

# MARCH

**1 March** A smoking ban in all offices of the federal public service came into force.

**1 March** The Muirhead Royal Commission released a preliminary research paper by consultant criminologist David Biles on the cases being investigated by the commission. Western Australia and South Australia had the highest rate of deaths in custody based on the size of their adult Aboriginal populations.

**1 March** The Fitzgerald Inquiry into Police Corruption in Qld released the first five of a total eighteen diaries kept by Sir Terence Lewis the suspended Qld police commissioner. The remaining diaries were released throughout the following week. The eighteen diaries covering the years 1969–87 indicated Lewis had regular contact with leading politicians, judges, business people, police and journalists already mentioned at the inquiry. Lewis had to surrender the diaries in 1987 after referring to them in evidence to the inquiry. He had not expected their contents to be made public.

**2 March** The parliamentary wing of the Qld ALP elected Wayne Goss, aged 37, as the new opposition leader. Goss replaced Neville Warburton who retired to the backbench after three and a half years as leader.

**2 March** Transport Minister Gareth Evans and NZ Transport Minister Bill Jeffries agreed in principle to allow Qantas to carry passengers between NZ and the US, a deal reputed to be worth \$100 million annually.

**2 March** The mining company CRA Ltd reported a record \$232 million profit for the 1987 calendar year.

**2 March** The French National Institute for Appellations of Origin of Wines and Eaux-de-vie began legal proceedings to prevent Australian winemakers from using the term 'beaujolais'.

**2 March** Prime Minister Bob Hawke announced he would argue for the partial sale of Australian Airlines and possibly Qantas, the



*In the lead up to the ALP national conference in June Prime Minister Bob Hawke announced his support for the partial privatisation of some government owned institutions. Cartoon by Bruce Petty, Age, 5 March 1988.*

Commonwealth Bank and the Commonwealth Serum Laboratories at the ALP national conference in June.

**2 March** Over 3000 dead fish were washed ashore at Jervis Bay, NSW, after a joint Australian–United States navy sonar and bombing exercise code named 'Operation Flying Fish'.

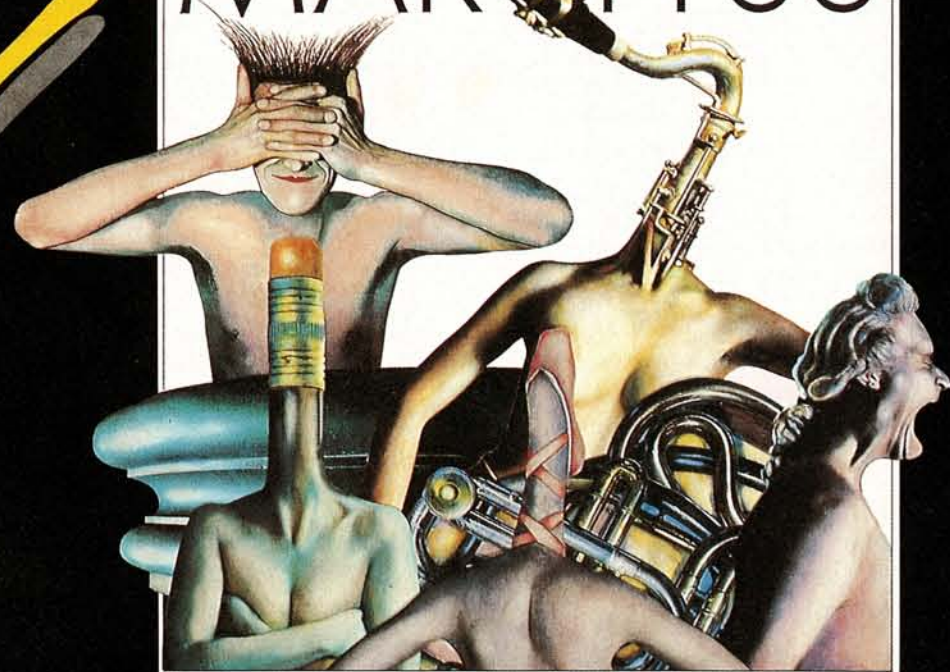
**2 March** Tropical cyclone Charlie weakened into a rain depression after it had lashed the north Qld coast for three days and claimed one life.

**3 March** The Vic Agriculture Minister Evan Walker announced his government faced compensation payouts totalling more than \$2 million to 220 Vic farmers for cattle affected by dieldrin, a government recommended pesticide.

**3 March** Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Hayden announced the appointment of Robert Cotton as Australia's first ambassador to Fiji. This marked the end of a diplomatic freeze with Fiji after the country's second military coup in October 1987 when Australia withdrew High Commissioner John Piper. The appointment followed the federal government's decision in January to recognise the state of Fiji rather than the Fijian government.



# ADELAIDE FESTIVAL MARCH '88



## ADELAIDE FESTIVAL OF THE ARTS

**4-26 March** Rated as Australia's biggest arts festival and among the world's top five, the three-week fifteenth biennial Adelaide Festival of the Arts featured 1400 performers from 70 companies, 529 performances and attracted a total audience of more than 290 000. The festival's artistic director was Englishman George Lascelles, the Seventh Earl of Harewood, former director of the Edinburgh and Leeds Festivals and the English National Opera.

Produced with a budget of more than \$5 million (including \$1.3 million from the Australian Bicentennial Authority) the festival included theatre, ballet, music, cabaret, visual arts, opera, dance, jazz and circus performed at the Festival Centre and many other locations around Adelaide. A substantial rival 'Fringe Festival' was also held in Adelaide at the Living Arts Centre.

The festival opened with a concert of rock, opera and fireworks at Elder Park adjacent to the Festival Centre. Devised and directed by Nigel Triffitt the concert featured Icehouse, Joan Sutherland, Amandla and Circus Oz.

Highlights of the festival included Peter Brook's production of *The Mahabharata*, a nine-hour Sanskrit epic performed from sunset to sunrise at an open-air quarry site; conductor Sir Georg Solti and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's production of Mahler's *Ninth symphony*; French composer and conductor Pierre Boulez and his Ensemble InterContemporain; American contemporary dance company Twyla Tharp Dance; Graeme Murphy's ballet spectacular *Vast*, featuring 70 dancers from four major Australian dance companies; and the Japanese Bhuto dancers, Sankai Juku, who performed *Eggs standing out of curiosity*.

Among the Australian theatre projects was the Australian Bicentennial Authority's commissioned play *1841* by Michael Gow, based on the year after the transportation of convicts to NSW ceased and performed by the State Theatre Company of South Australia. Other productions included the innovative play about the history and mythology of Port Adelaide, *Under southern eyes*, devised by students from the Flinders University Drama Centre, where the audience moved with the show through a maze of twelve rooms; and *Akwanso — fly south*, produced by Robyn Archer and written by four women of different descent (Aboriginal, Jamaican, Ghanan and black American) living in Australia.

As part of the festival, Adelaide Writers' Week was held. Almost fifty Australian and overseas authors participated including Peter Carey, Kate Grenville, Frank Moorhouse, Edmund White, Judith Herzberg and Kazuo Ishiguro. To coincide with Writers' Week, the South Australian Festival Awards for Literature, the biennial awards presented by the SA government, were announced. The National Fiction Award went to Rod Jones, *Julia paradise*; the poetry prize was awarded to Les Murray, *The daylight moon*; the children's book prize was awarded to Gillian Rubinstein, *Space demons*; the Carclew Fellowship for South Australian residents was awarded to poet Geoff Goodfellow; and the Non-Fiction Award for South Australian Writers went to Trevor Wilson, *The myriad faces of war*. Each award carried \$12 500 in prize money.



**3 March** A leaked document from the Committee on Higher Education Funding revealed tertiary students could face tuition fees of up to \$12 000 a year. The document was a submission presented by the Department of Finance to the three-person committee chaired by former NSW premier Neville Wran. Employment Minister John Dawkins established the committee in December 1987 to investigate ways of funding growth in Australia's higher education system. The committee released its report on 5 May.

**4-14 March** The Melbourne Moomba festival, which evolved from the traditional celebrations marking the Vic eight-hour-day movement of 1856, was held. From 1954 the festival incorporated the Moomba street parade, children's events, exhibitions, sporting events and music concerts. The Vic Trades Hall Council sought to place a greater emphasis on the achievements of the labour movement.

**5 March** The Department of Community Services and Health allegedly attempted to suppress a report by Helen Meekosha, a lecturer in social work at the University of New South Wales, entitled *Breaking in and breaking out: a study of women, disability and rehabilitation in Australia*. The report was critical of government rehabilitation services for disabled women.

**5 March** South Australia defeated Victoria 104-42 in the final of the National Football League Bicentennial Australian Football Championship at Football Park, Adelaide.

**5 March** Hungary's Foreign Minister Dr Peter Varkonyi, began a four-day visit to Australia. He signed an agreement clarifying bilateral relations between the two countries and presented Hungary's Bicentennial gift to Australia, a tapestry depicting Budapest, which will be hung in the new Parliament House.

**6 March** The NSW leader of the opposition, Nick Greiner, officially launched the Liberal party's election campaign at the Rockdale Town Hall for the NSW state election to be held on 19 March. Rockdale formed part of the southern Sydney electorate represented by

#### ABC BICENTENNIAL LITERARY AWARDS

**6 March** The general manager of the Australian Bicentennial Authority, Wendy McCarthy, presented the ABC Bicentennial Literary Awards worth \$95 000 in Adelaide. The awards drew almost 8000 entries in six major categories. Lolo Houbein won the \$10 000 unpublished fiction award for *Walk a bare-foot road*. Les Murray won the award for a poem of up to 40 lines for *The tin wash dish*. Archie Weller and Christopher Kelen shared the poetry award for a poem of up to 80 lines. The three short story awards went to Rosa Safransky, 'Can a Morris Minor break the speed of sound?', Jennifer Paynter, 'The sad heart of Ruth' and Jessica Adams, 'Be still my beating heart'. All entries in the once-only awards were presented to the National Library in Canberra as a record of what Australian authors were writing in 1988.

Premier Barrie Unsworth. Greiner's election promises included the introduction of freedom of information legislation, the creation of 16 000 youth employment opportunities, a four-year freeze on expenditure, a shift from welfare to support by the family unit and reform of the public service. He also pledged to reroute the monorail. Demonstrators concerned about public housing issues clashed with Liberals in the audience. One demonstrator was taken to hospital.

**6 March** Victorian prison officers held a state-wide strike to protest against the transfer of an officer alleged to have struck a prisoner. They returned to work on 10 March.

**6 March** Australia defeated Israel 2-0 in an Oceania men's soccer Olympic qualifying match in Melbourne.

**7 March** State health ministers agreed to bring the treatment of AIDS patients within the scope of Medicare.



**7 March** The Polish government refused permission for Solidarity leader Lech Walesa to visit Australia to attend the international conference of free trade unions in Melbourne despite personal intervention by Prime Minister Bob Hawke. Unions placed bans on the Polish embassy and the Sydney consulate.

**7 March** Justice Minister Michael Tate signed an extradition treaty with the Philippine government in Manila. It allowed criminals and suspects to be extradited to either country. It was the first such treaty signed with an Asian country.

**7 March** The NSW police commissioner, John Avery, commended Aboriginal leaders for the non-violent marches on Australia Day. His letter stated 'There were some Aboriginals, Police and others in the wider community, who predicted (and perhaps hoped for) violence'.

**7 March** The Qld cabinet refused to accept the resignation of suspended Qld police com-

missioner Sir Terence Lewis in order to postpone his \$1 million superannuation payout.

**7 March** The US deal to sell 100 000 tonnes of cut price wheat to North Yemen threatened one of Australia's most important export markets.

**7 March** Sport Minister Graham Richardson announced a three-year \$450 000 corporate sponsorship of netball by Johnson & Johnson Aust Pty Ltd. One in seven women aged 8-40 play netball in Australia.

**7 March** Jeff Fenech won the World Boxing Council's featherweight title by defeating Puerto Rican Victor Callejas on a technical knockout in the tenth round at the Sydney Entertainment Centre. It was Fenech's third world title.

**8 March** Prime Minister Bob Hawke rejected a proposal to use Synroc (synthetic rock) to immobilise and store plutonium from nuclear weapons in Australia as a contribution to international disarmament. The proposal had been made by an Adelaide company Nuclear Waste Management Pty Ltd who hold the commercial licence for the Synroc process developed at the Australian National University.

**8 March** The Federal Director of Public Prosecutions, Ian Temby, QC, asked the Australian federal police to reopen investigations into the election donation of the woodchipping company Harris Daishowa (Australia) Pty Ltd after receiving 'additional information'. Under the public funding provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Act the Commonwealth Electoral Commission had referred the matter to the police on 3 February after it was discovered that the NSW branch of the Labor party had not disclosed a 1987 \$10 000 donation from the company.

**8 March** The Conciliation and Arbitration Commission in Sydney ruled in favour of the ABC after the corporation allegedly failed to honour a verbal job offer to investigative journalist Wendy Bacon.

**8 March** A national survey by the federal government Public Policy Research Centre found that 22 per cent of men surveyed



*The federal opposition leader John Howard lends a hand to ladler Nick Greiner as they cook up publicity for the NSW state election campaign at the North Ryde Catering College, Sydney. Photograph by David Trood, Sydney Morning Herald, 8 March 1988.*

regarded the use of physical violence against women in a domestic situation as acceptable.

**9 March** The NSW premier, Barrie Unsworth, officially launched the ALP election campaign at Bankstown Town Hall. His election promises included cutting commuter transport fares by 25 per cent, abolition of stamp duty on first homes costing less than \$105 000 and a means tested education allowance.

**9 March** An inaugural conference on Australian studies was held in Beijing, China.

**9 March** The two-week second annual Age International Comedy Festival began in Melbourne.

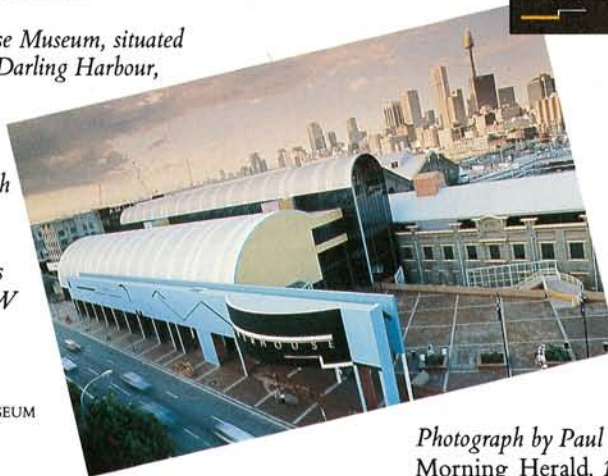
**9 March** Arts Minister Gary Punch launched Art at Work Month in Melbourne. Events included a photographic exhibition *More than a document* featuring Australian workers and an exhibition of contemporary trade union banners *Art and shared belief*.

**10 March** One of the nine surviving First Fleet 'Etruria' medallions was auctioned for \$41 667 in London. In 1789, British potter Josiah Wedgwood made twenty medallions from white pipeclay used by the Aborigines of Sydney Cove for decoration. The pipeclay had been sent to London by Governor Arthur Phillip.

**10 March** A Melbourne Anglican priest, the Reverend Ian Herring, stated in an ABC television documentary that 'It would be analogous to consecrating a meat pie on the altar of God to ordain a woman.'

*The Powerhouse Museum, situated near Sydney's Darling Harbour, intelligently incorporates modern architecture with the old Ultimo power station building. It was opened by NSW Premier Barrie Unsworth on 10 March.*

POWERHOUSE MUSEUM

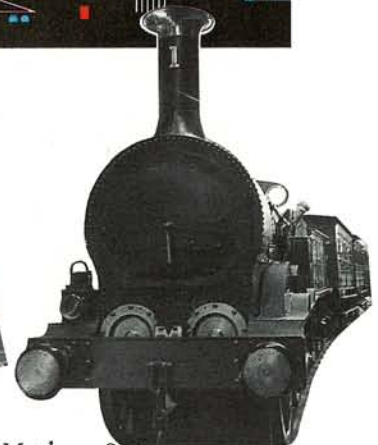
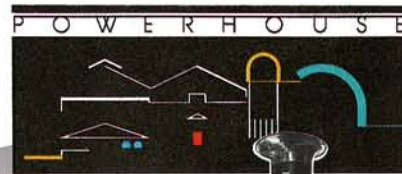


**8 March 1788** Saturday 8 am. 'Several of the Natives came to us, painted very whimsically with pipe clay & red ochre both which is plenty on the Island, the pipe clay just under the sand on the beach round the rocks.'

WILLIAM BRADLEY

**10 March** The Rottneest Island Board agreed to the establishment of a memorial on the island for the estimated 500 Aborigines who died there during the nineteenth century. Rottneest Island, about twenty kilometres off the coast of WA, was used as an Aboriginal prison from 1837 until 1931.

**10 March** The Powerhouse Museum, part of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences established in 1880, was officially opened in Sydney. Located in the renovated Ultimo power station, the new museum's collections cover science and technology, decorative arts and social history. Features include the world's oldest rotative steam engine built by James Watt and Matthew Boulton in 1785, the old Central railway station indicator board, Lawrence Hargrave's kites, the first steam locomotive in NSW and a Catalina flying boat.



*Photograph by Paul Matthews, Sydney Morning Herald, 10 March 1988.*



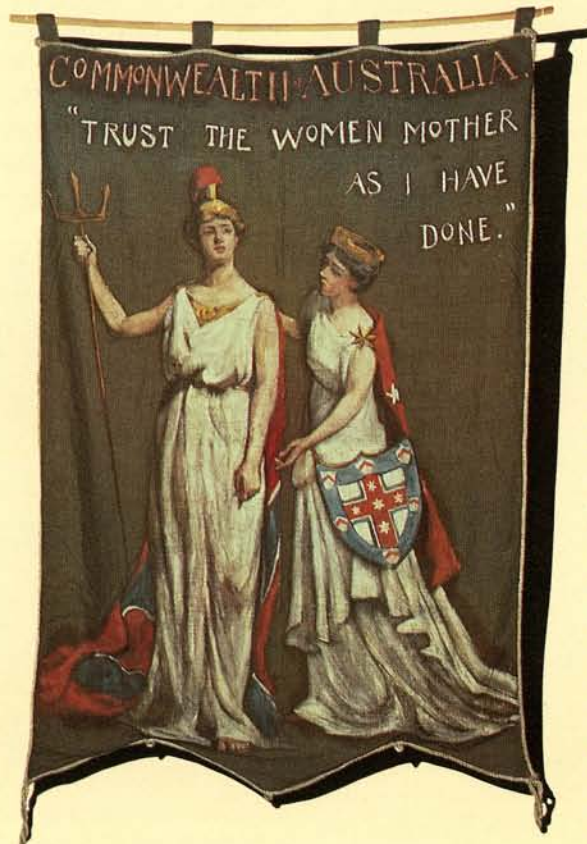
## WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE BANNER

**8 March** The Australian Bicentennial Authority presented a women's suffrage banner as a Bicentennial gift to the women of Australia at a ceremony in Canberra on International Women's Day.

Melbourne-born artist Dora Meeson (1869–1955) painted the canvas banner in oils in 1908. Australian women carried the banner through the streets of London on 13 June 1908 as part of a women's suffrage march. The 10 000 strong march was organised by the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies and featured 70 banners. The Australian banner showed two women, representing the young colonial daughter Australia with the shield of the Southern Cross at her side persuading Britannia to 'Trust the women'. It was a reminder that Australian women had obtained the vote in 1902. British women were not enfranchised until 1928. Australian women again carried the banner on 17 June 1911 in the women's procession to mark the coronation of George V in London.

Feminist author Dale Spender discovered the banner in London's Fawcett Library and arranged for the Australian Bicentennial Authority to purchase it for £10 000 (\$24 000) after restoration work was completed. The banner will hang in the new Parliament House.

Some feminists described the purchase of the banner by the Australian Bicentennial Authority as inappropriate, claiming it belonged to Australian and British suffragists. They displayed a rival banner 'Take the taint off Dora's paint' at the presentation ceremony.



*The suffrage banner carried by the contingent of Australian women in the London women's suffrage procession of 1908. The banner was purchased by the Australian Bicentennial Authority in 1988 and presented as a bicentennial gift to the women of Australia through the National Women's Consultative Council. Oil on canvas banner by Dora Meeson, 1908.*

AUSTRALIAN  
BICENTENNIAL  
AUTHORITY



**10 March** The High Court in a 5-2 majority upheld the validity of the Lemnathyme and Southern Forests (Commission of Inquiry) Act 1987 that resulted in the cessation of logging, and set up an inquiry headed by Justice Michael Helsham to examine whether the forests should be nominated for world heritage listing. The year-long inquiry was due to report in May. The Forestry Commission of Tasmania had challenged the act.

**10 March** Two Macchi jets of the RAAF Roulettes aerobatic team collided in mid-air during a training exercise in East Gippsland, Victoria. Both pilots escaped serious injury.

**11 March** Qantas announced the appointment of former minister Mick Young as a part-time consultant. Some ALP members perceived a conflict of interests for Young, the party's federal president, during the forthcoming privatisation debate at the June ALP national conference. On 14 March Young resigned as ALP national president amid controversy.

**11 March** Administrative Services Minister Stewart West announced Australia would receive \$640 million for the sale of 6150 square metres of its Tokyo embassy land and 16 adjacent staff apartments. The contract to redevelop the site was awarded to the MITA consortium and included the provision of a new four-storey chancery building, 43 new staff apartments, and a new residence for the ambassador to be built on the remaining 12 000 square metres of land. The deal included an agreement by C. Itoh & Co, a major member of the MITA consortium, to import an additional 1.5 million tonnes of coal from NSW during the next two years. Government assets sales reached \$1 billion.

**11 March** An exhibition of cartoons and jokes tracing racism in Australia entitled *200 in the shade* opened at the State Library of Victoria.

**12 March** The ten-day Canberra Festival began, commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the naming of the city in 1913. Events included a hot-air balloon gathering and the Castrol Bicentennial World Car Rally featuring 1500 vintage and veteran vehicles.

**13 March** The Australian Bicentennial Authority conceded that its \$31 million travelling exhibition was not achieving expected attendance figures.

**13 March** The WA sailor Jon Sanders completed a 658-day, 75 000-nautical-mile solo triple circumnavigation of the world at Fremantle Harbour.

**13 March** Health Minister Neal Blewett launched a series of television commercials as part of a national campaign to reduce youth alcohol abuse.

**13 March** The Australian Institute of Sport awarded its first scholarship for a disabled athlete to Russell Short, a visually impaired discus thrower.

**13 March** Australia defeated New Zealand 3-1 in an Oceania men's soccer Olympic qualifying match in Sydney.

**13 March** Gymnasts from Australia, USSR, China, US, Bulgaria, Canada, Switzerland, West Germany, Italy and Japan competed at the Konica International Bicentennial Gymnastics Cup held at the State Sports Stadium, Sydney. USSR and Bulgaria won most of the medals. It was the most competitive gymnastics tournament held in Australia.



Canberrans thronged to see veteran and vintage cars exhibited as part of the Castrol Bicentennial World Car Rally at the National Exhibition Centre, Canberra.  
CANBERRA TIMES



**14 March** In an effort to stem annual losses of about \$30 million, John Fairfax and Sons Ltd closed two newspapers, the Sydney afternoon paper the *Sun* and the weekly newspaper *Times on Sunday*. The *Sun* commenced publication as an afternoon tabloid on 1 July 1910, the *Times on Sunday* began as the *National Times* in 1971. The closures made 500 workers redundant and gave rival newspaper owner Rupert Murdoch 61 per cent of Australian metropolitan daily newspaper sales.

**14 March** The fourteenth World Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions began. More than 800 representatives from 100 countries attended the week-long congress in Melbourne.

**14 March** Rank outsider Dandy Andy (125-1) won the \$501 000 Bicentennial Australian Cup (2000 metres) at Flemington racecourse beating more highly favoured horses Vo Rogue and Bonecrusher.

**15 March** The Australian National Gallery unveiled Belgium's Bicentennial gift to Australia, Peter Paul Rubens' *Sketch for 'The triumphal entry of Henry IV into Paris 22 May 1594'* (1628), the first Rubens oil sketch in an Australian public collection. Belgium donated \$175 000, half the cost of the purchase.



The front cover of the *Sun* featured sensational news stories to the end. Informed of the paper's closure at 2pm on 14 March, *Sun* staff declined to put out a last edition the following day.



Peter Paul Rubens, *Sketch for 'The triumphal entry of Henry IV into Paris, 22 May 1594'*, oil on wood panel, 1628.  
 AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL GALLERY





*Some politicians got wet feet as balloons skimmed the surface of Lake Burley Griffin, Canberra. More than \$25 000 was raised for the National Heart Foundation. Photograph by Mark Wilson, Age, 16 March 1988.*

**15 March** The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Hobart Sir Guilford Young died aged 71 in Melbourne.

**15 March** Federal politicians participated in hot-air balloon flights over Canberra to raise money for the National Heart Foundation.

**16 March** The Anti-Slavery Society, a world human rights organisation, released a report *Aborigines today — land and justice* that called on Australia to promote the human rights of Aborigines.

**16 March** Professor Ron Penny of the National Advisory Committee on AIDS called for fixed doses of heroin in single-use syringes to be made available to intravenous drug users who were already infected with AIDS in order to reduce the spread of the disease.

**16 March** The federal opposition released a rules violation report by the WA Casino Control Committee, which referred to an incident in November 1986 when at a Perth casino Prime Minister Bob Hawke was allowed to play only one box at a blackjack table, contravening the rules of the game.

**16 March** Police charged international cricketer Ian Botham with assault and disorderly conduct after a disturbance on a flight from Brisbane to Perth. The Perth Court of Petty Sessions fined him \$800 on 23 March.

**17 March** Sir Ron Brierley's Industrial Equity Ltd and Kerry Packer's Consolidated Press Holdings Ltd launched a joint \$825.75 million takeover bid through the company Turnbridge Pty Ltd for Robert Holmes à Court's Bell Resources Ltd.

**17-20 March** The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships were held at Wanda Beach, Sydney. Queenslander Trevor Hendy won the Iron Man Race.

**18 March** The former US defence secretary, Caspar Weinberger, arrived in Australia on a four-day visit to represent President Reagan at Australia's Bicentennial celebrations. The US Bicentennial gift to Australia was \$7.5 million for an American gallery at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Sydney.

**18 March** Health Minister Neal Blewett announced the formation of a thirteen-member national committee on bioethics to advise state and federal governments on such issues as surrogacy, in-vitro fertilisation, genetic engineering and euthanasia.

**18 March** The Chinese giant pandas Fei Fei and Xiao Xiao arrived in Melbourne. The pandas were on loan to Australia until 6 October as China's Bicentennial gift to Australia. The three-month exhibition at the Melbourne Zoo opened on 26 March.



*The Chinese giant pandas consumed many bushels of bamboo during their stay at Melbourne Zoo. Photograph by John Lamb, Age, 23 March 1988.*





*NSW Premier Barrie Unsworth waves to supporters as he leaves the Arncliffe RSL Club to go to the tally room to concede to opposition leader Nick Greiner, whose sights were already set on the Premier's Room. Photographs by Brendan Read and Palani Mohan (inset), Sydney Morning Herald, 20 March 1988.*

**19 March** Elections in NSW for the legislative assembly and legislative council were held. The Liberal-National party coalition led by Nick Greiner won office comfortably with an average 10 per cent swing against the NSW Labor government of Barrie Unsworth, ending 12 years of Labor rule. Seven Labor cabinet ministers were unseated in the swing. In the assembly the Liberal-National coalition won a total of 59 seats, Labor 43, and independents seven. In the council the Liberal-National coalition won a total of 19 seats, Labor 21, Call to Australia three, and Australian Democrats two. A record seven women were elected to the assembly including former Olympic swimming champion Dawn Fraser who stood as an independent candidate for Balmain.

**19 March** The Liberal party candidate Jan

Wade won office easily in the Vic state by-election for the seat of Kew, with a 5.2 per cent swing against Labor. The by-election in the blue-ribbon Liberal seat was caused by the resignation of Prue Leggoe. More than 15 per cent of voters pasted yellow anti-Richmond-to-Brunswick powerline stickers to their ballot papers. Work had recently begun on the controversial eight-kilometre powerline, which had been recommended by a parliamentary committee set up in 1982. On 28 March Vic Premier John Cain halted work on the powerline and appointed a review panel to reassess the route the line should take.

**19 March** The Labor party candidates Ted Cunningham and Eric Ripper won office in the WA state by-elections for the seats of Balga and Ascot, despite a swing away from Labor of



more than 20 per cent. The by-elections had been called after the resignation of retired Premier Brian Burke and Deputy Premier Mal Bryce.

**19 March** In the Qld local council elections Brisbane Liberal party Lord Mayor Sallyanne Atkinson polled 63 per cent in the mayoral ballot — an 11.2 per cent swing to the Liberal party.

**19 March** The Australian film *The man from Snowy River II* premiered in Mansfield, Victoria.

**19 March** The annual three-month duck shooting season opened. Animal welfare groups in Vic and NSW collected protected wildlife and game that had been illegally shot and placed them outside the offices of Vic Premier John Cain and at the NSW Parliament House. Two protestors alleged they were fired upon near Kerang, Vic, by the duck shooters.

**19 March** The Versailles–Yvelines region of France staged *Versailles hails Canberra*, a \$1 million three-night pyrotechnic and theatrical spectacular held in Canberra as part of France's Bicentennial gift to Australia. Controversy arose over the inclusion of a full-page colour advertisement for the French uranium-enrichment company Cogenia in the program for the event.

**19 March** A Dutch car collector paid \$380 000 for a rare 1955 Alfa Romeo Sportiva at auction in Canberra. It was the highest price paid for a veteran or vintage car in Australia.

**19–20 March** The Australian Institute of Political Science in Canberra held a conference asking 'What does it mean to be Australian in 1988'. Speakers included Pat O'Shane, Russell Fynmore, Pru Goward, Brian Johns, Sir Ninian Stephen, Blanche d'Alpuget, Professor Leonie Kramer, Jack Munday and Galarrwuy Yunupingu.

**20 March** Quentin Bryce, Qld director of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, called on Rotary clubs to open their membership to women. She claimed that such a move was in accordance with the spirit of the Sexual Discrimination Act.

**20 March** Australia drew 0–0 with Israel in



*Dead waterfowl are placed outside Vic Premier John Cain's office by members of Animal Liberation to protest against the slaughter of protected species during the annual duck shooting season. Photograph by Rodger Cummins, Age, 22 March 1988.*

an Oceania men's soccer Olympic qualifying match at Christchurch, New Zealand.

**21 March** Barrie Unsworth resigned as leader of the NSW Labor party.

**21 March** In a study published in the *Medical journal of Australia*, volume 148, administrators at the Albion Street AIDS Centre, Sydney, criticised the effectiveness of the 'Grim Reaper' advertising campaign.

**21 March** World 500cc motorcycle champion Wayne Gardner won the 1987 Caltex Sports Star of the Year award.

**22 March** Medical officials at St Vincent's Hospital, Melbourne, announced that they had agreed to a request from a conscious and mentally competent terminally ill patient to remove her life support system so that she could die. It was the first time such a case had been documented in an Australian medical institution.

**22 March** Australian trade representatives in Japan announced that within three years 13 000 Australian-built cars would be exported annually to Japan.

**22 March** The Parliament House Construction Authority announced that most of the eucalypt-green carpet already laid in the



chamber of the House of Representatives would have to be replaced due to an inconsistency in the colour. The carpet was supplied by a Hong Kong manufacturer. The defective carpet was donated to charity.

**22 March** The Australian-made eight-hour mini-series *Melba* premiered on television. Based on the life of singer Dame Nellie Melba (1861–1931) the series cost \$8 million to produce.

**22 March** The Australian women's basketball team defeated Japan 69–50 in a test match in Canberra.

**22 March** In the final of the Sheffield Shield men's cricket competition in Perth, WA defeated Qld by five wickets.

**23 March** Health Minister Neal Blewett announced the formation of the National Council on AIDS to replace the AIDS Taskforce and the National Advisory Committee on AIDS. The council to be headed by Professor Peter Karmel would formulate national policy on AIDS. According to official figures, the total number of reported cases of AIDS in Australia was 795, with 418 deaths.

**23 March** The federal president of the Liberal party, John Elliott, advocated the introduction of a consumption tax.

**23 March** The investment group Ariadne Australia Ltd reported a loss of \$508.86 million for the six months ending December 1987.

**23 March** Mozambique's military revolutionary tribunal sentenced Qld Pentecostal missionary Ian Grey, aged 27, to ten and a half years gaol for four offences — incitement to rebellion, collaboration with an illegal organisation, rebellion against the state and illegal entry into Mozambique. He was acquitted on the more serious charge of espionage. Grey claimed that he had been deceived by political Christian groups who supported the Mozambique National Resistance.

**23 March** Greek runner Yiannis Kouros, aged 32, won the 1050-kilometre Westfield Sydney–Melbourne Ultramarathon in five days, nineteen hours and fourteen minutes. Despite a

twelve-hour handicap start, Kouros beat his nearest competitor by three hours.

**23 March** Australia drew 1–1 with New Zealand in an Oceania men's soccer Olympic qualifying match in Wellington, New Zealand.

**24 March** The federal parliament passed the controversial Conservation Legislation Amendment Bill to halt logging in Qld rainforests.

**24 March** The NSW premier-elect Nick Greiner announced his cabinet. As well as premier, Greiner took over the portfolios of treasurer and ethnic affairs, the latter including Aboriginal affairs. This foreshadowed the abolition of the NSW Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

**24 March** Politicians, staff and journalists consumed \$10 400 worth of 'free' food and alcohol during a five-hour ban on collecting payment by catering staff at Parliament House. The staff were protesting against staffing arrangements in the new Parliament House. The Speaker of the House of Representatives Joan Child called for repayment by those involved and later offered to reimburse parliament personally for the outstanding amount.

**25 March** More than 8000 point-of-sale terminals EFTPOS (electronic funds transfer at point of sale) came into operation in retail outlets throughout Australia.

**25 March** Linked by closed-circuit television, High Court judges sitting in Canberra heard seven appeals from plaintiffs in Brisbane. It was the first time the High Court employed the cost-saving video-link.

**26 March** The Labor candidate Rod Sawford won the seat of Port Adelaide in a by-election forced by the resignation of Mick Young, despite a 10.8 per cent swing against the Labor party.

**27 March** The federal government awarded \$10 000 compensation to nine Australian ex-service personnel incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. In 1986 Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Hayden had set up an interdepartmental committee to examine the question of compensation for veterans after viewing an Australian-made documentary on



Australians in World War II Nazi concentration camps.

**27 March** An estimated 90 000 people joined in Palm Sunday peace rallies throughout Australia.

**27 March** *Touch the sun*, a series of six telemovies presented by the Australian Children's Television Foundation and the Australian Bicentennial Authority, commenced on ABC television.

**27 March** James Hardie Industries withdrew its multi-million dollar sponsorship of the Bathurst 1000-kilometre Touring Car Race, ending a twenty-year association with the event. The company cited growing differences with the race organisers, the Australian Racing Drivers Club, as the primary reason for ending its sponsorship.

**27 March** Australia defeated The Netherlands 2-1 in the final of the Bicentennial women's international hockey tournament in Perth.

**27 March** Kerry Saxby broke the world 5000 metres walking record in a time of 20 minutes 45.32 seconds at the Sugar Industry Australian Athletics Championships in Perth. It was her fourteenth world record and the second time she had broken the 5000 metres record in 1988.

**28 March** The Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Ray Funnell, announced the winner of the RAAF's first annual Heritage Award for art: Canberra artist Jeff Isaacs' *The tradition lives on*.

**28 March** A research team from the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute, the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research and the Royal Melbourne Hospital announced the development of a new blood hormone therapy effective in the treatment of cancer. The hormone G-CSF (granulocyte colony stimulating factor) enhanced the ability of cancer patients to fight infections.

**28 March** Princess Anne and Captain Mark Phillips arrived in Sydney on a five-day visit as guests of the Royal Agricultural Society to officially open the Royal Easter Show.



*A section of the 35 000 strong peace rally march through central Melbourne. Photograph by Sebastian Costanzo, Age, 28 March 1988.*

**28 March** Air Force Week celebrations commenced, marking the foundation of the RAAF on 31 March 1921.

**28 March** Researchers at Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children, Sydney, announced a possible link between dairy products and hyperactivity in children.

**28 March** Queensland graziers held a meeting at Eidsvold to lobby the state and federal governments for drought relief. They claimed Qld was suffering its worst drought in 40 years.

**28 March** The Australian Cricket Board fined international cricketer Ian Botham \$5000 and Dennis Lillee \$1800 for damage they caused to a Launceston dressing room after a cricket match between Qld and Tas on 28 February.

**29 March** The Muirhead Royal Commission appointed Aboriginal activist Gary Foley as a consultant.

**29 March** The Qld Cricket Association voted unanimously to terminate cricketer Ian Botham's three-year contract.



**30 March** In a dispute over working conditions, the Electrical Trades Union, the Amalgamated Metal Workers Union and the Australian Transport Officers Federation agreed to remove week-long bans imposed on Melbourne's train services.

**30 March** The Federal Arbitration Commission ordered Jupiter's Casino on the Qld Gold Coast to reinstate a dancer sacked on 17 March for allegedly being overweight.

**30 March** The Sisters of St Joseph of the Sacred Heart, a Roman Catholic order of nuns founded in Australia in 1866, formed a ministry to work closely with Aboriginal communities.

**30 March** A private member's bill to restrict legal abortion in SA was defeated in the SA legislative council.

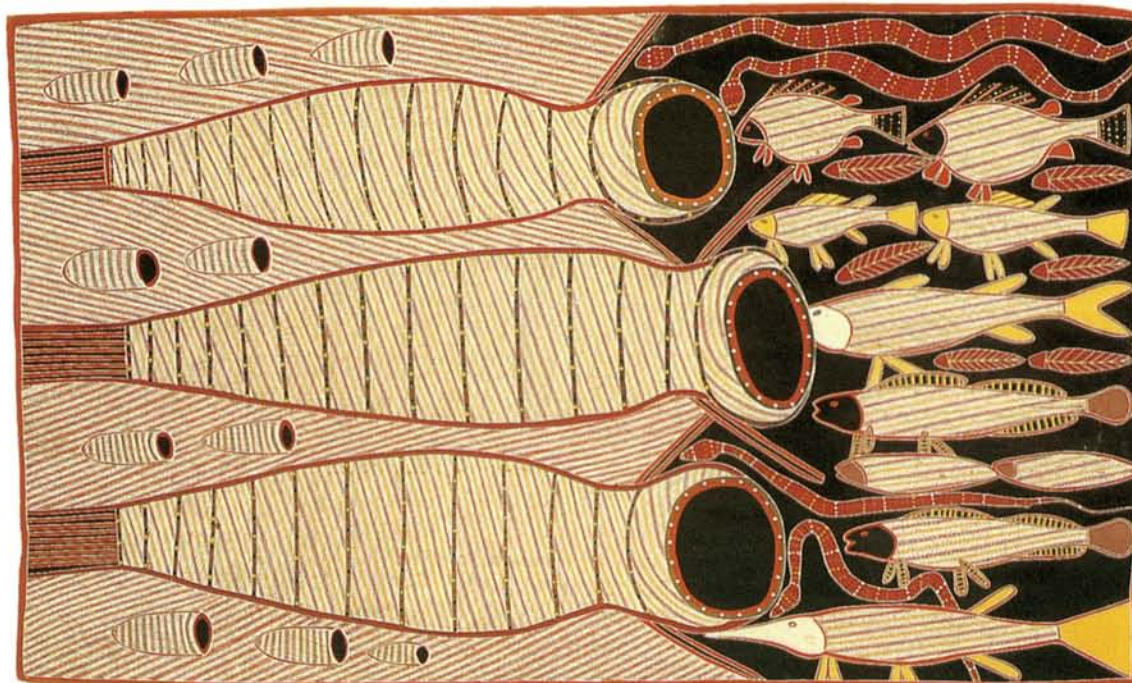
**31 March** Former Liberal prime minister Sir William McMahon died aged 80 in Sydney.

McMahon entered parliament in 1949 and held his seat until retirement in 1982. He held the ministerial positions for the navy and the air, social services, primary industry, labour and national service, and treasurer. He was prime minister from 10 March 1971 until his defeat on 2 December 1972 by the Labor party led by Gough Whitlam.

**31 March** The full bench of the Conciliation and Arbitration Commission rejected an application by the NT government to abolish the 17.5 per cent holiday pay loading for its 14 000 public servants.

**31 March** An eight-month exhibition *The inspired dream — life as art in Aboriginal Australia* opened at the Queensland Art Gallery.

**March** The Chicago Symphony Orchestra performed in Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. Sir Georg Solti, the con-



*Jack Wunuwun, Fishtrap story, ochre on bark, 1984. Wunuwun, from Gamedji outstation, Maningrida, NT, was one of the many artists whose work was exhibited in The Inspired Dream — Life as art in Aboriginal Australia. The exhibition represented regional areas and communities, but depicted Aboriginal Australia as a whole, revealing the contrasts with White Australia's European-based cultural traditions.*

ABORIGINAL ARTIST'S AGENCY



ductor, gave classes to orchestras and conductors in Perth, Adelaide and Sydney.

**March** Tertiary students returned to campuses for the start of the academic year. A new union, the National Union of Students, represented them.

**March** *First state '88* opened at the Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour, Sydney. Commissioned by the NSW Labor government the six-month exhibition was designed to mark 1988 as the NSW Bicentenary. It included a convict ship, a 1950s milk bar and the re-enactment of historic scenes by animated mannequins. Initially, attendances were poor, but increased significantly when the admission fee was waived.

SYDNEY TOWN

**March 1788** 'The principal street of the intended town was marked out at the head [of the cove], and its dimensions were extensive. The government-house was to be constructed on the summit of a hill commanding a capital view of Long Cove, and other parts of the harbour; but this was to be a work of after-consideration; for the present, as the ground was not cleared, it was sufficient to point out the situation and define the limits of the future buildings.'

JUDGE ADVOCATE DAVID COLLINS



*First state '88 at the Exhibition Centre, Darling Harbour.  
Photograph by Brian Alexander.*

WELDON TRANNIES





ABORIGINAL ART:  
AN AUSTRALIAN  
DISTINCTIVENESS?

Concluding his chapter 'Audiences for art', in *Australians from 1939*, Howard Morphy expressed the hope that, by enjoying Aboriginal art, non-Aboriginal Australians would continue to come to an understanding of Aboriginal people. There can be no doubt that the popularity of Aboriginal art persisted in 1988, but it is less easy to say why this was so and to trace the many threads of understanding it occasioned.

One of the ways in which Australians both confirm and reconsider their understanding of their country is by attending to overseas responses to exported fragments of Australiana. For example, in 1988, the federal government continued to subsidise the presentation of Australian art in other countries, proclaiming to the world that Australia was a 'nation' with a two-hundred-year history. So, what did it mean to West German audiences to advertise two hundred years of non-Aboriginal dominion by funding Bernard Lüthi to circulate Aboriginal films, videos, dance and other artworks? Some of the works would have resonated with the federal government's preferred imagery of Australia's ethnic inclusiveness in a beautiful, wide, brown land; but other works that Lüthi showed would have reinforced representations by Aborigines to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in Geneva in 1987. Key terms used by these delegates to describe Australia included 'fundamental institutionalised racism' and 'invading power'. If Aboriginal art was a symbol of Australia's distinctiveness, then there would be more than one version of that distinctiveness put into European circulation.

But the Australian media are often slow to report foreigners' informed distaste for their country. Within Australia, we were primed for pride rather than reflection by 1987 accounts of overseas interest in Aboriginal art. Was it warming or merely absurd to hear from Melbourne art dealer Gabrielle Pizzi that 'Janet Holmes à Court has given a Dreaming to her friend Yoko Ono'? Stories of what the *Sydney Morning Herald* had termed the 'unlimited thirst overseas for Aboriginal culture' continued to feature words such as 'explosion' and 'sky-

rocketed', the latter a metaphor for Western District canvas prices, as numerical an index of national glory as a world record at Seoul. Carol Lopez, a Los Angeles art dealer specialising in Aboriginal art, confirmed this boosting rhetoric when she sold a canvas by Anmatyerre men Tim Leura Japaljarri and Clifford Possum Japaljarri for \$150 000. The *Weekend Australian* bestowed some of Paul Hogan's aura (an innocent triumphant abroad) on the Aboriginal artists who appeared in New York at the Asia Gallery's exhibition *Dreamings*, crowing that they 'had the edge over that city's culture vultures when they put their own perspective — and price tags — on their unique heritage.' 'It's one of the hottest art forms around,' enthused Queensland Premier Mike Ahern, opening the exhibition *Ageless Art* at the Queensland Museum. But, while Ahern applauded what was 'hot', he and his government were ignoring criticism by the Wuthathi people of Cape York that their land interests in the Shelbourne Bay area had been ignored in 1986 when the state government approved the development of a new silica mine there. Apparently the Ahern government does not consider that the mining of silica and the reproduction of Aboriginal culture might not be compatible.

Would Ahern's position be more difficult to sustain if the art of the Wuthathi people emerged from museum collections to become world famous? Not necessarily. For some the market place is all that counts, in which case silica and Aboriginal art would be simply two 'hot' commodities. For the Wuthathi, the wish to celebrate their land by quietly tending its sacred places and gathering its foods could seem of little account when the 'Aboriginality' most acceptable to government is a tradable canvas daubed in acrylics.

In 1988, many of the Aborigines and non-Aborigines who are familiar with and appreciate Aboriginal art are well aware of the bad faith of Ahern's position. Among them, the term 'appropriation' has achieved currency, referring to both the forced settling of the country and the rapt circulation of an art that usually either attested the artist's ownership of land or mourned its loss.

At Sydney University's Fine Arts Department, for example, teachers engaged the wider community of artists, critics and art-enthusiasts to debate the political nuances of devising Fine Arts courses about Aboriginal Art. Was it poss-



ible to consider the qualities of art separately from other elements of Aboriginality, such as the relationship with the land? Did the concept of 'Aboriginal art' merely make Aboriginal culture digestible to a European society that otherwise spurned most Aborigines' claims to land rights?

For it is well understood that many of the designs that feature in Aboriginal art are symbols of people's relationships to places. In traditional Aboriginal rituals these designs have always been invested with meaning, stories and songs charting the connections and obligations among people and celebrating their belonging to particular tracts of country. In their new media, acrylic on canvas replacing natural pigments and fixatives on sand and bark, the images have attracted new commentaries and new meanings as they have gained greater public attention, but without necessarily losing their original significance for those who create them.

In June 1988 the artist Charlie Tjaruru Tjungurrayi reportedly said: 'If I don't paint this story some whitefella might come and steal my country.' Tjungurrayi's country is part of what is called 'Western Australia' where mining interests promoted such fears of Aboriginal land rights claims in 1984 and 1985 that neither the Burke nor Dowding governments have

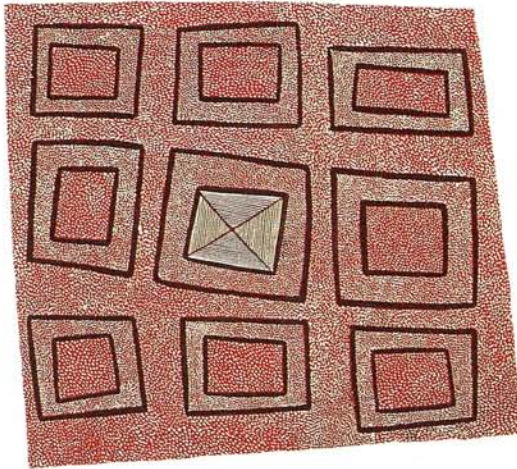
since dared mention their policy. That Tjungurrayi persists in seeing his painted symbols as a kind of deed of ownership points to one of the paradoxes of his art's reputation. He and other Western Desert artists owe some of their fame to a historical coincidence, between the contemporary curatorial preference for abstraction and the apparently abstract and neo-expressionist idioms of Western Desert art. Australian National Gallery Director James Mollison praised this work as 'simply the finest abstract paintings that have been produced in Australia to date.' Mollison's reading is appropriate to a certain domain — an international network of galleries and their attentive publics — but it hardly exhausts the potential for meaning in the objects to which he was referring.

What concerns many non-Aborigines and Aborigines is that a reading such as Mollison's may become the best known and most authoritative. There is a danger that non-Aborigines' enjoyment could then be a self-redeeming gesture, exploiting art's sublime transcendence of the messiness of colonialism's still unresolved political issues.

At the 1988 Sydney Biennale, Yulngu artists displayed 200 burial poles, a memorial to the Aboriginal casualties of conquest since 1788. The poles were then purchased by the Australian National Gallery. The display won the National Aboriginal Artists Award and one of the National Aboriginal Art Awards. Another jewel in the bicentennial crown? John Munding, Aboriginal adviser to the Ramingining (NT) community, tried to pre-empt such national self-satisfaction in his Biennale speech.

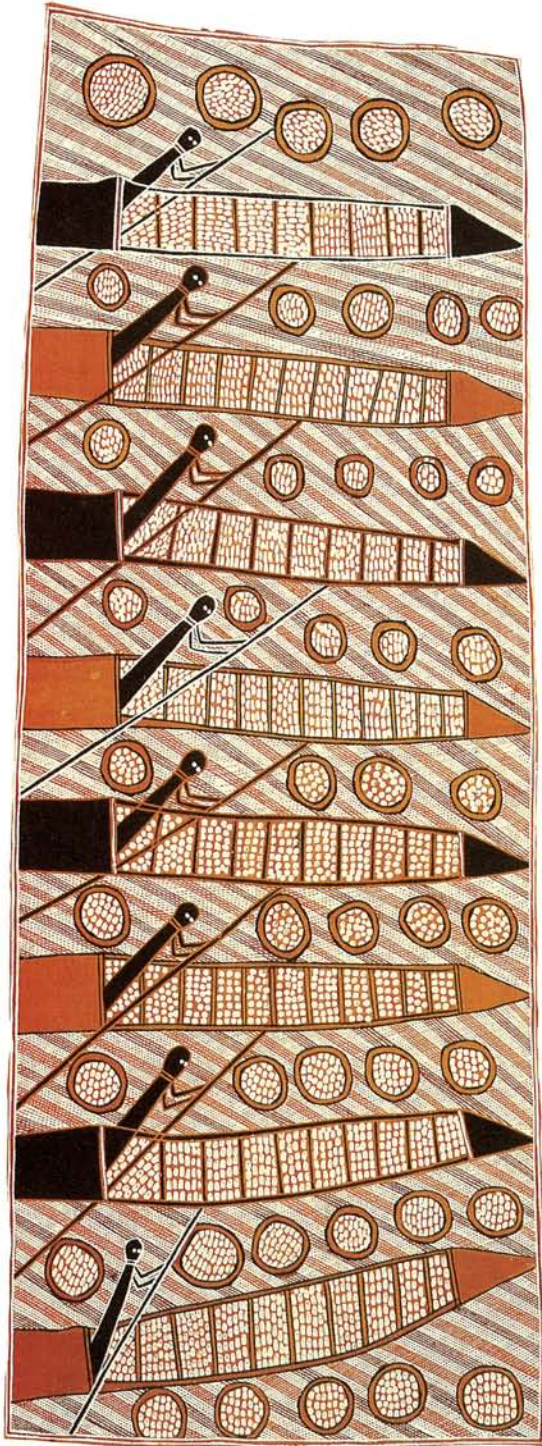
If White Australia thinks that by putting this memorial up that they've done their justice, well that's not quite true. They've got to make real concessions and address real issues. Such as, the National Land Rights law which hasn't been addressed and keeps being put off.

The Western Australian government led the fight within the Australian Labor Party to 'put off' (indefinitely) addressing the issue of National Land Rights within the Australian Labor Party. Yet, in January 1988, it bought, for more than \$2 million, the US collector Louis Allen's 1000 pieces of Arnhem Land art. When the government announced plans to display the collection in the soon-to-be-renovated Swan Brewery building in South Perth, the local Aborigines, the Nyoongar (Nyungar),



*Shorty Lungkata Tjungurrayi, Rat kangaroo dreaming, 1972. Tjungurrayi's country is around Lake Macdonald, a shimmering salt pan straddling the WA/NT border. Tjungurrayi's square motifs recall shapes in the sacred designs of the more western Pintupi; a sinuous roundness has tended to dominate the motifs of more recent Western Desert art.*





George Milpururru, *Goose hunting in the Arafura swamp 1987*. Yulngu (Arnhem Landers) know that food is tradition, a marker of difference from the Balanda (non-Aborigines). Painting sales might afford purchase of an outboard motor, to ease the artist and his family's dependence on their country's bounty.

objected. One of them, Ken Colbung, reportedly stated that officials planning the display 'don't care a stuff about local culture.' Remote in provenance from the Nyoongar, but safe in its reputation as great Aboriginal art, the Allen collection became a disputed symbol: an opulent but hollow manifestation of official enlightenment, exposed by the Nyoongar's trenchant and necessary parochialism.

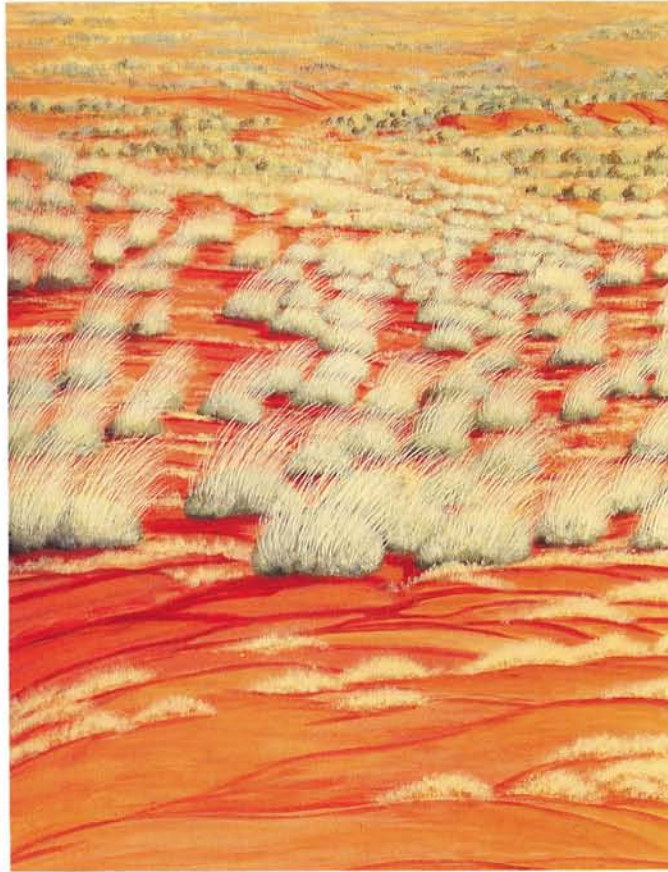
Neither the Nyoongar nor the Wuthathi are famous for their art; unlike the Aborigines of the Western Desert and Arnhem Land they are not producers of what is 'hot'. On this scale of value perhaps the Arrernte watercolourists could be called 'warm'. Contemporary Arrernte watercolourists took steps to advise the public about the meaning of their art.

Exhibiting in July 1988 at Fremantle's Birukmarri Gallery, their catalogue *Pmere: country in mind* expressed their view of their place in their intensively colonised home region. On their land stands Alice Springs, Pine Gap and most of the Central Australian pastoral industry. To claim their attachment to this land still exposes them to public insult. In April 1988 their attempt to defend sacred sites near Alice Springs against plans to build a recreation lake was cited by the then Northern Territory Chief Minister Steve Hatton as the cause of the flooding of the town.

The Arrernte painters, witnessing the success of their western neighbours' acrylic 'dot paintings' are also aware that their work continues a tradition that is out of fashion, therefore fetching smaller prices. Popular from the 1940s to 1960s, especially through Albert Namatjira's work, but always critically marginal (Robert Hughes warned in 1987 that Namatjira tended to be overrated), the Arrernte paintings can too easily be read as skilful Aboriginal versions of the same landscape depicted in tourist promotions — rich in the Centre's ochrous rocks and dunes and bleached eucalypts, but simply pictorial.

It was, therefore, a testament to their combative pride that the artists in the *Pmere* catalogue not only reasserted the importance of watercolour landscapes, but also urged the public to read this work anew. Like the Western Desert 'abstracts', their paintings of mountains, gullies, trees and plains also identified bonds between artists and country. As the artist Doug Abbott said: 'This is our country and we're proud of it. We want it to stay that way too





*Gabriella Wallace, Pmere, 1987. Gabriella and her generation have recently been introduced to painting. Now that few Arrernte are employed in the cattle industry, and as watercolour work enjoys a revival, painting has become an attractive option to young Arrernte.*

... I might stop in Alice Springs here, and the station owners own the country, but I know in my heart that it's my country. It's my land.'

These claims set an important test for a non-Aboriginal sensibility. During the years in which 'assimilation' was official federal government policy (1951-72) it was widely understood that Aboriginal society was rapidly decaying under the pressure of European influences. To be humane, it was argued, governments should rehabilitate Aborigines 'stranded' by the apparent collapse of their culture, and equip them with the skills and outlooks necessary for their acceptance by white Australians. The first generation of Arrernte painters seemed to show how quickly even 'primitive' people could make this adjustment: mission-bred folk, committed to a distinctly Western graphic style, were finding sales and fame.

This appreciation of their art was never publicly challenged by the artists themselves. Not only did they lack the political means to assert their sense of land ownership, there was no incentive to do so in a society that saw persistent 'Aboriginality' as, at best, quaint folklore,

and, at worst, an intellectual and emotional handicap.

Government policies since 1972 have allowed limited land rights in some regions and have devolved welfare administration to Aboriginal groups in the name of 'self-determination'. This has encouraged many Aboriginal people to reassert that culture which, in shame or out of prudence, they had long hidden from non-Aborigines.

But what of the 'authenticity' of such art? Aboriginal art's first fame was an expression of the 'primitive'. In 1988 there remained a fear among Australians who valued the Aboriginal ways of old that the authenticity of tradition (nearly always judged as absent from the Arrernte school) was everywhere in danger, now that the Western Desert and Arnhem Land artists were commercially successful. Indeed the apparent pathos of tradition's demise could be one reason for valuing highly the designs which, in form if not in medium, harked back to pre-colonial days.

However, there are reasons, in both the art and in commentary, to question such mourning



of 'authenticity'. In at least two ways the Australian public has been invited to understand Aboriginal artists' contemporary intentions.

First, as ethnographic comment on Aboriginal art has become more widely available (mainly through the publication of books of text and images), Australians have begun to understand that it is not the object itself (imagery plus medium plus style) but the interpretive use of that object in ritual that is 'authentic'. The artist and his or her associates, the 'owners' and 'managers' of the 'Dreaming' represented in the art, reveal its most important meanings in song, dance and talk. Because no uninitiated purchaser of an object will be made party to its most important stories, most Australians cannot avoid being in an alien relationship to Aboriginal art; only partial possessors, at best, of its indigenous meanings.

This exclusion means that almost all of the viewing public is destined therefore to respond chiefly to matters of form and style. Marcia Langton of the Central Land Council, while affirming the artists' right to withhold such meanings, argued at the 1988 Adelaide Arts Festival that some documentation was nonetheless necessary.

One must know who painted a painting, where that person comes from, what the dreaming of that painting is and other such details. Without this kind of documentation paintings are simply not really Aboriginal art in the sense that the painters mean them.

By such careful introduction into a painting's meaning non-Aborigines accord respect both to the artists' knowledge and to their powers to withhold it. By controlling the viewing public's admission to the Law embodied in the imagery, the artist is freed to circulate images to buyers and viewers whom they will never know.

Second, the bicentennial year, in which Aborigines addressed white Australians so forcefully, occasioned an opportunity for non-Aborigines to turn aside from the chimera of the 'authentic' artefact and the 'truly Aboriginal' artist and be more receptive to the contemporary sincerity of Aboriginal artists (women as well as men, urban as well as outback) who wish to make a living by communicating. Attributing and then taking seriously that intention to communicate, rather than assessing the claims of the art to be 'Aboriginal', became more central to a sympathetic reception.

If pride in country and in its sacred stories was increasingly perceived as a theme and rationale of the art, there was also, especially in the case of artists who had lost their land, a respect among the public for the apparent wish of such Aborigines to comment, diversely, on their political past and future. Diverse it certainly was, for the art market makes no political distinctions. Michael Nelson Tjakamarra designed a mosaic for a courtyard of the new Parliament House; the opening of the House was nonetheless the occasion of protest in favour of Aboriginal rights. While artists in the poster exhibition *Right here — right now* at the 1988 Adelaide Festival called attention to their sorrow and anger, Bronson Jakamarra Nelson was arrestingly conciliatory in his 'Living together working together', chosen as the cover illustration for the exhibition *A changing relationship* at the S. H. Ervin Gallery in June and July. Jakamarra, from Yuendumu, showed against a decorative background of dots, lines and vegetable images three flags: the Aboriginal, the Northern Territory and the Australian, with the last ascendant and the other two level.

On the eve of 1988, Jakamarra had been rated by market observer Terry McCrann as one of the four top Aboriginal artists, on a combination of sales, exhibitions and reviews.



Bronson Jakamarra Nelson, *Living together, working together*, 1986. Substituting the circular symbols of *ngurra* (camp, home, country), Jakamarra gently appropriated colonial icons. His playfulness gained new meanings when featured on the cover of a catalogue for a bicentennial exhibition.

S. H. ERVIN GALLERY, NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (NSW)



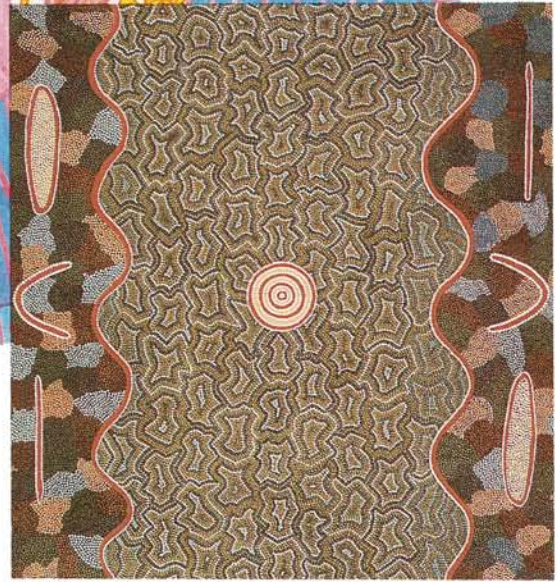
McCrann's other three 'stars' encapsulate some of the diversity of contemporary Aboriginal art. Johnny Bulun Bulun, from Arnhem Land, has been known as a master of bark since 1981 when he became the first Aboriginal painter to exhibit solo. Robert Campbell Junior, from Kempsey (NSW), is painting stylised human and animal figures on a decorative background derived from the dot strokes of the Western Districts artists. His contribution to the exhibition *A changing relationship* told the story of a death in custody that might have taken place in a cell beneath Bronson Jakamarra's carefully arrayed flags. Jimmy Pike, himself a gaol survivor, painted, printed and, astutely, designed gift-wrapping paper that evoked his Western Australian desert homeland.

If fluoro-coloured Western Desert gift-wrapping paper seemed more kitsch than 'art', what were we to make of the canvas sneakers painted in 1985 by Turkey Tolson Jupurrula to signify 'The Two Travelling Women at Putja Waterhole'? Notwithstanding that political sincerity was the intention to be read into all art called 'Aboriginal', the artists themselves did not seem to be confined to a solemnity of rhetoric.

That no women artists figured in McCrann's constellation was not due only to a pro-male bias among the non-Aboriginal public. Though some communities, such as Ernabella and Utopia, are known for women's art (batik fabric designs in these two cases), Aboriginal communities themselves have tended to first empower older men to paint barks and canvases. But by 1988 it appeared that, in some regions, women and younger people had become regular producers. Perhaps it was this entry of new producers into the market that stimulated the growing regional and personal diversity of style. For the first time, the National Aboriginal Art Award went to a woman, Pauline Nakamarra Woods, of Yuendumu and Alice Springs. Among the Walpiri (of Yuendumu and Yuelamu), in particular, the boom in Aboriginal art seems to be encouraging women to paint for sales. Some young people were also jostling older ones for the right to produce. Researcher Jon Altman has observed that the number of northern and central Australian Aborigines who produce artefacts is responsive to increased demand, but that cash returns per head are very low. Aboriginal Affairs Minister Gerry Hand has appointed Altman, Peter Yu and Chris McGuigan to

Background. Artist Jimmy Pike sells reproduction licences to Admeto Pty Ltd, owner of the label 'Desert Designs'. Wrapping paper and bed sheets are only two products of the Admeto/Pike combination which refuses to limit the media of contemporary Aboriginal art.

Below. Pansy Napangati, Winpirri rockhole, 1987. The ecology of desert life and ceremony combine with a formal geometric painting style to make the rockhole (the concentric circles) the focal point. Similarly celebrated are the women's tools: digging sticks and coolamons (half-cylindrical dishes) used for carrying food and babies.



report and recommend ways of maximising these returns.

The entry of new artists into the market, seeking to convert increased non-Aboriginal interest in art into cash supplements to Social Security payments, was itself a challenge to some non-Aborigines' idea that the Aborigines most remote from the cities are the spiritual antithesis of non-Aborigines' materialism. But how otherwise could video and audio cassette players, Toyotas and rifles be bought on the welfare state's below-poverty stipends? Here was a subtle challenge to white Australians' understanding, a developing perception that Aboriginal culture could change, become in many respects more 'modern', without the artists' communities reshaping their lives in a white Australian image.

TIM ROWSE

[I would like to thank Jan Mackay and Luke Taylor for their help in preparing this article.]

