Gordon Bennett’s *Study for Possession Island* (1991). All these items are referenced and documented in the exhibition catalogue, like all works referred to in this chapter.

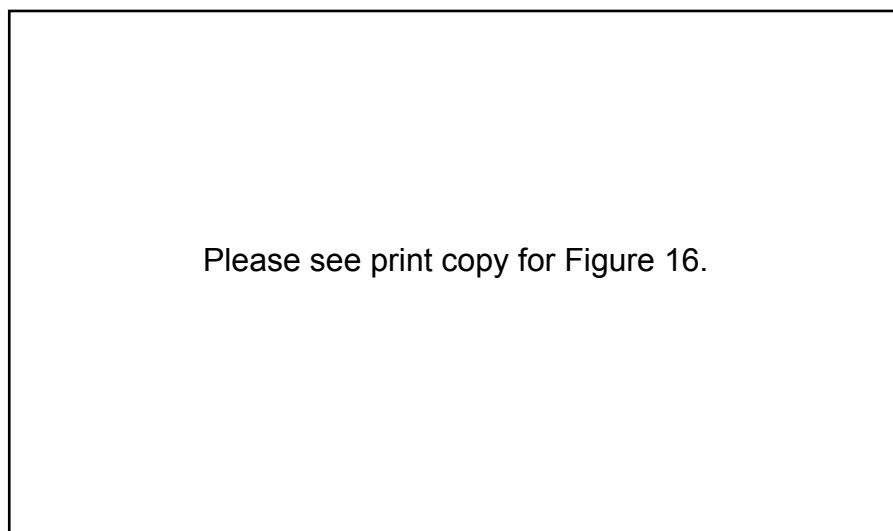
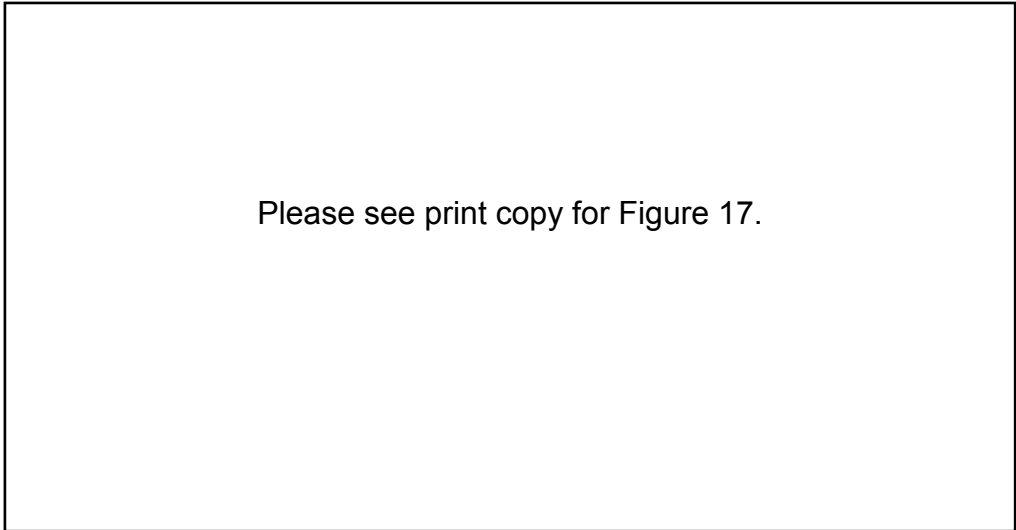


Figure 16. Adam Hill, *Heads Will Roll*. Photography by Jennifer Leahy.

The long walls and sides of the rectangular gallery then felt like the narrow decks running from one end of a ship to the other. Nathalie Hartog-Gautier’s botanical images

over the final pages from La Perouse's diary, on exquisite paper, required closer examination provided by this space, and people could also sit and watch Don Featherstone's film *Babakiueria* (1986). This "deck" gave me the chance to hang the one painting I had not chosen and did not particularly like, where it would receive minimal attention. It is an adage that an exhibition is only as good as the worst painting. I admire the energy and humour of the ubiquitous Aboriginal artist Adam Hill (born Blacktown, NSW, 1970), and I asked him if I could loan a painting called *Bennalong Time* (2002) with a Captain Cook tourist boat, and an indigenised Opera House. The painting is political, humorous and has a subtlety he is often not concerned with. He insisted on making a new large work *Heads Will Roll*, and the hang added to the blue sea/deck feeling. School children found it interesting.

There were several videos and films in the exhibition and they could only be installed on interior walls. This gave me the opportunity, for example, for Tracey Moffatt's *Nice Coloured Girls* (1987) film, where colonial and contemporary contexts are juxtaposed through the subversion of power and point of view as she inserts a female Aboriginal perspective, to be placed among colonial material from the Mitchell Library. Clinton Nain's *Two Natives Dancing* (1998), a diptych with himself referencing a dance pose and the representation of Aboriginal people from a colonial drawing, hung among other early colonial representations of Aboriginal people.



Please see print copy for Figure 17.

Figure 17. Left to right: Midden latex peel, Paddy Forham Wainburranga, *Too Many Captain Cooks*, and *Too Many Captain Cooks*, film.

Photograph by Jennifer Leahy.

A grouping I had not originally envisaged included a midden latex peel dug at Kurnell in the 1970s, led by Vincent Megaw, now Emeritus Professor of Visual Arts and Archaeology at Flinders University, Adelaide. Two were excavated, and one is permanently on exhibition at Kurnell, and I borrowed the other one from the collection of Macquarie University. It contained Aboriginal middens at the 1770 depth and a further 5000 years of “lines in the sand”. People were originally sceptical about why I wanted to include it, but I was adamant. It was such an effective history lesson, it was strangely beautiful in a plain but handsome 1970s wooden frame, and it was the actual soil from Kurnell. It proved to be a very popular exhibit, and I realised that middens have a devoted following. The grey/black colouring of the soil looked good hung beside Paddy Fordham Wainburranga’s (born Rembarnga, NT, 1941-2006) black and white ochre bark painting *Too Many Captain Cooks* (1987). I showed a film about the



painting on a small screen and I liked the mixture of mediums: the most ancient material, natural wood and ochres, and modern technology. What was especially fortuitous was that the best place for this grouping was the inside wall between the two entrances, so visitors entered and left to the sound of Aboriginal language - Paddy Fordham singing his song of Captain Cook in his language, and clapsticks resounding throughout the gallery.

There were not many new works in the exhibition. Joan Ross, in addition to the new portrait of Phillip, reconstituted *Eugene* which had originally been exhibited in 2006. It was a table with a variety of dolls heads in bottles and glass containers, and bizarre objects, a comment on eugenics and the collecting practices of “The Enlightenment”. Two new large works, the letters between Banks and King about the sending of Pemulwuy’s head to the UK were also incorporated. These letters were oversized to emphasise the shocking import of their contents: the horrific trade in Aboriginal heads. I encouraged the work as King had placed a price on Pemulwuy’s head - the worst action by a relation I have so far discovered. This event is only slightly ameliorated by the fact that Joseph Banks, who was so influential in the colony and instrumental in the appointment of the governors up until Governor Macquarie, demanded and received heads from all governors. Joan Ross’s portrait of Pemulwuy made from crayon on fur could be seen from one of the “cabin” spaces where the 1803 etching by Samuel Neele of Pemulwuy her portrait was based on could be compared. Hung beside this installation was Daniel Boyd’s *Self-Portrait, 1788-2006* (2006), a very good likeness of his head in a glass jar. This for me was probably the most powerful and distressing work in the exhibition. It expressed my feelings on the subject more effectively than any words, and dramatically personalised these events and brought them into the present.

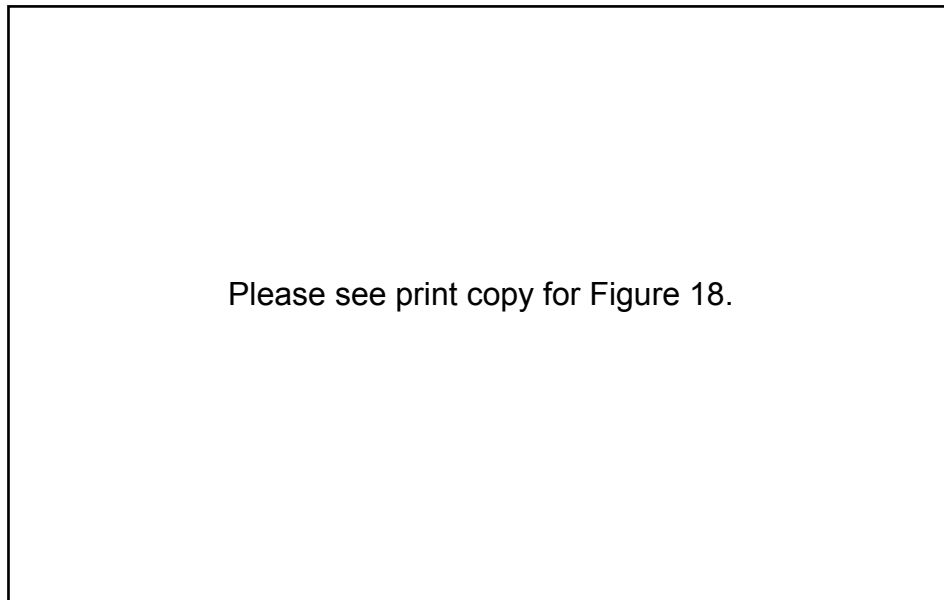


Figure 18. Jonathan Jones, *mark making (A View of Botany Bay)*, 2008.

Photograph by Jennifer Leahy.

Jonathan Jones (born Sydney, 1978) created a new work based on a 1789 etching *A View of Botany Bay* which I had originally drawn to his attention and which he incorporated into the art work. I like to collaborate with artists where appropriate. He created the image out of red beads, referencing the baubles and beads offered to the Aborigines. On the spur of the moment he wanted to axe into the walls in the manner Aborigines axed into trees to create foot holds to capture possums. Some people observed how these marks seemed to echo the Aboriginal girls climbing up the side of the ship in Tracey Moffatt's *Nice Coloured Girls* film. Jonathan's axe marks led to some offended remarks in the visitors' book. S. Beatus, for example, wrote: "Jonathon Jones defacing of gallery is appalling – how was this allowed to happen – who approved such vandalism? Who will pay for wall to be repaired?" (See Appendix F for Visitors' Book comments).

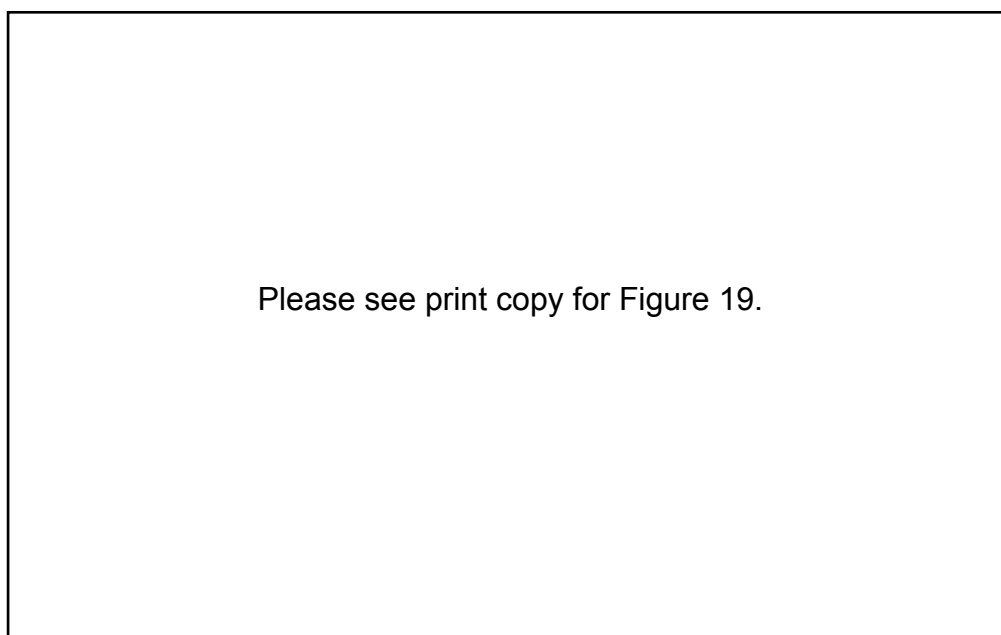


Figure 19. 1778 end wall (left to right): Julie Dowling, *Boongaree*, Gordon Bennett, *Metaphysical Landscape 11* and Jonathan Jones, *mark making (A View of Botany Bay)*. Photograph by Jennifer Leahy.

That end wall of the gallery was unresolved in my mind before the hang as I had not sighted Julie Dowling's (born Perth, 1969) portrait *Boongaree*, which had been selected from a photograph. It was such an arresting image, with Boongaree exuding ownership in the boat with Matthew Flinders and crew. It was a commanding strong corner painting, hung alongside Gordon Bennett's *Australian Icon (Notes on Perception No.1)* (1989), with Cook, appearing to observe Matthew Flinders as he completed his mapping of the Australian coastline. In the middle of the wall I hung Bennett's *Metaphysical Landscape 11* (1990), and the ship, dotting and colours matched well with Jonathan Jones's work. Jonathan was very familiar with the painting as it is loaned to the Art Gallery of New South Wales where he currently works as an assistant curator, and his painting was in homage to the Bennett. These three maritime paintings evoked

the open atmosphere I wanted to also create in this end of the gallery.

On the side wall beside this painting, I had photographs by Peter McKenzie (born La Perouse, 1944) who grew up in La Perouse as part of the Sims family. He had been commissioned in 1987 to photograph the mission at La Perouse. This was for a publication *After 200 Years* initiated by the Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies for the Bicentennial year. This archive of the community is very valuable as a point in time, and I teamed his photograph *Maxine Ryan Collecting Shells on Yarra Bay*, (1987), and others photographs, with shell work objects from La Perouse in the collection of the Powerhouse Museum.

Another local Aboriginal represented was Elaine Russell (born Tingha, NSW, 1941) who had lived on Botany Bay, just outside the mission, in the 1940s and had written and illustrated a book *The Shack That Dad Built*. I'd always had some reservations about her work which I found too symmetrical, but in this instance, her painting best captured the seductive circular nature of Botany Bay. The works by these two artists were very important because of the connection to Aborigines in La Perouse, and they helped build the picture of what Botany Bay actually looked like.

While the more intimate galleries in the centre of the gallery space accidentally felt like cabins, I originally envisaged a Master Cabin feeling for the section where I installed my exhibition within an exhibition. This area was to illustrate the background references, influences and material involved in the preparation of an exhibition. I think this was an original idea. The space however felt more like a small gallery than a "cabin". I exhibited my "collection", in the spirit of the exhibition: colonial art works from my collection, a pin board with miscellaneous photographs and articles and items that had influenced me, copies of art works I wanted to reference but could not borrow, and in perspex cabinets my reference books and other material, including a *banksia*

*serrata* sample I collected from a garden. It was a modern version of a gentleman's Cabinet of Curiosities. It was a space for more information about my family and to indicate the next generation and the colonisation that resulted from 1788. For example, I exhibited a Hardy Wilson print of the 1830s house built by King's daughter, Anna Maria and her husband Hannibal Macarthur, John Macarthur's nephew. I also included two photographs I had exhibited in 1986 and admire very much, Tracey Moffatt's ironic photograph *The Movie Star: David Gulpilil on Bondi Beach* (1985) and Mervyn Bishop's famous photograph of Gough Whitlam pouring soil into Vincent Lingiari's hand in 1975. A list of everyone on the First Fleet was very popular, as was a reproduction of Algernon Talmage's *The Founding of Australia*, a history painting first exhibited in 1937, with the Union Jack being raised at Sydney Cove on the 26 January 1788.

Other perspex cabinets in the 1770 end of the gallery exhibited works from the Botany Bay National Park (Kurnell) collection which included early photographs of Kurnell, including Cook's Stream and Isaac Smith's rock (where he was the first to step ashore), various programmes and souvenirs of anniversaries and re-enactments which illustrated the changing nature of the approach to this historic contested site, and items such as a sextant and convict leg irons. These exhibits were augmented by two artworks by Gary Carsley, one of several non-Indigenous artists in the exhibition, based on his series of parks as curated nature, in this case, Kurnell (Botany Bay National Park).

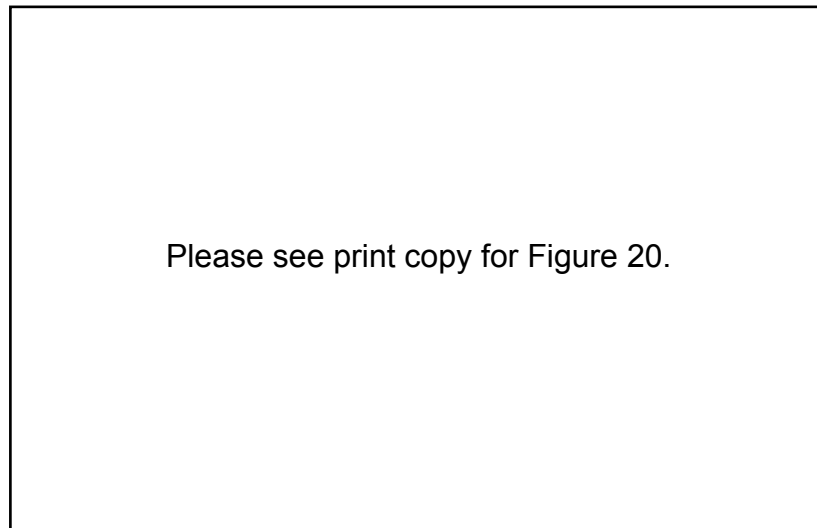


Figure 20. Collection Botany Bay National Park (Kurnell).

Photograph by Jennifer Leahy.

For me, *Lines in the Sand* was a synthesis of the two previous exhibitions, and the logical extension. It was as if I had been building towards it for many years. I felt an independence from my mentors. Although there was no designer, the exhibition was the best looking and the most evocative of the three, assisted by the classic exhibiting space. Even with the juxtapositions, I thought it was a seamless mixture of colonial/contemporary/Indigenous/non-Indigenous material, sourced from both natural history museums and art galleries. The catalogue and exhibition were accessible to the general public and were not driven by overt political or theoretical objectives. It was the exhibition that most comprehensively demonstrated what I regard as fundamental issues, and while I directed/curated it, it provided a space for other stories and viewpoints to be expressed, and to provoke thinking about the many ways history can be told and interpreted.

## RESPONSE

### **Attendance**

Over 6,000 people visited *Lines in the Sand* between 28 March and 11 May 2008, a period of forty four days. This compares with 12,562 visiting *Flesh & Blood* over seventy nine days, and 16,516 visiting *EORA* over fifty six days. Many people were very appreciative of the exhibition, and there was a well attended series of floor talks: local historian Daphne Salt (6 April), Djon Mundine (20 April), Keith Vincent Smith (27 April), and Les Bursill, a local Dharawal man and local rock art expert (4 May). People from Sydney's art world and academic institutions attended. I gave floor talks to the local Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation group and a group of older Aboriginal women who reside in the area. Attendances were average for the exhibitions at the gallery and many people did visit from the inner-city. Unfortunately much of the exhibition was on during school holidays as otherwise school teachers would have visited with their students.

Sutherland is a conservative, white, middle-class, flag-waving Shire, where difference is not encouraged. The Cronulla riots of 2005 were not an accident. I hoped that the exhibition provided an educational opportunity, while realising the people you would sometimes most like to reach, do not usually attend art galleries. Amongst many complimentary remarks in the visitors' book, a G. Smith, however, wrote "Too much intellectualisation! Not enough truth. Some pretty pictures. Nice historical records", and one woman was heard to say "I'm sick of saying Sorry". I was surprised at the extraordinary level of interest in Captain Cook. A local historian and member of the Captain Cook Society was apparently offended I had used Daniel Boyd's image of Cook with a black eye patch on the invitation, and complained I had desecrated Cook's image.

## Publicity

The exhibition was well publicised by advertisements, but these days the services of well known publicists are required to achieve effective media coverage. There are many exhibitions being staged, and it is very competitive (and rather a lottery) for the limited opportunities for publicity. There was a photograph of Daniel Boyd beside his work in the *Daily Telegraph* on the 29 March 2008 (See Appendix G), and a succinct summary of the exhibition. Media attention would have encouraged more people to make the one hour journey from the inner-city or Wollongong. The exhibition was not mentioned in *The Australian*, but on the day before the exhibition closed John McDonald reviewed the exhibition in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (See Appendix H). Anna Lawrenson has written a review scheduled to be published in the November 2008 issue of *Art Monthly Australia* (See Appendix I). For an exhibition that did raise so many issues related to the nation's foundation and ongoing settler/Indigenous relations, and as the Apology had just been made to the Stolen Generation by Prime Minister Rudd on 13 February 2008, I was disappointed that there was not more interest from the media.

Hetti Perkins, Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the Art Gallery of NSW, after referring to the Apology in her Opening Address on 28 March 2008 said, "let's hope the title this outstanding exhibition has been given, *Lines in the Sand*, is prescient in marking a moment where we as Aboriginal people have emerged out of the political wilderness of the past decade". A copy of her speech is included in the Appendix B. The Aboriginal artists enjoyed participating, although the non-Indigenous artists were possibly more effusive about being included. However, Brenda Croft, Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the National Gallery of Australia and a participating artist, was very complimentary and she



thought the exhibition should tour. Djon Mundine said, during his floor talk, that the exhibition was a little too Euro-centric and Cook-centric for him without elaborating further. For an exhibition that did retrieve the Aboriginal voice quite extensively, I wondered if they felt they were being colonised all over again, and that the exhibition should have been curated by an Aborigine.

Katrina Schlunke, a Senior Lecturer in Cultural Studies at the University of Technology, Sydney, gave a fascinating lecture (13 April 2008) about the Daniel Boyd and E. Phillips Fox paintings saying: “Quite literally today we have the opportunity, for a moment to stand within a crack of white mythology by standing between Fox and Boyd. These opportunities are rare and should be celebrated.” This lecture has been reproduced in the August 2008 edition of *Art Monthly Australia* (See Appendix C).

The exhibition catalogue was well received and sold well. All key works were illustrated and documented with informative captions that were also displayed beside the works in the exhibition. Relevant Artist Statements were included. My essay provided a context for the exhibition, Keith Vincent Smith’s essay reflected the most recent scholarship, and in his insightful essay, Djon Mundine wrote poignantly: “We have shifted from being the normal-widespread to becoming the lonely unique, the leftover, in a quiet landscape of eerie silence, like the Tasmanian Tiger verging on existing as only a myth” (11).

John McDonald in his review in *Spectrum* in the *Sydney Morning Herald* described the exhibition as “an entertaining, somewhat anarchic blend of art and activism” (17). I would question the use of the word “anarchic” as I see my curatorial role and agency as bringing together and presenting various elements and viewpoints, although some are very political. McDonald goes on to describe my methods as:

inclusive rather than exclusive. Instead of refining a coherent

argument from a vast mass of material, he has been happy to throw in all sorts of tangential items relating to Aboriginal society and history. The result is an extraordinary collage of ideas - a patchwork quilt of diverse, competing tendencies, where the anger of contemporary artist-activists and the scientific detachment of the white explorers and settlers meet in one imaginary summit [ . . . ] Bourke has given us 1770: ideas about a past shared and disputed by black and white Australians. We are asked to pause and consider before we rush headlong into the future, if there are still historical accounts to be settled (17).

## Chapter Five

### *Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770.*

#### Exhibition Catalogue Essay

#### “Lines in the Sand”

I first saw Botany Bay when I visited La Perouse one Sunday when I was 12 years old in the late 1950s. It was also my first introduction to Aborigines – there had been virtually no reference to them in the historical or contemporary narrative I was being taught at school. I remember being frightened of the other tourist exotica, the snakes that are still exhibited there on weekends. The Aborigines were matter-of-factly carving, demonstrating and selling boomerangs to the tourists, and were living in this beautiful setting. I don't really remember any particularly unusual strong feelings or impressions. What I have unexpectedly remembered, after all these years, is how gypsies fascinated and frightened me. At that time they could still occasionally be sighted on country New South Wales roads, their rather flashy but battered cars pulled over in groups. Cars were more prone to breaking down then and we feared stopping as gypsies had a reputation, among other prejudices, for being thieves. Interestingly, my family share no recollection of them, and the gypsies, peripheral at best, seem to have faded from the Australian narrative.

The Aborigines I saw that day at Botany Bay were probably from the Timbery family, from the south coast's Five Islands and La Perouse. The family still live there

today and some family members continue to make boomerangs. The Timbery family history is unusually well documented, and in the *Lines in the Sand* exhibition, or in public collections, they are represented by various items including an 1885 photograph of Queen Emma Timbery, an 1819 pencil drawing of their ancestor Timbéré, and Joe Timbery's 1930s boomerang illustrated with the arrival of Captain Cook.

I did not know then that my great-great-great-great-grandfather Philip Gidley King, Second Lieutenant to Captain Arthur Phillip had arrived in Botany Bay on HMS *Supply* 170 years before, landing at Yarra Bay a few hundred metres from this site. On 19 January 1788, both Phillip and King walked across the hot sand, in uniforms most unsuitable for the January heat. As they searched for water, they had the first encounters with Aborigines, possibly ancestors of the people I saw that day at La Perouse, or of people I have since met. King would document several of these first encounters over the next few days, and it is his account in his journal we read today, and see in the exhibition. The other better known journal writers such as Watkin Tench, David Collins and John Hunter were on the other First Fleet ships, days behind HMS *Supply*. King's accounts (and his later account of the settlement of Norfolk Island) were subsumed into the published journals of other writers. John Hunter for example, included material from King's diary without acknowledgement which made it impossible for him to be published himself. King felt cheated about this and his annoyance and difference of opinion is obvious in his annotations in his personal copy of Hunter's journal. This remained in the family for several generations, was then purchased by a noted collector, and then auctioned in London several years ago.

My cousin Jonathan King devised and led the First Fleet Re-Enactment of 1988 to celebrate Australia's bicentenary. Co-incidentally, the artist Tracey Moffatt and I were participating in an Arts Festival in Portsmouth, England when the re-enactment fleet left

from there in 1987. Tracey protested against the cultural insensitivity of the fleet flying an Aboriginal flag and was escorted away by the police. When this First Fleet sailed into Botany Bay in 1988, Jonathan King wanted to re-enact the landing at Yarra Bay but was refused permission by the Aborigines.

I have been involved in Aboriginal art as a curator and gallerist for over twenty years. I was fortunate in the mid to late 1980s to meet or work with an extraordinary generation of emerging artists and curators including Gordon Bennett, Tracey Moffatt, Michael Riley, Brenda Croft, Hetti Perkins and Djon Mundine. I have always been especially interested in works that specifically address Indigenous/settler first encounters as they have provided an Aboriginal perspective which is markedly absent from historical accounts. The late Michael Riley once rather snappily said to me “ALL our work relates to that.” But in reality, artists such as Tracey Moffatt and Gordon Bennett have proceeded to make international reputations as “Australian” artists, addressing a wide variety of concerns and interests.

In the lead up to the Bicentennial of 1988 there was an unprecedented interest and growing awareness of Aboriginal issues and sensitivities. *Lines in the Sand* includes several works that were produced at this time in response to the events being celebrated or boycotted. For example, in Tracey Moffatt’s short film *Nice Coloured Girls* (1987) colonial and contemporary contexts are juxtaposed through the subversion of point of view and power as she inserts a female Aboriginal perspective into the official historical narrative: Aboriginal girls climb up onto the decks of the first ships, or score a “Captain” in Kings Cross. Gordon Bennett’s paintings of this period such as *Australian Icon (Notes on Perception No.1)* (1989) and *Study for Possession Island* (1991) challenge the orthodox Australian histories, or investigate an Aboriginal identity within a postcolonial framework, reinserting an Aboriginal presence in the Australian narrative

in an act of reclamation. In *Metaphysical Landscape II* (1990) Bennett has appropriated a section of Joseph Lycett's 1824 aquatint *North View of Sidney*, transforming (re-informing) the image from an Aboriginal perspective, complete with the visual pun of a Xanthorrhoea (or Black Boy), a plant of great use to Aborigines which Lycett was probably not aware of. Brenda Croft's photograph of 26 January 1988 reminds us of the unprecedented pan-Australian united Aboriginal opposition to 1988.

Although my colonial ancestors were involved in the dispossession of Aboriginal people, ironically it has been the genuine interest of friends like Tracey Moffatt, Michael Riley and Hetti Perkins in my own family history, which encouraged me to further research and to be less self-conscious about it. For Aboriginal people, family comes first and is central to existence to an extent that non-Indigenous people do not comprehend. The opportunity to begin comprehensively researching my family, and to curate a story about the historical role of certain members, developed from an imaginative invitation to propose an exhibition for the Museum of Sydney. As the former site of the First Government House, the family connection is significant on both sides: my mother's ancestor King, as Governor from 1800 to 1806, had lived there with his family, as had my father's ancestor Governor Bourke from 1831 to 1837. This culminated in the exhibition *Flesh & Blood: A Story of Sydney 1788-1998*, at the Museum of Sydney in 1998, which explored the contribution of various family members to the origin and growth of Sydney. I had extraordinary public and private material to illustrate my thesis - journals, government records, paintings and personal memorabilia – mostly loaned from the Mitchell Library. The exhibition was designed to make people think about their own family contributions to where they live, and about how communities and cities develop.

It struck me forcefully at the time that while my own history was well

documented and relatively easy to research, and I had many relatives, little seemed to be known about the Aboriginal people or their descendants, who were dispossessed, or died, so quickly in the Sydney region after 1788. I was fortunate to meet Keith Vincent Smith who had written the pioneering biographies of Bennelong and Bungaree, and I discovered that a few people knew a surprising amount about the Eora people and were doing extraordinary research, including reconstructing the language. This resulted in the 2006 Mitchell Library exhibition *EORA: Mapping Aboriginal Sydney 1788-1850* co-curated by Keith Vincent Smith and myself, and based primarily on his research and the collections of the Mitchell Library. While it included extensive material, all existing vocabularies of Eora words, and many accounts, quotes and representations of Aboriginal people, their voice and perspective remained more elusive than I had hoped.

To counter this, I wanted to try to personalise where possible specific relationships or encounters between my family and Aboriginal people, as documentation does exist in some instances. I moved to Bundeena on Port Hacking, one bay south of Botany Bay, and enrolled for an MA at the University of Wollongong. My starting point was my ancestor Philip Gidley King in Botany Bay in 1788. This research has culminated in the exhibition *Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770*, staged at the Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre in the Sutherland Shire, which extends to the southern side of Botany Bay. The exhibition, in which selected colonial, contemporary and local artists respond to the events of 1770 and 1788, provides the opportunity to reflect on a pre 1770 Aboriginal existence and its subsequent loss, the meeting of two entirely alien world views, the Enlightenment's search for knowledge about the diversity and connectedness of the world's flora, fauna and people, and the weaving of foundational narratives, including a counter narrative of resistance. *Lines in the Sand* illustrates how Aboriginal voices – and the artists have

been the most articulate – are being inserted back into the Australian narrative.

As I look at Botany Bay today it is hard to imagine the hold it has exercised on the public imagination since 1770. This is reinforced by the seemingly ignored, and under the circumstances, infrequently visited site at Kurnell, although much more imaginative proposals and plans are currently being considered. It is as if the site has been paralysed by the weight of its foundational history and contested nature, a metaphor for the impasse of settler/Indigenous relations.

Botany Bay has been severely damaged, indeed vandalised environmentally over many years by sand mining, the pollution and development associated with its life as a port, the container terminals that handle one third of Australia's container trade, the refineries and pipe lines. A new threat is the proposed desalination plant. While so many people set out for "Botany Bay" which was synonymous with "Australia," no-one actually arrived there, although the ever expanding and noisy Sydney Airport is now the primary point of entry to Australia with over thirty million arrivals each year.

With only a thin strip of land barely separating the water and the sky, Botany Bay is a beautiful, bland, blank canvas for the superimposition of expectations and aspirations, dreams and nightmares, disappointments, fears, and for some, redemptive possibilities. For the Aborigines it has meant dispossession and the destruction of their traditional lives. Botany Bay has a pleasing, comforting, almost perfect circularity to it, resembling a womb: the perfect location for the "birthplace" of Australia.

Botany Bay was a contested and paradoxical site from the beginning with the Aborigines calling out "warra warra wai" ("go away" "begone") which was interpreted as "welcome." Both the leading explorer (Cook) and botanist (Banks) of the day were wrong about the suitability of the site to support a colony, but there was an urgent need to establish another site for convicts due to the American War of Independence, fierce



strategic and economic competition with the French, Spanish and Portuguese, and the need for a naval and supply base. Banks no doubt had his own agenda, and his influence over the colony extended until the appointment of Governor Macquarie in 1815.

*Lines in the Sand* contains iconic representations of the events in Botany Bay such as E. Phillips Fox's *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay 1770* (1902), but also responses to the events and their representation by Aboriginal artists such as Daniel Boyd, Dianne Jones, Brenda Croft, Tony Albert and Clinton Nain. These artists often seek to redress the omissions or perspectives, viewing their work as educational and a long over-due correction of the historical records.

Daniel Boyd questions the romantic notions of colonisation, and as illustrated in his painting *Captain No Beard* (2006), sees such behaviour as more akin to piracy. He says "it's very important that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders continue to create dialogue from their own perspective to challenge the subjective history that has been created" (Boyd). Boyd and Dianne Jones were both provoked, shocked and like many Aboriginal people, insulted by the National Portrait Gallery's purchase of the John Webber portrait of Captain Cook for \$3.5 million in 2000, at a time when the Howard Government was refusing to say sorry to the Stolen Generation. The bark painting *Too Many Captain Cooks* (1987) by the late Paddy Fordham Wainburranga from the Northern Territory provides a unique opportunity to see how the story of Captain Cook has been incorporated into Aboriginal mythology, and how Aboriginal storytelling and art differs conceptually from Western representational structures.

Peter McKenzie grew up in La Perouse, a member of the well-known Sims family. In 1987 he was part of the Bicentennial project which culminated in the photographic book *After 200 Years*. His work provides an invaluable snapshot of the lives of Aboriginal people at La Perouse twenty years ago. As McKenzie said recently,

“Things are changing so fast for Kooris, we need to take photos because things will be different tomorrow. Photography is particularly pertinent because in the Aboriginal household the most prized possession is the photos in the photo tin” (qtd. in Pakula 19). Elaine Russell wrote the book *The Shack that Dad Built* (2004) about her childhood in the 1940s living for a time near the La Perouse mission, and gives an insight into what life was like for many Aboriginal families. Her experience was similar to many different families that had come to live there earlier, during the Depression.

The artist Nathalie Hartog-Gautier illustrates the diverse narratives attached to Botany Bay, and in the exhibition she superimposes botanical images over the handwritten last pages of the diary of her countryman Laperouse. In a demonstration of how competitive it was at this time, in January 1788 he attempted to enter Botany Bay in unsuitable weather as Phillip rather uncharacteristically and recklessly sailed out for Port Jackson. Jacques Arago’s portrait of *Timbere* (1819) reminds us of other French visitors such as Louis de Freycinet. Much of Hartog-Gautier’s recent work references very sensitively and imaginatively, past explorations and migrations, paralleled by her own experiences and her own artistic journey.

Captain Phillip’s instructions from King George III were “by every means possible to open an intercourse with the natives and to conciliate their affections” (Barton 119). By contrast, after a recent encounter in Samoa where several men had been killed, Laperouse built and defended a stockade on his arrival. As he spoke French, Philip Gidley King was sent from Sydney Cove by Phillip to visit on board with Laperouse and he described how well equipped for scientific endeavour the *La Boussole* and *L’Astrolabe* were. In fact Laperouse said he “could not think of any article that he stood in need of” (P.G. King 9). In this and future contacts with the French, King’s relations appear to be a mixture of camaraderie, diplomacy and espionage. King was

one of the last people to see them alive before they were shipwrecked in the Solomon Islands.

While Nathalie Hartog-Gautier uses botanical drawings as a metaphor, Joan Ross's love and affinity for the natural world heightens her sense of what aboriginal people were separated from and lost, and she questions ideas of "civilisation" and "superiority." Ross sees her work as a way of drawing attention to this loss, and, hopefully, as a reconciling agent. Her use of the iconic kangaroo fur is a deliberate and as powerful a political statement, as Boat-people.org's *Untitled* (2005) photographs of three people on the cliffs at Botany Bay, "silenced, blinded and rendered deaf" by the Australian flags over their faces, and eerily prescient of the Cronulla riots (Kelly). Boat-people.org formed in 2001 as a response to the Howard Government's expressions of nationalism and xenophobia, particularly in relation to refugees, although this work primarily addresses post 1770 legitimacy.

Fiona MacDonald's woven photograph of the Sutherland Shire's James Cook Island, and Gary Carsley's Kurnell works of complex digital wooden inlay, address issues of colonisation and cultural transfers between the Old and New World, and the qualities of the handmade faced with the uniformity of globalisation. Carsley's *Botany Bay National Park, Sydney*, references the botanical history of the site: "Parks are specific forms of place making; they are curated nature" and "can take on narrative qualities that portray significant cultural and historical strategies" (Holder).

Michel Tuffery's paintings remind us of the broader context of Cook's explorations, and illustrate a Pacific Islander's perspective on Cook and colonisation. Guan Wei's *Echo* (2005) contains nine appropriated images of Europeans exploring in the Pacific Ocean in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Wei has "reconstructed" these images into a very well known Chinese intellectual landscape painting that

illustrated the harmony between nature and humankind. He is commenting on how “otherness” came to be portrayed, and the painting is an attempt by Wei to “introduce a fresh approach where historical analysis develops in a non-linear, trans-cultural and multilayered way,” a “reminder that we are living in an historical arena where cultures from many regions and races are much more integrated than in the past” (*Echo*).

The convict story, despite being Australia’s *raison d’être*, is only hinted at in the exhibition. They did not disembark in Botany Bay, and very few accounts of their experiences exist. I feel justified in including my own family narrative in *Lines in the Sand* as it is an attempt to personalise some of the events that happened in Botany Bay. King did participate in and record in his journal several of the first encounters with Indigenous people, and it is his accounts of them that have become the historical record. On the first day he and Phillip encountered Aborigines when they were looking for water, and over the next days he had his own encounters, showing himself to be as courageous if not as assured or successful as Phillip in the protocols both sides were acting out. It is fascinating how these protocols were useful, understood and misinterpreted. King wrote about the key encounter where he ordered for the marines to reveal their sex to the Aborigines. He also offered them alcohol, and although he resisted what he perceived to be the offering of women, he provocatively proffered a handkerchief to a naked young woman he had singled out.

King records encountering a large group of Aborigines up the George’s River, at a place he named “Lance Point” where spears were thrown at his party. This name did not subsequently appear on any maps, but later as Governor he did much naming and claiming. As did his son Phillip Parker King who was the first famous “Australian” for completing much of Matthew Flinders’s charting and (re)naming of the north west of Australia. He was accompanied on the 1817-1818 journey by Bungaree who had been

the first Australian to circumnavigate Australia in 1803 with Matthew Flinders.

Exhausted by another trip in 1820, Phillip Parker King was very nearly shipwrecked on Point Banks at the entrance to Botany Bay, only days from home.

Later as Governor, Philip Gidley King placed a reward on the resistance leader Pemulwuy's head, which he subsequently sent to Joseph Banks, and several artists reference this in the exhibition. While obviously I find this horrific and inexcusable, this is not the place to discuss in detail the records of my ancestors in relation to Aboriginal subjects. Joseph Banks, who had been influential in the appointment of all the early governors, asked for heads to be sent to him. Both King and Bourke were in the colony at a time of expansion and land acquisition, and there was inevitable frontier conflict. Both men were products of their time, with daunting responsibilities, and despite overall good intentions, handled these issues no worse than anyone else. Indeed many of the issues remain as unresolved today.

In 1832 Governor Bourke gave the first lease to an Aborigine, the entrepreneurial Boatswain Mahroot who hired out boats and huts to fishermen at Bumborah Point along from Yarra Bay. Had he had any descendants the lease could have been handed down. Unfortunately, as Mahroot was later to say, "All gone! Only me left to walk about" (Miles).

As my interest and appreciation of colonial art has grown over the last few years, I have collected a small selection of works that relate to my colonial history. Some of these are included in the exhibition as they give an indication of what grew from these first encounters and the resulting colonisation. Included are the first etchings of both Botany Bay and Sydney Cove in 1788, and 1824 aquatints of Sydney, Newcastle (Kings Town) and Hobart by Joseph Lycett, as King was involved in the foundation of all three towns. Back from Norfolk Island in April 1790, King recorded in his journal meeting

Bennelong who he described as “very intelligent,” a “very good natured fellow, & has a great deal of humour” (392-93). King at this time copied David Collins’s compilation of Eora words, which he took to England and was the first vocabulary to arrive there.

King’s daughter Anna Maria, my great-great-great-grandmother, married Hannibal Macarthur, John Macarthur’s nephew, and lived at The Vineyard, subsequently renamed Subiaco and seen in the Hardy Wilson print. Such connections illustrate the small and incestuous nature of early colonial society. Also exhibited are photographs I have taken, family memorabilia, copies of works I considered for inclusion, and relevant books I have especially admired.

The beach has been the prime location of most encounters in the Pacific and there are many lines in the sand in the exhibition and in our history – literal lines of sand and soil for over 5000 years in the 1970s Kurnell midden, site specific environmental lines of protest relating to sand mining, the filming of *40,000 Horseman* (Charles Chauvel 1940) in the Kurnell dunes, the sand in Daniel Boyd’s Endeavour installation *Untitled* (2006), or David Gulpilil’s reclamation of the beach at Bondi in Tracey Moffatt’s *The Movie Star* (1985). The introduced straight line began mapping the coastline which led to surveying, naming, claiming and colonisation. In Tasmania there was the infamous 1830 Black Line designed to expunge the Aborigines. Mervyn Bishop’s 1975 photograph of then Prime Minister Gough Whitlam pouring soil into the hands of Vincent Lingiari reminds us of the earlier and prolonged courageous stand by Aborigines in the Wave Hill Walk Off that helped give birth to the Land Rights Movement.

On the very first evening in Port Jackson on the beach with Aborigines at Manly Cove, Phillip wrote: “As their curiosity made them very troublesome when we were preparing our Dinner, I made a circle round us; there was little difficulty in making

them understand that they were not to come within it, and they then sat down very quiet” (Smith *Bennelong* 16).

It is not surprising that these events and encounters have constructed different national psyches for Australia’s Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. Perhaps as Australians we have now reached yet another line in the sand historically – the Northern Territory Intervention, the apology from a new Federal Government, another opportunity to reconcile our shared histories and futures, and to acknowledge and understand just what happened that day on the beach in Botany Bay in 1770.

Ace Bourke  
Curator

## Conclusion

*Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770* was a successful exhibition, and the installation evoked an atmosphere and an environment that transcended my original visualisation and hopes. In fact I think it was one of the few exhibitions of diverse art works and material that transcended the individual works and gallery space, and constituted an installation. In retrospect, this exhibition was a confluence of my career path, relationships and influences that had been building over the last two decades.

An individual style of autobiographical curatorship has evolved and I have mapped the development. I linked the past with the present in *Flesh & Blood* by illustrating a story of Sydney through my relations over generations, and in *EORA* many of the Eora people that were dispossessed in the first years of settlement were identified and their lives contextualised. In *Lines in the Sand* I looked at the events of 1770 and 1788 through many eyes including my ancestors, Aboriginal eye witnesses and contemporary Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists.

The three exhibitions, especially *EORA* and *Lines in the Sand*, were accompanied by catalogues which represented the latest in scholarship, and the exhibitions all received attention from academics, historians, art historians, and students. They have provoked debates and dialogues. *Flesh & Blood* was the catalyst for Anna Lawrenson's PhD thesis entitled *Flesh + Blood: Appropriation and the Critique of Australian Colonial History in recent Art Practice*. The exhibitions were also accessible and appreciated by the general public, stimulating reflection on their own family histories. The exhibitions reinforced the idea that history is made up of many voices, perspectives and interpretations, and that national narratives consist of personal experiences by real people we are sometimes descended from. I also demonstrated how exhibitions need not



be elitist or hierarchical, and can include side by side the most valuable fine art works and kitschy souvenirs, drawn from a variety of sources, from natural history museums, libraries, art galleries and our personal collections.

I have been able to research and curate exhibitions that illustrate the settler/Indigenous relationship in a new way through:

- A weaving of personal Aboriginal narratives and relationships into my settler family stories;
- My own Aboriginal relationships and friendships;
- The juxtaposition of appropriated works with the works they reference;
- The mixing and grouping of colonial and contemporary art works and material, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous art works;
- A visual autobiographical curatorial methodology;
- The disruption of a linear colonial/settler narrative by interspersing Indigenous works.

I have had to analyse my influences, and strengths. I have a good eye and a strong vision. I recognise what artworks, or groupings of them, have the power to evoke or inform. I instigate many of the connections and cross references to be found in my work and I create an environment for this to happen, although some are surprising collisions. My exhibitions have a depth to them and are original contributions to our historical and cultural life. Visitors can participate to whatever level they wish or have time for. I realise I am a storyteller, primarily through visual imagery rather than words. I have been more influenced by the times I have lived in, and the artists I have known, rather than by specific exhibitions or curators, and I wonder, have I influenced them? These exhibitions are a collage of the images, ideas, influences and relationships that have informed my life and career.

I am strongly influenced by site. As the Museum of Sydney is on the site of First Government House, I knew I primarily had to respond to the fact that I was descended from two families that had actually lived there, and this was a very powerful emotion. *EORA* was an exhibition of colonial material featuring Indigenous people from the State Library's collection that had not been exhibited comprehensively before. It was like revealing the secret information that was embodied almost incidentally in the settler histories, in a grand building representing the architectural pretensions of a colonial society. It was also an acknowledgement by me of past assistance and mentorship from the then Mitchell Librarian, Elizabeth Ellis and a tribute to my great-great-uncle, David Scott Mitchell, for his foresight and determination in assembling one of the world's extraordinary collections. As Kurnell is part of the Sutherland Shire, an exhibition about Botany Bay was a logical choice for the local Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre, given that I had moved to the Shire, and was researching first encounters in Botany Bay.

Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre and I are planning a second exhibition on the history of Botany Bay 1770-2010, with a special focus on the contested history of the site of Kurnell. Next I want to research other early Australian family footsteps and undoubtedly I will find images, sometimes by family members, which will effectively illustrate the stories I would like to tell. I want to research the documented but relatively unknown colonial relationship between Australia and New Zealand. Philip Gidley King was one of the first to urge the colonisation of New Zealand, and formed a relationship with two Maoris, Tuki and Huru, who had been kidnapped in 1792 to advise on flax on Norfolk Island. King fulfilled his promise to return them to the Bay of Islands, and the families remained in contact and visited Sydney when King was Governor. There was a celebration attended by their

descendants on Norfolk Island in 1993.

There is also a family connection to the events leading up to the Treaty of Waitangi in 1838 as all arrangements and negotiations were conducted through the colony of Sydney when Governor Bourke was Governor. The Treaty illustrates the changing attitudes to Indigenous people by the British Government, with no-one in the New South Wales colony prior to this point having had the authority to make a treaty with the Aboriginal people. In fact Bourke had nullified Batman's spurious treaty made with the Port Phillip Aborigines. The early contact between New South Wales and New Zealand, and Maoris and Aborigines, while documented is not well known within a wider public sphere. Again it is the family connection that has led me into a subject I would not necessarily have been interested in.

In the 1860s my great-great-grandfather Joseph Docker toured New Zealand in an Eminent Persons group to select a capital city. He was an early photography enthusiast and transported all his heavy equipment. He took photographs of Maoris, but although many of his photographs still exist, the New Zealand photographs are yet to be located.

Other family footprints to examine include the Mitchell, Merewether, Scott, King and Docker families, all pioneers in the Newcastle and Hunter Valley region. I am also interested in researching E.C. Merewether, an aide de camp to Governor Gipps, who in 1848 was appointed Commissioner for Lands at the Macleay River. He wrote Reports to the Colonial Treasurer, Colonial Secretary and the Chief Commissioner of Crown Lands between 1848 and 1854 and these reports describe his radically changing attitudes to the local Aborigines as they struggled to adjust to their dispossession, and participate in the new nation.

There are many artistic and interesting people scattered throughout the generations in my family, and I recognise some of their characteristics, likenesses,

interests, strengths and weaknesses in myself and our extended family. Their footprints have allowed my entry into Australian history. Tracing the past in the present as a mode of curatorial autobiographical practice has resulted in a series of exhibitions that have enabled me to share my personal journey and research with a wider public audience, and make a contribution to personal and public shared histories.

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## Appendix A

Ken Watson review of *Flesh & Blood*

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Appendix B

Hetti Perkins's Speech

Opening of *Lines in the Sand* Exhibition

Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre

Please see print copy for Appendix B.

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Appendix C

Katrina Schlunke, Talk: Captain Cook's Eye-patch

Sunday 13 April at 2pm

Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre

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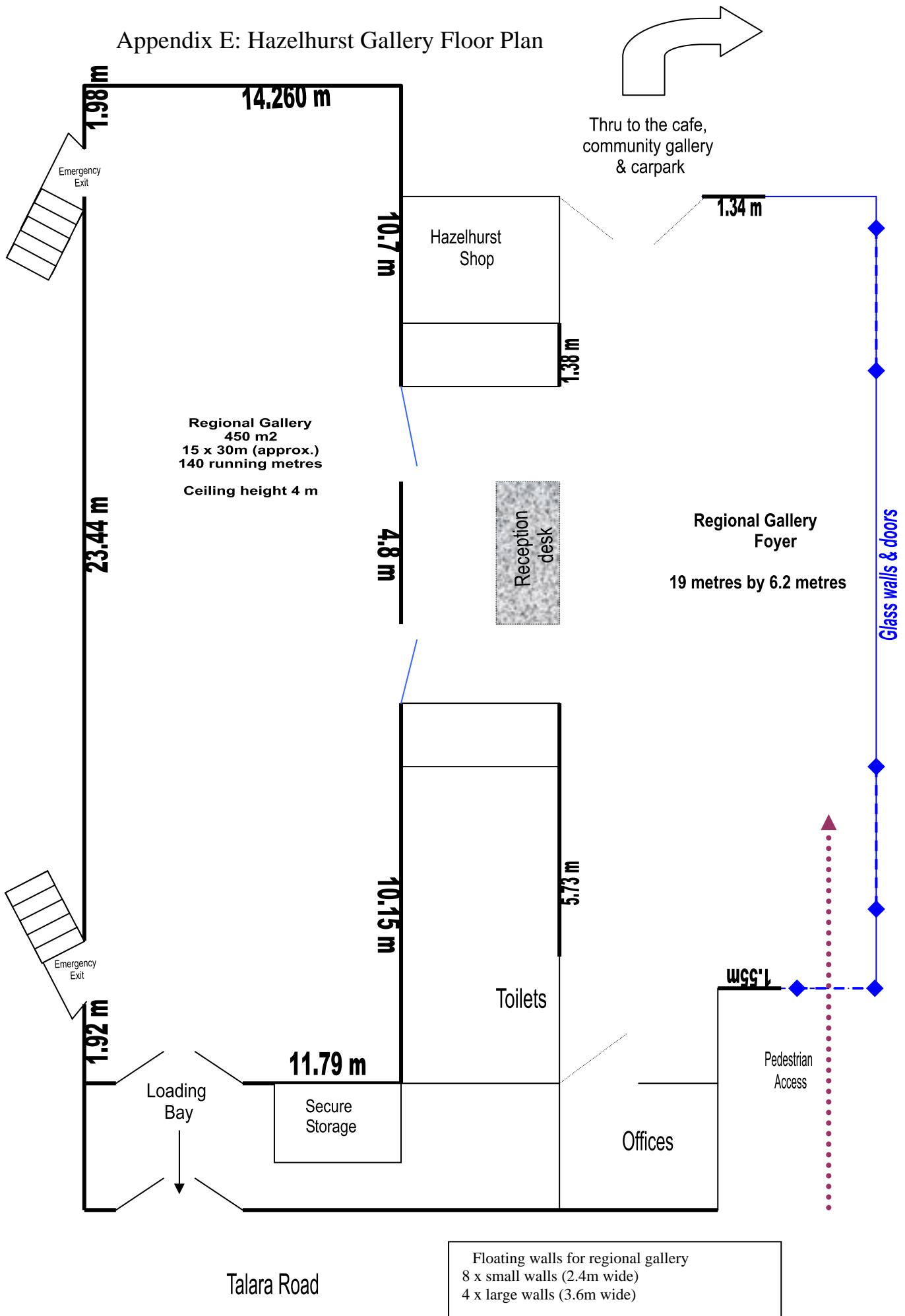
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## Appendix D

*Lines in the Sand* – Budget

<b>Expenditure</b>		<b>Income</b>	
Catalogue		ArtsNSW	26,000
-print	12,000	Hazelhurst admin (in kind)	8,000
-design	10,000	Design sponsorship	10,000
-essays	3,000	Revenue for symposium	500
-editor	2,000	Revenue for catalogues	1500
-image fees	3,000		
Freight	12,000	Hazelhurst / SSC	39,700
Loan fees	3,000		
Artist fees	4,000		
Curator fee	8,000	<b>Total</b>	<b>85,700</b>
Framing	3,000		
Symposium	3,000		
Opening	3,000		
Equipment	3,000		
Installation	3,000		
Admin (in kind)	8,000		
Invitation	1,200		
Advertising	4,000		
Signage	500		
<b>Total</b>	<b>85,700</b>		

## Appendix E: Hazelhurst Gallery Floor Plan



## Appendix F

*Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770 – Visitors' Book*  
Comments

- An excellent exhibition. Well done to Director and curators.
- Fabulous and a credit to the curator.
- Excellent exhibition – a well balanced representation of two cultures now moving forward as one.
- Fantastic! More Exhibitions like this one please!
- Too much intellectualisation! Not enough truth. Some pretty pictures. Nice historical records.
- Excellent exhibition – the best we have seen on the subject.
- Excellent – very much a ‘thought expedition’.
- Enjoyed the exhibits. Hope they’ll fix the holes in the wall.
- A very positive and meaningful talk and exhibit.
- Fascinating – need more time, so will come back.
- Congratulations! A wonderfully constructed exhibit.
- Interesting.
- Timely and important exhibition.
- It was fun. I learnt where Captain Cook landed. Also, I learnt in the past, they didn’t know what clothes are.
- Enjoyed.
- Fascinating and fabulous!
- It is disgusting you have allowed in interior of the gallery to be defaced, and I hope the person who allowed it pays for it to be repaired, not the rate payers.
- Jonathon Jones defacing of gallery is appalling – how was this allowed to happen – who approved such vandalism? Who will pay for wall to be repaired?
- Most impressed – will recommend to friends.
- Wonderful exhibition and artwork.
- Fascinating and exciting exhibits. Worth the trip down from Manly.
- Absolutely fantastic, greatly appreciated!!
- All the way west of Sydney it is an event to come and see.
- Very interesting, well done and appreciate the collection. Thank you.
- Very enjoyable and interesting.
- Fascinating exhibition – congratulations!
- Very interesting, enjoyed very much.
- Terrific exhibition – historical importance.
- Very thought provoking.
- As always, a most brave and adventurous and successful show. Congratulations Ace and the artists.
- Well done. – interesting.
- Don’t touch the exhibits! Excellent.
- A wonderful display of early Australia.
- Great exhibition and catalogues.
- Fantastic and fascinating. Congratulations.
- Thoroughly enjoyable.
- Very interesting – great to see.



- Wonderful exhibition and great insight on the white settlement of Australia from 1770 onwards.
- Great exhibition, very thought provoking.
- Very enlightening.
- Congratulations! Fantastic show.
- Thanks – beautiful gallery and great party venue!! (interesting exhibition too).
- Enjoyable with remembering history.
- An amazingly diverse exhibit. Thanks.
- Hazelhurst continues to amaze and inspire. Thanks to the curators, director and artists.
- Don't know why someone should cut or hack pieces out of wall.
- Magnificent day – very pleasant service, fabulous outlook – just a lovely day.
- Very memorable visit.

## Appendix G

Elizabeth Fortescue, “Drawn From the Past,” *Daily Telegraph* 29 Mar. 2008, Culture: 10. Photograph: Bob Barker.

Please see print copy for Appendix G.

## Appendix H

John McDonald, "All their Eggs in one Basket: A Cultural Exchange with San Diego Piques the Interest, while Elsewhere Pirates Entertain in a Blend of Art and Activism," *Sydney Morning Herald* 10-11 May 2008, Spectrum: 16-17.

Please see print copy for Appendix H.

## Appendix I

Anna Lawrenson review of *Lines in the Sand* for *Art Monthly Australia*.

Submitted version. Article forthcoming.

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Appendix J

**Parallel Lines**

Lines in the Sand: Botany Bay Stories from 1770

[Hazelhurst Regional Gallery and Arts Centre](#), 29 March – 11 May 2008

*Marisa van Eijk*

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