NOTICE OF GENERAL MEETING.

The fourth General Meeting of the Society for 1983 will be held in the Museum Education Building, North Terrace, Adelaide at

8.00 p.m. MONDAY, 27th JUNE, 1983

AGENDA

1. Apologies:

2. Minutes of previous General Meeting:
   Minutes of the previous General Meeting, held Monday, 23rd May, 1983 to be confirmed. A copy of these Minutes is attached.

3. New Members:
   No new members were elected to the Society for this month. Val. Frank was re-elected.

4. Papers and Journals:
   Papers and Journals from other Societies and Organisations will be tabled at the meeting.

5. Business:

6. Speaker:
   Mr. Steven Hemming, Acting Curator of Ethnology, South Australian Museum, will give an address to the Society, entitled "Looking at Aboriginal contact history along the Upper Murray River in South Australia".

7. Supper.

MARGARET NOBBS,
Honorary Secretary,
C/- 213 Greenhill Road,
EASTWOOD. S.A. 5063.

Telephone Home 31 7374
SOME IMPLICATIONS OF THE WESTERN EUROPEAN ART TRADITIONS FOR ABORIGINAL ART

ADRIAN MARRIE

It appears that there has been little systematic study by anthropologists interested in the visual arts of their own Western culture's arts institutions, and the scholarly examination once advocated by Vandenhouw (1961) of the various theories and attitudes animating the Visual Arts discipline is patently lacking (Donne, 1975:164). Anthropologists venturing into the field take with them their own informally learned conceptions and attitudes concerning visual art and proceed to apply them cross-culturally ignorant of the fact that their theories - the most popular being those which conceive art to be essentially a matter of skill (Boas, 1955:11; Anderson, 1979:11), or expert manipulation of form (Berndt, 1972:147; Boas, 1955:9-10; Dutton, 1977:392 and 406; Haselberger, 1961:343; Maquet, 1979:12-22), or expression (Schmitz, 1963:154), or the affective response which art is supposed to elicit (Mills, 1971:82; D'Azvedo, 1958:707; Cardwell, 1979:48) - have already been expertly "worked over" by aestheticians, philosophers and theorists working within the Western tradition (Brooke, 1977:1-19). No anthropologist undertaking, for example, psychological or anatomical studies in the field would do so with but a casual knowledge of psychology or anatomy, yet this appears to be the case with respect to researchers studying the arts of other cultures. Their uncritical acceptance of tired and worn-out theories is most unprofessional. Therefore, before we can examine the implications for Aboriginal arts of our Western traditions, some analysis of the latter's tradition should be made in order to see how our various values and attitudes impinge upon Aboriginal art.

Milton Albrecht's (1968) paper, "Art as an Institution", provides a useful conceptual tool for examining some of the more basic differences between the Western arts tradition and the "arts" traditions of Australian Aboriginal cultures. To analyse art and its associated behaviour in Western culture, Albrecht focussed on eight aspects of institutionalized behaviour, namely,

1) artists,
2) their technical systems,
3) their traditional forms,
4) the art market,
5) reviewers,
6) the public,
7) formal principles of judgement, and
8) the broad cultural values sustaining art in Western society.

In my address to the Anthropological Society, artists, the formal principles of judgement, and the Western cultural values pertaining to art were given a more detailed analysis. Artists, it was pointed out, have identifiable roles within Western culture; are seen as professionals in as much as they earn their living from the things they do or create; are formally trained; their individuality is of the utmost importance; and their "personality profile", as stereotyped in the public image, is something of a "special person" gifted with unusual or extra-ordinary insights, sensitivity, imagination, flair, skill, sometimes iconoclastic and prophetic, and upon whom the public bestows a degree of licence.

The formal principles of judgement fall into two categories: aesthetic and non-aesthetic. Aesthetic principles derive from the relatively recent (i.e., from the mid 19th Century) ethos of "art for art's sake" which seeks to divorce the process of judging art works from aspects which might be considered extra-artistic, or non-aesthetic, such as social, historical, political, religious or moral criteria. This ethos proposes that: "Art is self-sufficient, autonomous, and autotelic; that it need serve no ulterior purpose and should not be judged qua art by non-aesthetic standards, whether moral, political or religious." (Osborne, 1979:11). Thus such properties as form, colour, draftsmanship, line, tone, texture, etc., intrinsic to an art work were the ones upon which aesthetic judgements should be based (Bell,
1928:5-6). Needless to say, many commentators such as Merriam (1964:260), Lewis (1959:2), Brook (1977:1-19), and Wolfe (1980) hold traditional aesthetics in considerable contempt. Critics are notoriously vague about so-called aesthetic judgements and usually resort to extra-artistic (i.e., non-aesthetic) aspects such as attribution (refer to Berger, 1979:22, on the verification of the National Gallery's Virgin of the Rocks as a genuine Leonardo), and art historical and social factors to justify the alleged greatness of a work. They have never been able to come to terms with what everybody else regards as a truism, namely, that: "Beauty is in the eye of the beholder".

In respect of the broad cultural values sustaining art in Western society, fine art is usually regarded as encompassing objects of contemplation rather than physically useful things (i.e., craft-works). Fine art reflects the preoccupation of some with humanistic values, "speaking" to the emotions, allowing us spiritual insights (Berger, 1979:21) and glimpses of the "higher" values of life such as "truth" and "beauty", whatever those concepts might mean. In keeping with our Judaico-Christian tradition of a dichotomy of soul and body, spiritual and earthly, a dichotomy apparently absent in Aboriginal culture (Yengoyan, 1979:399), fine art is supposed to encapsulate the values and qualities of the soul or spirit.

If art in Western culture is highly institutionalized then the opposite is the case for Australian Aboriginal cultures. Aboriginal cultures, sometimes referred to as "sacred" societies (Berndt, C.H., 1978:67), focus on the Dreamings - every facet of Aboriginal life is explained by and is answerable to the laws laid down by the ancestral beings, and thus Aboriginal cultures, in general, exhibit a markedly non-institutional character. It is impossible to study any one aspect of Aboriginal culture, for example, economics, social organization, marriage customs, music, and of course, art, without being drawn into the others, or at least being cognisant of their inter-relatedness. Writing of Aboriginal art, Ronald Berndt (1971:101) comments: "...it is subsumed under other activities that can be identified in our terms as religion, economics, magic, sex and so on, and can be understood only in relation to one or more of these." This observation is supported by Wandjik Marika (1978:7) when he states that there is "...no real distinction for us between art and life;..." And the appropriate context in which Aboriginal art should be understood and appreciated is that of ceremony.

In keeping with this integration of art with life is the lack of a concept of art analogous to that of Western culture (which does not mean that Aboriginal cultures have no art, but that they lacked, and indeed probably had no need of, an indentifiable and clearly articulated concept of it); as Dick Roughsey (1978:53) comments: "There is no Aboriginal word for art, or artist." There appears to be no separate language, no aesthetic theory, to specifically describe the sorts of things, for example, ceremonial designs, ground paintings, body adornments, artefact decorations, etc., which we accept under our concept of art. How Aborigines classify what we regard as concepts basic to art such as colour, line, balance, symmetry, tone and texture, as well as principles of evaluation, is little researched - studies such as that by Jones and Meehan (1978) are rare. It appears, and this judgement is based on the work of Ellis, Ellis, Tur and McCordell (1978) concerning Pitjantjatjara sound classifications, that designs might be described, using such devices as metaphor, analogy and simile, by association with everyday aspects of living. They write: "Most terms that we have been able to identify as having specific musical meaning are also used in normal discourse..." (p. 68). One of their examples illustrating this point is, that among the Andagarinja speakers, the word for the 'taste' of food, and that for the musical characteristics which makes any melody distinguishable from any other melody are identical" (p. 69). Not too much should be made of this because we often use the same or similar words to evaluate different phenomena, but I think it does point to the problem of determining just how do Aboriginal people conceptualise and classify those aspects of their culture which we call art.

Other fundamental differences between European and Aboriginal art traditions are:
1. There is no attaching of the status of "artist" to any individual. Skill was undoubtedly acknowledged but those acknowledged as having it could not live by it, in the sense of a profession. It was a necessary condition for every individual male and female in the course of their "rites of passage" to learn and to be able to reproduce in the right context the appropriate designs which were their birthright as members of particular clans and totems.

2. The designs were prescribed - specific designs were associated with particular ancestors and Dreamings - and were executed in accordance with a traditionally defined set of rules governing both the design and the subject matter. The rules were not aesthetic canons but ones of appropriateness. Innovation was not encouraged and might well jeopardize the efficacy of the rite.

3. The designs were primarily created and used by specific groups (clans, totems) and as such were rarely traded (Morphy, 1982:7). If they were, strict obligations between parties were usually entailed.

All these aspects point to the fundamentally non-institutional character of art in Aboriginal cultures. Thus of the eight aspects of "Art as an Institution" as an analysis of Western behaviour pertaining to art objects, only two, namely technical systems (materials, tools, techniques and skills) and traditional forms (painting, carving) reveal any correspondence with Western culture's fine arts tradition. The remaining six categories which describe art behaviour rather than focus on the object, are virtually totally inapplicable to Aboriginal art.

The noting of a visual and form-medium-technique correspondence between certain sorts of objects in non-Western cultures and those of Western society has led to the application of our categories to those non-Western artefacts (Haselberger, 1961:342; Wingert, 1962:13-14). Maquet(1979:9) notes this transformation of artefact into art as one of metamorphosis whereby "objects produced in one society are transported to another and labelled as 'art'". It is interesting to reflect on this process as it has occurred in Australia. In accord with the Social Darwinist orientation of the mid 19th Century, the study of "primitive" man was considered to be the domain of the Natural Sciences in the interest of the general scientific study of Homo sapiens. Therefore Natural History museums acquired by fair means (and foul) considerable collections of artefacts. In 1929 the National Museum of Victoria staged a major exhibition of Aboriginal material culture; in 1943 a similar venture, but including exhibits from other tribal societies, was jointly sponsored by the Public Library, the Museums and the National Gallery of Victoria and entitled "Exhibition of Primitive Art". In 1960-61, the state Art Galleries were now responsible for a large exhibition of Aboriginal Art to be shown in all states.

It is perhaps instructive to note the present roles of Museums and Art Galleries in respect of Aboriginal artefacts. In the museums Aboriginal material culture is displayed as much as possible with something of the cultural context in which it once existed. Art galleries usually present certain Aboriginal artefacts "as art" (i.e., as art for art's sake) hermetically sealed off from their traditional context in a situation whereby all of Western culture's artistic values are brought to bear. The rationale can be seen in J.A. Tuckson's (1964:63) comment: "...works of art, exhibited in an art gallery can be contemplated in some form of isolation...making it possible for us to appreciate visual art without any knowledge of its particular meaning and original purpose."

Having outlined some of the essential differences between Western and Aboriginal cultures' arts traditions, and glimpsed something of the process of transformation of artefact into art, we should now be in a better position to appreciate some of the implications which arise out of those differences.

If the "art for art's sake" ethos is followed through in Western culture the art object itself assumes paramount importance as it is isolated (as a necessary condition of that philosophy) from its surrounding social, political, genetic, etc., contexts. In Aboriginal culture the designs are
usually destroyed during or soon after the ceremony (except in such instances as sacra and some cave paintings) - the object is ephemeral, the information, i.e., the message relating to the Dreaming (the "content" of the object) is all important and persists. The Europeans' insistent demand for "stories" to accompany Aboriginal paintings, by and large, is accommodated within the Aborigines' own systems whereby "stories" exist in a number of forms, the disclosure of a particular form being dependent on the status of participants in a particular ceremony (Ellis, 1970:83-4; Peterson, 1981:46-7). Europeans are thus usually given the "open" or "secular" form. Deeper levels of disclosure may entail reciprocal obligations on the part of the receiver and it is in this circumstance that much of the conflict has arisen. The American anthropologist, Richard Gould, abused his privileges when publishing much secret information, particularly in the form of photographs, in his book Yiwara: foragers of the Australian desert (Hamilton, 1971). Another instance (although not in an art context, but remembering that carved wooden objects are appreciated by Europeans as "art") involved the Elcho Islanders' attempts to involve the mission in a reciprocal obligation. The Islanders created a "Memorial" in which rangga (carved and painted wooden figures symbolic of world-creative powers) were brought out for all to see. Maddock (1974:1-6), commenting on Berndt's (1962) report of this incident, states that:

"The Aborigines appear to have reasoned that if they exposed, and thereby shared the sight of, their most precious possessions, Europeans would in return give them 'education, economic security, employment, and more control over their own affairs'. They are still waiting."

The "Memorial" was a place at which sacred things had been profaned by being brought out of the secrecy hitherto proper to them in an effort to recast some of their customs in a response to European ways. It was obviously hoped that the Europeans would respond appropriately. When Berndt returned in 1961 he found that paint was flaking from the memorial and that the Aboriginal women were hanging their washing on its fence (Maddock, 1971).

The different cultural emphasis on the "medium" or the "message" is probably not so much of an issue today, although Steve Fox (1982:10-11) and Vincent Megaw (1982:213) have recently experienced the dilemma, as the vast bulk of the Aboriginal art is "deritualised", being created specifically for the Western art market. The Aborigines now exploit our artistic values, our mania to possess, for their own economic advantage, but in earlier days the full import of the receiving of an important "story" with the possibility of obligation was not often fully appreciated.

Another influence disruptive of Aboriginal custom has been the bestowing of the role of "artist" on certain individuals in societies in which such roles did not traditionally exist. This has given some individuals an importance which they would not otherwise have had with consequences to themselves and their kin. The demise of Albert Namatjira is a case in point. He was "rewarded" with Australian citizenship for his expertise as an artist; he was thus given rights that his people could not have. The tensions of living in two worlds while trying to meet the demands of his relatives to whom he had traditional obligations and simultaneously living to white expectation resulted in his premature death. In the early days of the Papunya art movement 30 or 40 painters gained a measure of financial independence which, for a time, upset the status quo amongst the 800 or so Aboriginal people living in the community.

The above points concerning the importance of the content and context of paintings over their value as objects, and the creating of the reputation and role of "artist" for particular individuals illustrate two ways in which Aboriginal groups can be directly affected by imposing our arts values on their culture. The next points concern the manner in which the Western public's perception of Aboriginal art is influenced by critics, private gallery owners and perhaps Western artists themselves.
As Albrecht has pointed out, critics are an important group within the Western arts institution. They are also important interpreters of Aboriginal art to the public, but their good intentions are matched only by their being badly misinformed. In their attempt to lionise Aboriginal painters and to locate them in the Western arts tradition, we are greeted with such head-lines as "The Picasso of Arnhem Land" (McGrath, 1979), in reference to Yirawala, the South Australian Art Gallery apparently likes to refer to Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri as the "Leonardo of the Desert" (Megaw, 1982:209). It should be apparent that, with due respect to Yirawala and Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri and their cultural traditions, the association of their names with Picasso and Leonardo, respectively, is most inappropriate. For example, Picasso was renowned for being eclectic, iconoclastic and innovative; Yirawala was esoteric and respectful of his traditions. McGrath (1978) also writes of the Western Desert acrylic painting as "Abstracts to put Moderns to Shame". In one sense the symbols used in the desert are abstract - they encapsulate or summarise the most characteristic visual feature of the objects they represent, for example, the circle is used to represent a range of objects whose most characteristic or generalised visible quality is circularity or "roundedness", such as rock-holes, camps, animal burrows, berries, yams, etc. McGrath uses the term "abstract" as it is used in the context of recent Western art history as a term in opposition to "concrete", that is, to refer to non-representational, non-figurative works. But as pointed out those symbols in desert painting are representational but only to the extent that they "abstract" the most obvious visual character of an object or natural feature. As Megaw (1982:214) remarks, these contemporary Western Desert acrylic paintings must be "one of the least abstract of all modern art forms". McGrath by noting some correspondence between Western Desert acrylic paintings and "Euro-American late-minimal and post-modernistic art styles" (Coutts-Smith, 1982:54) ignores the fundamentally different cultural contexts in which they exist and thus misrepresents the form of Western Desert art.

Whilst acknowledging that the production of art and craft for sale is not without its repercussions to Aboriginal "artists" and their communities, this production nevertheless provides many opportunities both economic and for the expansion of Aboriginal awareness of the world at large - to know and become known. Many Aboriginal communities are now renown for their distinctive styles; Ernabella, Hermannsburg, Papunya, Oenpelli, Yirrkala, Bathurst Island and many other places have gained identities through their arts and crafts. However, it is within this opportunity for growth that Aboriginal people are often blocked - victims of European double standards. Artists in Western society, as pointed out on page 1, are often viewed as agents of change, as innovators, but Europeans don't grant Aboriginal "artists" this same freedom. We expect them to make only "traditional" work (or our version of it); anything else is not "authentic". It is seen as a debasement of their art, as being tourist oriented and not "true" Aboriginal work. This situation invites the proposition that cultures are not static entities, but are dynamic; change and adaptation are constants, although, obviously, the rate and degree of change may vary. This double standard hinders Aboriginal "artists" from taking what they desire from other cultures and traditions as a normal part of the acculturative process, i.e., a process of adaptation. Much Aboriginal art expresses this process of acculturation, of coming to terms with change and the problems of living in the world at large, and not some small cordoned-off area of it. That the bulk of Aboriginal art is produced for sale is in itself a response to European economic values impinging on Aboriginal societies. Harry Silver (1979:191) in his paper "Beauty and the 'I' of the Beholder: Identity, Aesthetics and Social Change among the Ashanti", makes comments which are pertinent to the contemporary Aboriginal arts scene in Australia:

"Though frequently belittled, African tourist arts are often as conceptually sophisticated as traditional works. Messages expressed in similar modern forms complement the demands of a changing society just as effectively as traditional art once reinforced complex meanings inherent in political and religious rituals."
Ethnographic evidence from the Ashanti - where artists today violate traditional norms of harmony with deliberate grotesqueries catering to Western tastes - show such art to be highly functional....The Ashanti artist today is a cultural broker whose work, by a process of inversion, reinforces traditional cultural values....Modern developments in tribal visual art - often called 'tourist' or 'airport' arts - operate through a variety of cognitive mechanisms to provide both native artists and viewers with important information facilitating smooth transition from traditional to modern life. Messages conveyed through these new arts reinforce tribal identity, while simultaneously translating values into a new "language" that can help people effectively operate on the modern African scene; an evaluation in purely aesthetic terms therefore fails to reveal the full significance of the existing new art forms....Often tourist pieces are summarily dismissed as nothing more than commercial exploitations of a nondiscriminating market. Their "devolution" from the "glories" of traditional art is bemoaned as a cultural tragedy, past canons of beauty slain by the rough beast of culture change....Tourist arts are neither better nor worse than their traditional counterparts, simply different, and equally careful attention must be paid to the new function they serve."

Winifred Hilliard (1980) at Ernabella has had to work hard at overcoming this resistance to innovation; the textile "crafts" from there have been regarded as being too innovative, i.e., un-Aboriginal. A glimpse of this attitude can be seen in Ronald Berndt's (1982:1) remarks when he writes of the Papunya work being "true innovation" as he draws comparisons with the work from Ernabella. It seems that radical(!) experimentation, particularly with non-traditional media such as batik and ceramics, meets with little critical acclaim (Coutts-Smith, 1982:54), although recently the works of one Aboriginal woman potter, Thancoupie (Isaacs, 1982) has received more generous recognition (Weston, 1983; Wood, 1983).

Such has been the resistance from entrepreneurs of Aboriginal arts and crafts shops to the more innovative work that one doubts the wisdom of trying to present such work at these places at all. It would seem that Aboriginal batiks, ceramics, screen- and lino-prints, etc., would fare better if presented in non-specialised galleries which exhibit works irrespective of origins, that is, the work is allowed "to stand on its merits" (Hilliard, 1980:7) against all comers. Leone Furler and Jim Cane (personal communication), two artists who have been following up my lino-printing work at Indulkana, have been very successful in adopting this tactic when selling recently made lino-prints from that community.

To many private gallery owners, specialising in Aboriginal arts and crafts, innovation is seen as being risky to business. John Mundine (1982:10) asks: "What are we doing? Are we selling Aboriginal art or are we selling only that which suits the ideals of the marketeers of Aboriginal art?" This has certainly been my experience with Indulkana paintings. For example, we were advised to encourage the artists to use only traditional colours - blues and greens were "out". Paintings presented for sale were often rejected because they were regarded as being "unfinished", that is, the unpainted areas of board were not filled in with dots as the Papunya painters currently do, the Papunya work setting the present market standard. To try to develop the really innovative work hitherto executed with felt-tipped pen by men like Minyungu Baker and Harry Wintjin (see plates 1,2,3,23,24, Marrie, 1982) was seen by the Indulkana Community Advisor, who was partly responsible for marketing the community's art and craft, as being pointless. For this, and other reasons (Marrie, 1982:3-8) it was decided not to encourage painting at Indulkana, although the talent was undoubtedly there, and instead break the situation of competition by working in a medium not developed (to our knowledge) by other Aboriginal communities, namely, lino-printing. The lino-prints have proved very popular (see Marrie, 1982:plates 5,12-14,18,19, for examples), but have not yet been marketed through the usual channels. When the artists at Indulkana have been allowed their freedom the results have been extraordinary:
such is the case for works by Angkuna Baker and Minyungu Baker. In New Guinea, Ulli Beier, for example, has encouraged his protegées to be innovative, and such artists as Kanage have expanded way beyond their traditions with fascinating results.

In my role as a tutor to Aboriginal tertiary students it has become very evident to me that they respect each other's different cultures. We should do like-wise. Aboriginal cultural diversity is so often ignored - didjeridu music accompanies film, radio and T.V. presentations which are about, or involve southern Aborigines. Nancy Sheppard's (1975) delightful transposition of Alice in Wonderland into Pitjantjatjara language and context is illustrated with drawings in a patently Western Arnhem Land idiom. Tourists expect "traditional" artefacts from areas in which a particular artefact was unknown, for example, the returning boomerang in some central Western Desert regions (Hilliard, 1980:7). Our acknowledgement and respect for this diversity would do much to repeal such stereotypes as that, for example, which straight-jackets Aborigines into "a physical prototype, head-banded, bearded, loin-clothed, sometimes ochred, one foot up, a clutch of spears, ready to hunt or exhibiting eternal mystical vigilance....a pristine, pure, before-the-white-man-came-and-buggered-everything, idealised type" (Tatz, 1979:86).

The infringement of copyright has been a very sore point for Aboriginal artists (Marika, 1978:66-70). Perhaps the most notorious incident is that concerning the one-dollar-note and Malangi, who, because of the circuitous events surrounding the incorporation of his painting in Gordon Andrew's design of the note, was very nearly overlooked. If it were not for the intervention of journalist Roland Pullen (his article drawing public attention to the matter appeared in The Advertiser, 2 February, 1966) and mission teacher Alan Fidock, this would most certainly have been the case (Bennett, 1980).

All the above points have been somewhat negative. There are, however, some positive aspects which have enabled Aboriginal artists to capitalise on our values concerning art. The production of art and artefacts is one pursuit which fits easily into the Aborigines' lifestyle, using their traditional skills however modified. They can remain more-or-less their own bosses, and the sale of such objects is widely acknowledged as an important economic contribution in many Aboriginal communities, enabling them to break down the dependence on government welfare and gain greater independence and autonomy. For example, at Papunya the artists are joint share-holders in the company, Papunya Tula Artists Pty. Ltd., which in some ways acts as a bank for investment and savings, but also looks after marketing, commissions for painters, and buys the materials which the artists need (Jillian McLean, personal communication). This sort of financial experience is essential if the Aboriginal people want to manage their own communities.

Being an "artist" becomes a virtual "passport" enabling Aboriginal artists to be invited to places beyond their homelands - other cities, arts communities, festivals, participate in artists-in-residence programmes, etc. - and to receive visiting artists from other cultures as equals. Obviously they learn much about other parts of the world and other people, knowledge which they bring home and discuss in their communities, knowledge which is essential to their adaptation to changing circumstances. I remember taking a very old Pitjantjatjara man from Indulkana, visiting Adelaide as part of the Centre for Aboriginal Studies in Music programme, to see the ocean for the first time. The biennial South Pacific Festival of Arts is now a very important event on the Aboriginal calendar; Leila Rankine (1982:10-12) describes what attendance at these festivals has meant to her:

"To suddenly find myself one of the majority instead of one of the minority gave me a feeling of oneness, of belonging, and even though I was in a different country with different people who spoke a different language, I still felt 'good'...Coming from reserve backgrounds, I felt made us more able to feel for the people who came from village areas, because some of our backgrounds had similarities and the extended family relationships and bonds are still very strong as with black Australians. Being a black minority in our own country,
it was a marvellous feeling to be part of the majority group. It put a sense and feeling of togetherness in us and made black Australian artists feel strong about their arts and crafts, traditions and cultures. The Third South Pacific Festival presented the opportunity for black Australians to meet with people who share many of the situations we in Australia are going through. Some of the people of the South Pacific Region are very aware of the effect of colonisation upon them while others prefer not to talk about it. I think it certainly presented the opportunity for discussion in that area. Festival performances were a tremendous boost to the tribal and urban people's morale and our performances were very well presented and gave a sense of pride and importance to us as a race of people. Thus the spin-offs from being involved with the arts are immense in terms of pride, solidarity, identity, recognition and awareness.

In this paper a study of the character of the arts traditions of Western and Aboriginal cultures has been presented with the help of Albrecht's analysis of Western art as an institution. Fundamental differences have created problems for Aboriginal people; some of a very serious nature, such as the disclosure of designs and knowledge which have been mistreated because of the ignorance of the proprietories involved, and the problems for some individuals when accorded a status by Europeans which they would not traditionally have had. Other areas of concern have been the manner in which Aboriginal art has been mis-represented by art critics; the blurring of the cultural differences; the expectations that Aborigines should only make "traditional" work and not be given the freedom granted to Western artists to innovate; and infringements of Aboriginal copyright. But art has also provided benefits: community identity and recognition, business experience, and wonderful opportunities for expanding Aboriginal awareness of the world at large. These experiences are important to coping with change.

A parting paragraph. Daniel Thomas (1978:29) writes that: "Artists can recognise each other across great cultural gaps." This romantic myth is built on the supposition that artists are somehow "special people". As argued above, no such "specialness" exists in traditional Aboriginal societies - everybody necessarily learned their appropriate totemic designs. Thomas must envision some international brotherhood of artists, and undoubtedly many European artists have gained inspiration from the designs and forms of various tribal artefacts (and, one might add, while remaining ignorant of their full cultural import). But, of course, for Thomas's claim to be correct, tribal "artists" from one culture should also be able to recognise artists, and appreciate their works, from other cultures. I would strongly dispute this point - most Western art is meaningless to people from non-Western societies.
References Cited

Albrecht, M.C.  

Anderson, R.L.  

Australian Gallery Directors Council  

Bell, C.  

Bennett, D.H.  
1980  "Malangi : The man who was forgotten before he was remembered." Aboriginal History. Vol. 4, No. 1, pp 42-7.

Berger, J.  

Berndt, C.  
1978  "Digging sticks and spears, or, the two-sex model." in F. Gale, op. cit., pp 64-84.

Berndt, R.  


Berndt, R.M., C.M.  
1982  Berndt with J.E. Stanton.  

Boas, F.  

Brook, D.  

Cooke, P. and J. Altman (eds.)  
1982  Aboriginal Art at the Top. (Exhibition Catalogue) Northern Territory: Maningrida Arts and Crafts.

Cordwell, J. (ed.)  

Coutts-Smith, K.  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fox, S.</td>
<td>&quot;Quality is not necessarily a smooth straight line.&quot; P. Cooke &amp; J. Altman, op.cit., pp 10-11.</td>
<td>1982</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lewis, C.I. 1959.

Maddock, K. 1971

1974

Maquet, J. 1979 (f.p. 1971)

Marika, W. 1978

Marrie, A.P.H. 1982

McGrath, S. 1978

1979

Megaw, J.V.S. 1982

Merriam, A.P. 1964

Mills, G. 1971 (f.p. 1957)

Morphy, M. 1982

Mundine, J. 1982


Peterson, N. 1981

Rankine, D.L. 1980

Roughsey, D. 1978

Schmitz, C.A. 1963

Sheppard, N. and B.S. Sewell 1975


Introduction to Aesthetic Anthropology. Malibu: Undena Publications.

"Introduction." (pp 7-8) and "Aboriginal Copyright." (pp 66-70). R. Edwards, op.cit.

(Unpublished) The Informal Art of the Pitjantjatjara People of Indulkana, S.A. (Paper 2). B.A.(Hons.) paper, Visual Arts Department, Flinders University of S.A.

"Abstracts to put Moderns to Shame." The Australian. 24 April.


Conversation with S. Fox, op.cit.


Silver, H.R. 1979

Tatz, C. 1979

Thomas, D. 1978

Tuckson, J.A. 1964

Vandenhouwe, P.J. 1961

Weston, N. 1983

Wolfe, T. 1980

Wood, J. 1983

Yengoyan, A.A. 1979

4. Papers and Journals:
Papers and Journals from other Societies and Organisations will be tabled at the Meeting.

5. Business:

6. Speaker:
Mr. Tom Gara will give an address to the Society entitled 'Aboriginal Rock Art of the Burrup Peninsula, W.A.'

7. Supper and TRADING TABLE.

MARGARET NOBBS,
Honorary Secretary,
c/o 213, Greenhill Road,
EASTWOOD. S.A. 5063

Tel: Home 31-7374