The Museum As Art:

Site-specific Art in Australia's Public Museums

by
Lucy Emma Hawthorne

Bachelor of Fine Arts with First Class Honours

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This thesis critically examines site-specific art projects in Australian museums from the late 1960s onwards. Despite the fact that site-specific art practice is relatively widespread, there have been few in-depth or systematic studies published on this subject, particularly in terms of its historical and theoretical foundations. More importantly, there have been no in-depth studies explicitly on *Australian* site-specific art, and so my research aims to extend the existing knowledge on this art form while applying it to an Australian context.

Because the site-specific field is vast, I narrowed my research to focus on artworks located in museums, including art, natural history, cultural history museums, historic houses and sites, and botanic gardens. The inclusion of such a wide range of museums is in part due to the fact that the artistic projects in these institutions vary greatly. Additionally, the comparisons between art museums, and those in which art is a (usually) temporary visitor reveal certain aspects of Australian culture, values and colonial history, than discussing art museums alone. The title, 'the museum as art', refers to the role of the museum as site, subject and medium in the site-specific works of art under examination. It reinforces the significant relationship and dialogue with the museum in question - the museum is an integral part of the artwork.

The key aim of this thesis is to identify and critically analyse significant site-specific art projects undertaken in Australian museums by both local and international artists. I also critique existing theoretical writings about site-specific art, particularly the paradigms established by Miwon Kwon and James Meyer and devise my own working models as applicable to museum-based site-specific art. The aim is not to replace these paradigms, but to expand on existing models using local and more recent examples. Although this thesis focuses on Australian site-specific art practice, and the way in which Australian museums construct knowledge and reflect national values, my models are equally relevant to international museums.

The chapters in this thesis are arranged thematically, centred around significant art examples which are in turn used to illustrate wider issues relating to site-specific art practice. In analysing a large number of art projects, I have observed a range of strategies used by artists working in museums. Firstly, an artwork may respond to the physical or spatial aspects of the museum. Artworks also frequently interact with a museum's collection or archives, or question the institution's representation of history or social constructions of nature. Others mimic museum classification strategies or highlight ingrained display methods that have become normalised, almost invisible, to the average visitor. More functionally, the work might be used by curators to enliven tired museum spaces or communicate aspects of history poetically, allowing for speculative histories or subjective responses – methods unavailable to regular historians. Lastly, an artwork may seek to preserve intangible heritage or highlight gaps in knowledge or history, particularly when it comes to the representation of Aboriginal Australians or women.

I argue that current site-specific art practice reflects a move away from the Modernist frame, illustrated by the growing popularity of non-art museum sites and converted ex-industrial 'raw' spaces, particularly since the mid-1990s. Theorists such as Kwon and Meyer tend to ignore the pre-Modernist philosophy towards art, where art frequently sat in dialogue with the site. However, contemporary site-specific art practice, although distinctly different to the pre-Modern site/art relationship, indicates an acknowledgment and celebration of the unavoidable influence of exhibition environments on works of art.

At the start of this research, I questioned the notion of an 'Australian art'; however, I can now demonstrate that site-specific art, more than any other art form, has the ability to address distinctly Australian concerns. It can reveal how a nation's museums not only reflect, but also develop and promote particular values and knowledge. The very marginality of art practice makes it an ideal method in which to critically examine cultural assumptions and norms, and despite the risk of site-specific art projects becoming a form of institutionalised institutional critique, I have demonstrated how artworks can question institutional authority and highlight gaps in knowledge in a way that curators, historians and museum directors simply

cannot. By recording a range of artistic interventions in Australia's public museums, and analysing them in relation to both existing site-specific theories as well as my new extended models, this thesis demonstrates not only the complexities of site-specific art practice, but also the role that art can play in interpreting, challenging and re-presenting existing knowledge as mediated by the museum.

Contents

Introduction

This thesis critically examines site-specific art projects in Australian museums from the late 1960s onwards. Despite the fact that site-specific art practice is relatively widespread, there have been few in-depth or systematic studies published on the subject, particularly in terms of its historical and theoretical foundations. More importantly, there have been no in-depth studies explicitly on *Australian* site-specific art, and so my research aims to extend the existing knowledge on this art form while applying it to an Australian context.

The lack of research on Australian site-specific art was a key motivator for my choice of thesis subject.[1] It was subsequently necessary to constrain this broad topic, which has been done by focussing on art produced for the museum as site. Early in my research, I identified a number of sites that appear to attract site-specific response, including abandoned and ex-industrial sites, public spaces, locations within the natural environment, botanic gardens, historic sites, natural history museums, and art galleries. I decided to focus on the art gallery or museum because, despite the sometimes antagonistic relationship between artist and institutions, the art museum continues to dominate as an exhibition space. The decision to extend the research to include a wider variety of museums was motivated by the growing trend of site-specific art projects based in non-art museums, particularly from the mid-1990s onwards. Additionally, despite the fact that art is the outsider in these sites, the role of these institutions in shaping knowledge and reflecting a sense of national and cultural identity means that many of the artistic strategies identified in this thesis are common to all museum types. By comparing art projects across various museum platforms, I was better able to highlight patterns in contemporary site-specific art practice.

For the purpose of this project, my use of the term 'public museum' includes art, natural history, social/cultural history museums, historic houses and sites, and botanic gardens (botanical museums). The inclusion of such a wide range of museums is in part due to the fact that the artistic projects in these institutions vary greatly. Additionally, the

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[1] My own art practice also influenced my choice of topic. Not all of my art is site-specific, but my interest in the subject, and my practical knowledge in the areas of sculpture and installation, greatly informs the way in which I discuss works of art.

comparisons between art museums, and those in which art is a (usually) temporary visitor, reveal certain aspects of Australian culture, values and colonial history, than if discussing art museums alone. The title, 'the museum as art,' refers to the role of the museum as site, subject and medium in the site-specific works of art under examination. It reinforces the significant relationship and dialogue with the museum in question - the museum is an integral part of the artwork.

The focus on public galleries was initially intended to exclude commercial galleries because while there have been some site-specific artworks in commercial galleries, site-specific art is by definition relatively hard to sell when compared to, for instance, a painting or self-contained sculpture. When I commenced my research, the private but non-commercial galleries in Australia were small and mostly irrelevant to the topic. The relatively new MONA museum, which opened in Hobart in 2011, is the exception to this rule but perhaps that is another thesis in itself. I have also excluded art projects located in Artist Run Initiatives (ARIs). Despite the significant role they play in the development of experimental art practice in Australia, there is little documentation on exhibitions held in these spaces, and the relationship between artist and artist-run boards is quite different to that of the larger public institutions examined in this thesis. Also outside the scope of this thesis is the virtual site, such as the cyberspace world of Second Life;[2] however, it is a topic that I am keen to investigate in the future.

The key aim of this thesis is to identify and critically analyse significant site-specific art projects undertaken in Australian museums by both local and international artists. I also highlight the way in which site-specific artworks in museums frequently address specifically Australian concerns, as well as the way in which museums construct knowledge and promote dominant cultural values. The marginality of contemporary art practice means that art can directly address these concerns and challenge social norms in a way that curators, historians and museum boards simply cannot. Additionally, I critique existing theoretical writings about site-specific art, particularly the paradigms established by Miwon Kwon and James Meyer, and devise my own working models as applicable to

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[2] Second Life is a virtual online world, first developed in 1999. Participants create an avatar (or character) and can socialise with other online 'residents'. Property, vehicles, clothing, and even works of art are bought and sold, sometimes with large amounts of real world money. Many museums and art galleries have parallel buildings in Second Life, and art fairs and exhibitions are often held in conjunction with real world events. For more information and access to the 'world' visit secondlife.com

museum-based site-specific art.   The aim is not to replace these paradigms, but to expand
on existing models using local and more recent examples.

I argue that current site-specific art practice reflects a move away from the Modernist
frame, illustrated by the growing popularity of non-art museum sites and converted ex-
industrial 'raw' spaces, particularly since the mid-1990s. Theorists such as Kwon and
Meyer tend to ignore the pre-Modernist philosophy towards art, where art frequently sat in
dialogue with the site. However, contemporary site-specific art practice, although distinctly
different to the pre-Modern site/art relationship, indicates an acknowledgment and
celebration of the unavoidable influence of exhibition environments on works of art.

Kwon's site-specific schema is largely chronological, and she proposes three models that
represent a move away from a literal site to a mobile site. Her first model is the
phenomenological site, defined by artworks that relate physically or spatially to a site, and
are largely illustrated by sculptural works from the 1960s and 70s. In the second model,
termed institutional critique, the site is defined as a cultural framework, the ideologies of
which can be exposed through what Kwon describes as 'aggressively anti-visual'[3] artworks.
The third, and most recent model, is the discursive site, defined by project-based artworks
located largely outside the gallery.

In the first chapter, I provide a more detailed critique of Kwon's schema; however, I
essentially argue that these rather narrow models do not adequately account for the art
projects examined in this thesis. Most of the artworks, particularly when sited in non-art
museums, sit somewhere in-between her second and third models. For instance, if one
defining aspect of her mobile model is an artwork's location outside the art museum, and
conversely, institutional critique is sited within the art museum, then her site-specific
schema fails to properly account for many of the largely immobile artworks (that is, works
designed for one particular site) installed in non-art museums. Kwon also insinuates that
the three models represent varying levels of criticality, and by describing her models as
loosely chronological, it suggests that institutional critique is largely historical. Yet, as I
will demonstrate, Kwon's bias towards her discursive model, and rather negative dismissal
of the earlier two models, does not account for the significant ongoing role of both

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[3] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 24.

phenomenological site-specificity and institutional critique in contemporary art practice. Kwon's research importantly identifies and attempts to account for a then emerging discursive art practice; however, not only is this model so distanced from the literal site that 'site' threatens to become meaningless, but her models are also rather narrow, failing to accommodate the range of strategies I have observed in site-specific museum-based art.

Instead, I have identified a range of strategies used by artists when making site-specific artworks in museums, noting that many of these strategies are interrelated, and the artworks often fall into multiple categories:

- Artworks that relate spatially or physically to the museum, often challenging or altering the semiotic space, or gallery layout.
- Existing (and often self-contained) artworks installed site-specifically by the artist in dialogue with the space, with the aim of altering or enhancing the existing concepts embedded in the work.
- Artworks that mimic museological methods of display and categorisation.
- Artworks that challenge the museum's authority, including general ideological concerns, collecting policies, or the construction of 'truths'. In Australia, this commonly relates to the practiced exclusion of Indigenous Australians or the female population, and the representation of history.
- The artist as 'curator'.
- Artworks that identify 'site' as the wider region or place where the museum is located.
- Artworks that critique the institution of art generally, rather than just the specific museum in which they are sited.
- Artworks developed as a key interpretation tool, where the artist works in an interdisciplinary team.
- Permanent artworks sited in the public space around the museum, acting as representatives of the museum's content and identity.
- Institutionalised institutional critique – that is, artists are commissioned by the institution to critique its collection.
- Artworks that refer to multiple sites, including at least one outside the museum.
- Artworks that uncritically celebrate a museum's collection.

Again, my aim is not to replace Kwon's models, nor uncritically accept their validity; rather, it is to develop an extension of Kwon's models, particularly in relation to her second model, institutional critique. The strategies listed above account for artworks that consider the museum as a primary site and focus, and are based on recent trends in site-specific art practice. Additionally, although this thesis focuses on Australian site-specific art practice, and the way in which Australian museums construct knowledge and reflect national values, my models are equally relevant to international museums.

The chapters in this thesis are arranged thematically, centred on significant art examples that are in turn used to illustrate wider issues relating to site-specific art practice. The first chapter is a literature review and overview of the field. I outline the range of existing definitions and misconceptions of the term 'site-specific,' including those established by artists, organisations and theorists such as Lucy Lippard, the Guggenheim Museum, Richard Serra, Robert Barry and Daniel Buren.[4] I then examine the more recent site-specific schema, developed in part by Douglas Crimp in the 1980s and extended by Meyer and Kwon in the 1990s. Kwon's book, *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity,* is the most commonly cited text on site-specific art, yet it has largely gone unchallenged in the decade since it was written. Its dominance in the field, and the fact that its models do not account for much of the recent developments within the art form, demonstrates the need for an in-depth critique of Kwon's models. I establish the notion of the museum as a frame and identify new trends in museum theory, and also outline the way in which many artists working in this field embrace the social geographical concept of place. I draw upon existing knowledge in three key research areas: the fine arts, museum studies, and place; thus, a distinguishing feature of my project is its interdisciplinary nature.

The second half of chapter one examines literature and art practice relating to site-specific art in Australia. I discuss some of the key events, exhibitions and individuals that have influenced the development of alternative art forms in Australia, such as the Mildura Sculpture Triennials, Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Wrapped Coast* (1969), and Domenico de Clario's *Elemental Landscape*(s) (1975/1993). These developments, while

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[4] I should note that although I have read widely and attempted to take into account the writing of a large range of theorists and critics, this study only draws upon texts written in English or in translation.

not necessarily directly relevant to my thesis topic, have influenced and set a precedent for many of the projects critically analysed in my thesis.

The second chapter, 'Semiotics and Spatial Politics: The Art Museum,' traces an evolution of exhibition spaces in Australia, from our neo-classical monument to nationhood – the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) – to the new industrial chic spaces, such as Cockatoo Island in Sydney and the Bond Store that forms part of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG). The loosely chronological layout allows me to examine the way in which certain aspects of museums actively reflect and promote prevailing national attitudes and values. I examine the semiotics of the art museum, and the way in which things like museum layout, wall colour, and architecture subconsciously affect the way we interpret works of art.

I argue that it is the more unusual features, such as the AGNSW's vestibule and the Queensland Art Gallery's (QAG) water mall, that tend to attract site-specific response. The AGNSW's varied architecture, with its combination of grand neo-classical and modern white-walled spaces, clearly demonstrates the effect of the museum environment on works of art. Interestingly, it is the older, culturally loaded areas, rather than the gallery's minimalist Modern spaces, that are more popular for site-specific response. I also examine the ways in which artists have challenged the artificial separation of the AGNSW's collections along racial lines, and have revealed the politics of museum layout. Museums have always articulated national identity, and often emphasise or privilege certain artists, styles, eras or ethnicities over others. The museum is a predominantly physical space, and so decisions such as a gallery's layout, wall colour, or hanging methods, subtly communicate value and power. Site-specific art has the ability to actively question these spatial politics in a very public way.

Despite the fact that the site-specific artworks in chapter two relate largely to spatial or physical aspects of the gallery, most do not fit neatly into Kwon's phenomenological model. Many of the works critique the ideologies of the museum, whether along collection lines or the values communicated by museum architecture; yet again, most of the artworks are not fully explained by Kwon's institutional critique model. As such, I argue that her models need to be extended to take into account recent spatially oriented

site-specific art practice and propose that my alternative set of models, based on artist intention and strategy, enhance those of Kwon's.

The 'Modern museum,' illustrated by the QAG, further demonstrates the way in which certain features, such as the building's iconic water mall, consistently attract site-specific response. The TMAG, a combined art, natural history and ethnographic museum, is also indicative of this point. The museum is divided along strict disciplinary lines – the zoology sections tend towards a dark, dramatically lit environment, the contemporary art section is a white walled space, and the colonial art section is a suitably ornate, red-walled environment. As a result, many artists have installed work outside the museum's dedicated contemporary art galleries, responding to the unique aspects of the museum's display methods or collection.[5]

In the second chapter, I also examine the recent trend towards ex-industrial sites as exhibition spaces, as well as the popularity of permanent industrial building to museum conversions. I call these new spaces the 'raw museum,' and argue that the 'rust aesthetic' now connotes an institution that is truly contemporary. The history of a site is frequently used to promote a museum as distinctive in an art world that demands uniqueness – a far cry from the intentions of the AGNSW's founders.[6] However, the popularity of these new spaces is also indicative of the backlash against the restrictions of modernist display, which provide opportunities for site-specific response. A key example is Mike Parr's two exhibitions at Cockatoo Island and the Bond Store at the TMAG, where the artist installed pre-existing artworks in dialogue with the former industrial sites.[7] The two semiotically rich spaces effectively re-framed the works, demonstrating the powerful influence exhibition environments have on works of art. I argue that Kwon's site-specific schema fails to take into account this recent trend of artists (as distinct from curators) installing existing works of art site-specifically in exhibition spaces.

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[5] Mid-way through my research, the TMAG closed for major renovations and so my descriptions are based on the pre-refurbished museum.

[6] The AGNSW's conservative trustees demanded a building in the image of Britain's Greek Revival museums. The architecture of the AGNSW will be discussed in detail in chapter two.

[7] An early version of this section of chapter two was presented as a conference paper, 'The Significance of Site and Place to the Work of Mike Parr,' at the *2009 International Conference on the Arts in Society* in Venice, Italy.

The third chapter, 'When the Walls Aren't White: Site-specific Art in Non-art Museums,' is structured around four types of non-art museum: the historic house/site, the social or cultural museum, the natural history museum, and botanic gardens. Unlike the examples examined in chapter two, the art in these museums is very much the outsider, and the conditions under which art is displayed are quite different to the average art gallery. While art museums continue to champion the 'neutral' interior, artists are turning to spaces outside the gallery that provide greater opportunities and inspiration for site-specific response. Just as the attraction of these former industrial buildings is in part due to the fact that they are meaningful sites, the allure of these non-art museums is similarly symptomatic of a backlash against the modernist notion of aesthetic autonomy.

For each museum type, I focus on one or two key examples that exemplify the issues relating to art projects in the particular discipline. In relation to historic houses and sites, I concentrate on two Tasmanian exhibitions – the *Port Arthur Project* (2007) and *Trust* (2009) – outlining the various strategies artists use to respond to each site. Often artists will highlight gaps in knowledge, question the institution's presentation of history, or remember particular historical figures. Other artists focus on the function of the historic house/site museum itself, and its relationship to tourism and local identity. Importantly, unlike the other types of museums which are largely defined by their collections, in this case the house or physical site *is* the museum, and a popular display method in house museums is the recreation of past eras with little critical scholarship; consequently, many art interventions have challenged the often romanticised histories promoted by these institutions. Additionally, in both Tasmanian projects, the curators emphasised the involvement of local artists and their connection to place, a strategy that will be discussed in relation to arguments made by Lucy Lippard in *The Lure of the Local* (1997), and Kwon's criticism of Mary Jane Jacob's Charleston exhibition *Places with a Past* (1991).[8]

While art projects in historic houses tend to speculate on the lives of individual inhabitants or recreate historic scenes, art projects in social or cultural history museums often focus on an institution's archives and collections, display methods or documentation. Like many historic house and site projects, however, artworks tend to address notions of exclusion and

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[8] The first section of chapter three was presented as a conference paper, 'When the Walls aren't White: Site-specific Art in Heritage sites and Museums,' at the *2010 International Conference on the Inclusive Museum*, Istanbul, and later published as a refereed article in the associated journal.

inequality, as well as the representation of Australian social history. My analysis of art in the social/cultural museum is largely illustrated by site-specific projects at the University of Melbourne-affiliated Grainger Museum. I argue that artists tend to be attracted to more archaic displays, such as the then unrefurbished biographical institution dedicated to Australian composer, Percy Grainger. I also examine the role of academia in museum interventions, such as the *Port Arthur Project* and the exhibitions at the Grainger Museum. Such interventions provide multiple outcomes on the museum's behalf, including an increase in visitor numbers, and when affiliated with a university, these critical exhibitions demonstrate to the public the institution's willingness to self-evaluate. Additionally, many of the artists involved in museum interventions are employed by universities, and so the criticality inherent in such artistic strategies fulfils academic research requirements.

Like those sited in social/cultural museums, art projects in natural history museums frequently reference or use the institution's archives, or mimic traditional museum display methods and taxonomy. However, projects sited in natural history and botanic gardens are distinct in their tendency to address *cultural* issues relating to science and nature, such as trade and classification, museological display methods, the social construction of nature, underacknowledged histories, and political or colonial roots of these collecting institutions.

The limitations of Kwon's models are most obvious when considering site-specific art projects in non-art museums, and yet the popularity of museum interventions has grown significantly over the last decade and a half. Kwon's assessment of similar exhibitions, such as *Places with a Past*, is overwhelmingly negative, and I argue that not only does it suggest that Kwon underestimated the lasting influence of such projects, but she also discounts the positive outcomes of museum interventions.

The fourth chapter, 'Institutional Dialogue,' outlines three modes of dialogue between art and institution in relation to museum-focussed art projects. This chapter was initially titled 'Institutional Critique'; however, I wanted to separate my discussion on the various

relationships between artist and museum from Kwon's site-specific model of the same
name, and the term 'dialogue' better encompasses the variety of projects analysed.[9]

The first model is that of assimilation, where the artist collaborates with museum curators
or historians. When curator Peter Emmett established the Hyde Park Barracks and Museum
of Sydney (MoS), his emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration during the museums'
conception has had lasting effects on the identity and philosophy of both institutions. I
argue that artists, unlike historians, can get away with presenting speculative or multiple
histories, and Emmett recognised the benefit of combining artworks with more
conventional museological interpretation methods, resulting in a less didactic representation
of history.

The second mode of dialogue is that of intervention, illustrated by Michael Goldberg's
temporary exhibitions at Elizabeth Bay House. He was highly critical of the institution's
curatorial methods and romanticised interpretation of history, and his method of critique
was quite provocative. Even though many of the Historic Houses Trust's curators were
unhappy with Goldberg's initial installation in 1995, the increase in visitor numbers during
that period resulted in the approval of a second series of equally critical exhibitions, further
demonstrating that the measures of success of such projects are often quite different for
artist and institution. Rather than interpret this as a compromising position, as critics like
Kwon do, we should view these dual outcomes as a necessary element for future projects.

The third model could be considered 'institutionalised institutional critique,' and my
discussion focuses on the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia's (NGVA) curatorial strategy
when it opened in 2002. The museum commissioned artists to make work critiquing the
collection, thereby establishing a political and post-colonial identity. By using the
legitimising and supposedly neutral figure of the artist, the museum constructed a culture
of self-evaluation – an act that was seen by many commentators as lacking in genuine
institutional critique. I argue that institutional critique has become so normalised that it
risks losing its critical strength, which is a tendency well analysed by Kwon in relation to
Fred Wilson's museum interventions.[10] By outlining three distinct modes of dialogue

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[9] Throughout this thesis, I also use the term 'dialogue' as a basic requirement of site-specificity,
particularly in relation to art that relates to the spatial or physical aspects of a site.
[10] See Kwon, *One Place After Another,* 46-52.

between artist and museum, we can better understand the function of art in a range of museums – from more interpretive roles, where artists form part of an interdisciplinary team, to critical interventions.

The fifth and last chapter, 'Extending the Museum: Politics, Identity and Place-making in Permanent Public Art,' looks at the increasing number of permanent artworks installed on the edge of museum and public space. Many of these site-specific works seek to record intangible heritage, and have become important signifiers of local identity and place. The three main artworks used to illustrate my argument are located in inner Sydney: Hossein and Angela Valamanesh's *An Gorta Mor* (1999) at the Hyde Park Barracks, Fiona Hall's *Folly for Mrs Macquarie* (2000) in the Royal Botanic Gardens, and Fiona Foley and Janet Laurence's *Edge of the Trees* (1995), installed outside the MoS. The majority of the artworks examined in this thesis are temporary, and so this chapter acknowledges the difference between permanent works sited in public spaces, and projects of a temporary nature. Public art is generally required to be uncontroversial in nature, yet by their association with museums, these site-specific artworks tend to have an interpretive and educative role – they become an extension of the institution.

I observe that in Australia, permanent place-responsive works are more prevalent outside social history museums. The artwork relates to the museums content and the image it wants to project. For instance, the concepts embedded in the *Edge of the Trees* reflect the MoS's identity and content. Obviously, any art is representative of the content of an art museum by definition, although the choice of artworks outside still represents the image each institution wants to project. Brook Andrew's site-specific *Warrang* (2012) outside the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA), for example, refers to the site's contested and multiple histories, and reflects the institution's desired identity as a critical and culturally inclusive gallery. Outside the AGNSW, by comparison, is a bronze Henry Moore sculpture, which reflects the institution's relative conservatism and emphasis on Modern art.

In the final chapter, I refer to Kwon's models of public art, which are based on policies in the United States of America, but to an extent reflect the evolution of public art in Australia. For instance, the removal of Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981) in the late 1980s had similar consequences to the removal of Ron Robertson-Swann's *Vault* (1980) from Melbourne's city square, resulting in public art strategies that emphasised

community engagement and an artwork's meaningful relationship to site. Many
Australian cities have public art policies that stress the role of public art as not just
reflecting place but also having a place-*making* function. The policies are conservative
and unashamedly commercial in their aims. Each policy states that public art must play
an important role in shaping attitudes towards the city and promote the value of art in
attracting tourism. We can see the positive results of this art branding, particularly in
Melbourne. The preservation of cultural heritage is also emphasised, particularly
Aboriginal culture, the recognition of which reflects changing attitudes towards our past.
However, the continued use of 'dreaming' motifs in public art in the name of
'reconciliation' is problematic, and largely contradicts the way in which Aboriginal
culture is managed in other policy areas.

At the start of this research, I questioned the notion of an 'Australian art'; however, I can
now demonstrate that site-specific art, more than any other art form, has the ability to
address distinctly Australian concerns. It can reveal how a nation's museums not only
reflect, but also develop and promote particular values and knowledge. The very
marginality of art practice makes it an ideal method in which to critically examine cultural
assumptions and norms and, despite the risk of site-specific art projects becoming a form of
institutionalised institutional critique, I demonstrate how artworks can question institutional
authority and highlight gaps in knowledge in a way that curators, historians and museum
directors simply cannot. By recording a range of artistic interventions in Australia's public
museums, and analysing them in relation to both existing site-specific theories as well as
my new extended models, this thesis demonstrates not only the complexities of site-specific
art practice, but also the role that art can play in interpreting, challenging and re-presenting
existing knowledge as mediated by the museum.

Chapter One

Literature Review and Overview of the Field

*Instead of using a paintbrush to make his art, Robert Morris
would like to use a bulldozer.*

-Robert Smithson[1]

This first chapter, which is both a literature review and overview of the field, will explore
the many definitions of the contested term, 'site-specific,' assess some of the key texts
and artworks that relate to the subject, and offer a new framework for understanding site-
specific art. The review covers areas of research and art practice such as institutional
critique, installation art, public art, museum theory, and the social geographical concept
of place. I identify significant issues associated with major theorists, chiefly Miwon
Kwon, with the aim of extending current models of site-specific art. These new and/or
extended models are framed by an examination of art projects located in museums,
allowing me to explore the social and cultural role such institutions play in Australia, and
the function of art in both art and non-art museums.

This chapter also traces the development of experimental art practice in Australia from
the late 1960s, and identifies key issues relating to site-specific art practice in the
country. Issues affecting this evolution of art include the changing relationship between
artists and art institutions, Australia's colonial history and the foundations on which
museums were built, and the country's relative geographic isolation. I will also detail
how the attitudes of individual curators, critics and philanthropists have been of
significant influence.

As noted in the introduction, there have been no in-depth studies of Australian site-
specific art practice from the 1960s to the present. Most theoretical texts referenced in
this thesis were written outside Australia, and consequently the museum and artwork

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[1] Jeffery Kastner and Brian Wallis, eds. *Land and Environmental Art.* (London: Phaidon, 1998), 19.

examples focus predominantly on international artists, mostly from the United States of America. Therefore, one of my main tasks for this research project was to apply key theoretical texts to local examples and concerns, and in the cases where I have not attended the exhibitions or events in question, the information was predominantly sourced from individual journal articles, catalogues or exhibition reviews.

The theoretical texts referred to span three fairly distinct areas of scholarship: those on relevant art forms, such as site-specific and installation art; museum studies; and place.[2] While there are always crossovers, such as Lucy Lippard's *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society,* which uses artworks to illustrate the notion of place, I highlight these three areas of study as distinct because the styles of writing, methods of research, and respective application of theories are often very different.[3] Importantly, my background in fine art means that when I started my research, I was far more familiar with art theory than the areas of museum studies and social geographical notion of place. The application of theoretical concerns from all three areas of study to a critical investigation of site-specific art in Australia's public museums is a distinguishing feature of my research.

1.1 Defining Site-specific Art

One of the key texts on site-specific art referred to in my thesis is Kwon's *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*, published in 2002. Kwon's book, which stemmed from her PhD thesis and is probably the most cited text on site-specific art, traces its history from the late 1960s onwards, and attempts to define the term. Other books that examine the art form in detail include Nick Kaye's *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place, and Documentation* (2000); the collection of essays edited by Erika Suderburg, called *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art* (2000); and *On the Museum's Ruins* (1993) by Douglas Crimp, particularly his chapter 'Redefining Site Specificity.'

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[2] I highlight the relevance of texts on installation in addition to those on site-specific art due to the similarities between art forms, the significance of which will be discussed later in this chapter.
[3] The difference between fine arts research (both theory and practice) and the museum studies discipline was made particularly evident when I attended and presented a paper at the *International Conference on the Inclusive Museum* in 2010.

A common issue raised by these theorists is the definition of the term, and each theorist's use of the word varies. In fact, Daniel Buren claims that the term site-specific 'has become hackneyed and meaningless through use and abuse.'[4] Kwon, like Buren, begins *One Place After Another* by commenting on the extent to which the term has been 'uncritically adopted as another genre category by mainstream art institutions and discourses.'[5] Kwon writes that she prefers to think of site-specificity as a 'problem idea,'[6] rather than an artistic genre, and views site-specificity as 'the cultural mediation of broader social, economic, and political processes that organize urban life and urban space.'[7]

In the introduction to *Space Site Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, editor Suderburg groups installation and site-specific art together, writing:

> Collectively the work of installation and site specificity engages the aural, spatial, visual, and environmental planes of perception and interpretation. This work grows out of the collapse of medium specificity and the boundaries that had defined disciplines within the visual arts beginning in the 1960s.[8]

Rather than define site-specificity, Suderberg's book presents a collection of essays, which provide varying definitions and theories on site-specific and installation art. One of the essays, James Meyer's 'The Functional Site; or, The Transformation of Site Specificity,' outlines two models of site-specific art, which is then cited by Kwon when setting out her defining three models in *One Place After Another*. Kwon also features in Suderberg's book with 'One Place After Another: Notes on Site Specificity,' a more condensed version of her similarly titled book.

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[4] Daniel Buren. 'Like a Palimpsest; or, The Metamorphosis of an Image,' in *Contemporary Sculpture Projects in Münster*, ed. Klaus Bussmann, Klaus Bussmann, Kasper König, and Florian Matzner (Münster: Verlag Gerd Hatje, 1997), 79.
[5] Kwon, *One Place After Another*, 1.
[6] A term Kwon has borrowed from William Pietz. Ibid., 2.
[7] Ibid., 3.
[8] Erika Suderburg, ed. *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 2.

1. Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc* (1981)

Richard Serra's famous declaration that 'to remove the work is to destroy the work,'[9] just prior to the removal of his site-specific public artwork *Tilted Arc* (1981), exemplifies a literal notion of site-specific art. He claims that 'the specificity of site-oriented works means that they are conceived for, dependent upon, and inseparable from their location,'[10] a narrow, and somewhat outdated definition of the term that has been widely critiqued by theorists such as Kwon, Crimp in 'Serra's Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity,'[11] and Thomas Crow in 'Site-specific Art: The Strong and the Weak.'[12] However, due to the high-profile nature of this case, Serra continues to be quoted to this day, greatly influencing the wide misinterpretation of the term.

Kaye's loose definition allows for variations in the relationship between site and artwork, which accommodates, for instance, the 'proper' relationship between Serra's artwork and its location. He argues that a site-specific artwork 'might articulate and define itself through properties, qualities or meanings produced in specific relationships between an 'object' or 'event' and a position it occupies.'[13]

Alternatively, Lippard in the *Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* believes that 'site-specific art conforms to the topographic details of the ground on which the work rests and/or to the component of its immediate natural or built

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[9] Richard Serra in a letter to Don Thalacker, Director of the Art-in-Architecture Program, General Services Administration, Washington D.C. Serra wrote the letter in response to the potential removal of *Tilted Arc*, arguing that it 'was commissioned and designed for one particular site: Federal Plaza. It is a site-specific work and as such not to be relocated. To remove the work is to destroy the work.' The letter was published in full in Clara Weyergraf-Serra and Martha Buskirk, *The Destruction of* Tilted Arc: *Documents* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 38.

[10] Richard Serra, *Writings, Interviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 203.

[11] Douglas Crimp, 'Serra's Public Sculpture: Redefining Site Specificity,' in *Richard Serra/Sculpture*, ed. Rosalind Krauss (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1986), 41-55.

[12] Crow argues that *Titled Arc*'s unintentional temporary nature in fact made the work stronger, writing that it 'came to organize and clarify its context by refusing –albeit involuntarily – traditional forms of permanence and monumentality.' Thomas Crow, 'Site-specific Art: The Strong and the Weak,' in *Modern Art in the Common Culture* (Newhaven, Yale University Press 1998), 150.

[13] Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (Oxon: Routlage, 2000), 1.

environment.'[14] She defines Land Art as separate to site-specific art and uses the term place-specific art to describe what is closer to my own understanding of site-specific art. Place art, she writes 'may incorporate some or all of these elements but can add a social dimension that refers to the human history and memory, land use, and political agendas relevant to the *specific* place.'[15]

Part of the problem with defining site-specific art is that the definition has changed over the last four decades,[16] thus an understanding of the term is perhaps best understood by looking at the three models of site-specific art developed by a number of contemporary theorists, rather than a single sentence definition. Nevertheless, many gallery websites, catalogues and dictionaries, tend to promote a short definition of the term, which often, like Serra, supports a literal understanding of the site. For instance, the Guggenheim museum states that site-specific/environmental art 'refers to an artist's intervention in a specific locale, creating a work that is integrated with its surroundings and that explores its relationship to the topography of its locale.'[17]

1.2 The Site-specific Art Schema

A number of theorists have attempted to trace a genealogy of site-specific art, including Crimp, Kwon, Meyer and Kaye. Kwon and Meyer propose three models of site-specific art. The two early models are the phenomenological model and institutional critique, which were earlier established by Crimp in his essay 'Redefining Site Specificity.' The later model constructed by Myer and Kwon that emerged in the 1990s, is termed the 'functional site' by Meyer, or alternatively, Kwon identifies it as the 'discursive site'.

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[14] Lucy Lippard, *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentred Society* (New York: The New Press, 1997), 274.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Further confusing this notion of a literal site is the fact that art is now being made specifically for non-physical sites, such as the internet. Reflecting this trend, in 2007, the Australia Council for the Arts offered an arts residency on the virtual environment platform, Second Life. The two chosen artists, Christopher Dodds and Adam Nash, produced artworks within the virtual world.
[17] Guggenheim Museum. 'Site-specific Art/Environmental Art.' *Guggenheim Museum*. http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/show-full/movement/?search=Site-specific%20art/Environmental%20art

This 'discursive site' is often viewed as more advanced in terms of criticality and mobility.[18]
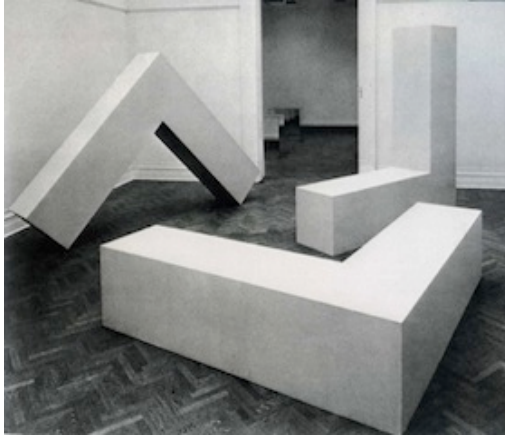
2. Robert Morris, *Untitled (L-Beams)* (1965)

Site-specificity has its origins in Minimalist sculpture, and the phenomenological model stems from the ideas explored by these artists; in fact, many of the artists associated with Minimalism, such as Robert Morris, Carl Andre, Dan Flavin and Sol LeWitt, were also key practitioners of early site-specific art. These sculptors of the 1960s started to challenge the notion of a neutral 'white cube' gallery site, creating objects that echoed the aesthetics and materials of the gallery site, thereby highlighting and often problematising the relationship between the artwork and site. Crimp argues that this connection between site and art object was radical 'not only in the displacement of the artist-subject by the spectator-subject but in securing that displacement through the wedding of the artwork to a particular environment.'[19] For instance, Morris declared 'the better new work takes relationships out of the work and makes them a function of space, light and the viewer's field of vision.'[20] Minimalist art revealed flaws in the Modernist ideals of the self-contained art object with fixed meaning; values best captured in William Turner's claim 'if you have to change a sculpture for a site there is something wrong with the sculpture.'[21]

Early site-specific art often took the notion of the 'site' literally as a physical location, emphasising the inseparability between artwork and site, in addition to privileging the role of the viewer as the creator of the work's meaning. Artists such as Robert Barry and Serra were vocal about the importance of the physical site. In 1969, Barry described

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[18] For clarity, in this thesis I will use Kwon's term, 'the discursive site', when referring to the third model.
[19] Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 17.
[20] Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture, Part II,' (1966) in *Art in Theory: 1900-2000,* eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 832.
[21] Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 11.

each of his wire installations as 'made to suit the place in which it was installed. They cannot be moved without being destroyed.'[22] Serra similarly wrote:

> site-specific works deal with the environmental components of given places. The scale, size, and location of site-specific work are determined by the topography of the site. The works become part of the site and re-structure both conceptually and perceptually the organization of the site.[23]

While both artists perhaps correctly outline the conditions in which their individual works are intended to be viewed, their emphasis on a *physical* site means that they describe only one model of site-specificity. Kwon identifies it as the phenomenological model, or Meyer, more simply as the 'literal site.'[24]

The second model of site-specificity – social or institutional critique – aims to expose the ideologies of the museum. To artists such as Hans Haacke, Robert Smithson, Michael Asher, Marcel Broodthaers, Daniel Buren and Mierle Laderman Ukeles, the site is not limited to a physical location, but also acts as a '*cultural* framework defined by the institutions of art.'[25] Kwon explains:

> To be 'specific' to such a site, is to decode and/or recode the institutional conventions so as to expose their hidden yet motivated operations – to reveal the ways in which institutions mould art's meaning to modulate its cultural and economic value and to undercut the fallacy of the 'autonomy' of art and its institutions by making apparent their imbricated relationship to the broader socio-economic and political processes of the day.[26]

Many of the works within this model during the 1960s and early 70s focussed on the physical conditions of the gallery space, such as Haacke's *Condensation Cube* (1963-5), Mel Bochner's *Measurement Series* (1969), and Buren's *Within and Beyond the Frame* (1973). Haacke's descriptively titled 'cube' made from clear acrylic with condensation clinging to the inside walls of the structure, quite literally commented on the highly controlled climate conditions in museums. Bochner's work also focussed on the aesthetic constructs of the museum by printing the dimensions of the gallery space on the white walls. In Buren's installation, a row of striped flags extended from the gallery

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[22] Barry cited in Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 39.
[23] Richard Serra 'Introduction by Richard Serra,' in *The Destruction of* Tilted Arc*: Documents*, ed. Clara Weyergraf-Serra and Martha Buskirk (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 11-12.
[24] James Meyer, 'The Functional Site; or, The Transformation of Site Specificity,' in *Space, Site, Intervention: Situating Installation Art*, ed. Erika Suderburg (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 24.
[25] Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 13.
[26] Ibid., 14.

wall, through an open window and across the busy street to the building opposite, thereby expanding the art institution and drawing attention to the framing effect of the museum, its physical limitations, and by consequence, ideological limitations of the museum.

3. Hans Haacke,
Condensation Cube (1963-5)

4. Daniel Buren, *Within and Beyond the Frame* (1973)

Later works interpreted 'site' as the social, political or economic conditions in which the art institution operates. For Haacke, the socio-political relationships of the institution came under scrutiny in works such as *MOMA Poll* (1970), where viewers filled in surveys requesting their opinions on various political and art issues. The notorious *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* and *Sol Goldman and Alex DiLorenzo Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*, to be shown at the Guggenheim museum in 1971, exposed the suspicious property holdings of two real estate companies affiliated with the

5. Édouard Manet,
Bunch of Asparagus (1880)

museum, resulting in the exhibition's cancellation only weeks before its scheduled opening. Haacke's work, *Manet-PROJEKT '74* (1974) at Wallraf-Richartz Museum in Cologne was similarly censored. Haacke traced the ownership of Manet's *Bunch of Asparagus* (1880) from Jewish collectors to the 1968 acquisition by Hermann Josef Abs, exposing his past career as a Nazi-era banker. Abs was a patron of the museum who had permanently

loaned the painting to the institution; by exposing Abs, the museum was also implicated.[27] To ban the artwork was surely a foolish political move in itself; however, the issue was intensified when fellow exhibition participant Buren cunningly revealed the censorship in his own work for the same exhibition, installing sections of Haacke's work over his striped wall.[28] Haacke revealed the links between corporate investment, politics and the legitimacy gained through institutional relationships. Just as earlier artists had questioned the supposed neutrality of the physical gallery space, Haacke demonstrated that museums are far from neutral when it comes to politics.

Kwon sees these later institutional critique artworks as evidence that the notion of site-specificity was gradually moving from a less literal conception of site (that is, the physical location as site), to an increasingly metaphorical interpretation.[29] She adds, 'concurrent with this move toward the dematerialization of the site is the simultaneous deaestheticization… and dematerialization of the artwork.'[30] The next development, Kwon writes, is the transition between museum-based art/site to a more mobile one, with an emphasis on producing works of art, performing art, in public spaces, thereby engaging with the broader population and supposedly dissolving art's perceived exclusivity. These new site-oriented works aim to engage with 'everyday life – a critique of culture that is inclusive of nonart spaces, nonart institutions, and nonart issues (blurring the division between art and nonart, in fact).'[31]

Both Kwon and Meyer argue that the most recent variation of site-specificity is that which embraces the more mobile 'discursive' or 'functional' site. Meyer's functional site is described as:

> a process, an operation between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual
> filiations and the bodies that move between them (the artist's above all). It is as an
> informational site, a palimpsest of text, photographs and video recordings, physical
> places, and things.[32]

Kwon's 'discursive site' is similar:

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[27] Manfred Hermes, 'Hans Haacke,' *Frieze*, no 106 (2007)
http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/hans_haacke/
[28] Rosalind Krauss, 'Daniel Buren,' *Artforum* 41, no. 4 (2002): 132.
[29] Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 19.
[30] Ibid., 24.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Meyer, 'The Functional Site,' 25.

the way in which the artwork's relationship to the actuality of a location (as site) and the social condition of the institutional frame (as site) are both subordinate to a *discursively* determined site that is delineated as a field of knowledge, intellectual exchange, or cultural debate. Furthermore, unlike in the previous models, this site is not defined as a *pre*condition. Rather, it is generated by the work (often as 'content'), and then verified by its convergence with an existing discursive formation.[33]

Both theorists cite examples of this recent trend in site-specific art practice, such as Fred Wilson's *Mining the Museum* (1992-3), Mark Dion's *On Tropical Nature* (1991), and

6. Mark Dion *On Tropical Nature* (1991)

Christian Philipp Muller's *Illegal Border Crossing between Austria and Czechoslovakia* (1993). Kwon proposes that in Dion's work, a number of different sites operate concurrently. The first site was Dion's original base in the Venezuelan rainforest, collecting various plants, stones, insects and feathers; the second was one of two hosting art institutions, Sala Mendoza, in nearby Caracas, where the 'specimens' were displayed. The third site was the context in which these objects were shown, that is, within the frame of the museum and the curated group exhibition, and the fourth was the lasting 'cultural representations of nature and the global environmental crisis.'[34]

While these three models together cover a wide interpretation of site-specificity, they have their limitations. Many works, and Kwon acknowledges this, fall within multiple categories, but I would also argue that many of the examples examined in this thesis that take place within historic sites or botanic gardens in order to examine both museum-specific and wider cultural issues in this country, are not properly accounted for in Kwon's models. She notes the trend of place-responsive art, writing:

> Certainly, site-specific art can lead to the unearthing of repressed histories, help provide greater visibility to marginalized groups and issues, and initiate the re(dis)covery of 'minor' places so far ignored by the dominant culture. But inasmuch as the current socioeconomic order thrives on the (artificial) production and (mass) consumption of difference (for difference sake), the siting of art in

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[33] Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 26.
[34] Ibid., 28.

'real' places can also be a means to *extract* the social and historical dimensions of these places in order to variously serve the thematic drive of an artist, satisfy institutional demographic profiles, or fulfil the fiscal needs of a city.[35]

However, her examination of this popular theme – art that calls for social and cultural change by highlighting (to use her words) 'repressed histories' – is limited and somewhat dismissive of this trend in site-specific art practice. This theme is particularly prevalent in Australia, where our official colonial histories are often systematically exclusionary. Kwon is detailed in her analysis of institutional critique, which she presents as a predominantly historical category of site-specific art tied to the art museum, and yet she largely discounts exhibitions such as *Places with a Past* (1991), which challenged official historical accounts in Charleston, USA. Mary Jane Jacobs' Charleston project established a model of institutional critique outside the art museum that has since been emulated worldwide, but as Kwon's book was published in 2002,[36] she could not have predicted that the exhibition would act as such a significant catalyst. Kwon's failure to properly account for Jacobs' project appears to be a significant gap in her schema, and through my analysis of exhibitions that have evolved from Jacobs' model, I have extended Kwon's institutional critique paradigm.

7. David Hammons, *House of the Future* (1991)

Kwon's assertion that institutional critique is 'aggressively anti-visual'[37] also seems to refer specifically to a select group of artists, such as Haacke, who privileged content over aesthetics. However, most of the artworks examined in this thesis that critique the institution in which they are sited, are not 'anti-visual' at all. Many artists mimic the aesthetics of museum display, such as taxonomical ordering seen in natural history museums, and these aesthetics function as a hook to attract attention. The notion that aesthetics or the method of production somehow compromise the concepts embedded in

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[35] Ibid., 53.

[36] Additionally, Kwon's book was based on her PhD research conducted in the 1990s.

[37] Ibid., 24.

a work of art is outdated, as Nicolas Bourriaud explains when discussing the relationship between concept and art object:

> The work process no longer has any supremacy over ways of rendering this work material (unlike Process Art or Conceptual Art, which, for their part, tended to fetishize the mental process to the detriment of the object). In the worlds constructed by these artists, on the contrary, objects are an intrinsic part of the language, with both regarded as vehicles of relations to each other.[38]

Kwon links 'deaestheticization' with 'dematerialization,'[39] and by consequence, site-specific art's gradual movement towards a more critical, mobile, site. However, as I will demonstrate throughout this thesis, artists use aesthetics *strategically*; far from undermining potential critique, aesthetics are considered a significant communication method.

Additionally, while I acknowledge that *Places with a Past*, like many similar projects in Australia, have motives relating to tourism, branding, and visitor numbers, these motives mostly exist in conjunction with a genuine desire by artists or curators to question dominant cultural norms. A prominent feature of Kwon's text is her relatively negative attitude towards many high-profile site-specific art projects, such as *Places with a Past* and Documenta, and so her analysis tends to exclude a balanced account of art project outcomes. As a result, in this thesis I have tried to balance judgement and critical analysis with a reasonable account of the multiple outcomes and mutual benefits of the museum-based projects in question.

Kwon also refers to the problems that arise when older phenomenological site-specific artworks, such as Serra's *Splash Piece: Casting* (1969-70) or Barry Le Va's *Continuous and Related Activities: Discontinued by the Act of Dropping* (1967) are relocated or refabricated in museums around the world, not always with the artists' permission. By moving these works away from the sites where they were 'performed,' Kwon argues that they become mere aesthetic objects, 'isolated as the signified, severed from its signifier.'[40] However, unaccounted for in her models is the recent practice of artists themselves site-specifically installing existing works of art in a particular space.

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[38] Nicolas Bourriaud. *Relational Aesthetics*. (France: Les Presses du Reel. 2002), 47.
[39] Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 24.
[40] Ibid., 38.

8, 9, 10. Richard Serra, *Splash Piece: Casting* (1969-70)

There are a growing number of ex-industrial sites used as temporary, or in some cases, permanent exhibition spaces around the world. These sites encourage site-specific responses, but they are also often used to exhibit existing works of art, and these works are frequently *installed* site-specifically, either by the artist or curator, to take advantage of the existing environment. Notably, these artworks were often originally produced as self-contained objects. In the case of Mike Parr's exhibitions at Cockatoo Island as part of the 2008 Sydney Biennale, and his survey exhibition at the Bond Store, TMAG (2008-09), artworks were installed in dialogue with the site. The impact of these exhibition spaces on the reading of Parr's work is significant, and will be discussed in detail in chapter two. Both sites are ex-industrial buildings with a history stretching back to the early colonial era, and have interiors with minimal restoration that still reflect their pasts.

Australian academic and site-specific artist Margaret Roberts, in her 2009 paper 'Models of Site-related Artpractice: Critical Potential and Mobility in the Phenomenological Model of Site-specific Art,' critiques the notion of historical progression in the schema presented by Kwon and Meyer. As mentioned earlier, Kwon and Meyer both view the earlier models of site-specific art – the phenomenological and institutional critique – as less mobile, and by insinuation, less critical, than the later functional or discursive models. Using the examples of Morris' Minimalist work *Untitled (L-Beams)* (1965), and Hans Haacke's *MOMA Poll,* she argues that these earlier models of site-specific art have aspects of mobility that have been overlooked when developing schemas. Roberts concludes:

> Like potential criticality, this reconsideration of mobility as a way of defining
> models of the schemas, further undermines the notion of a progression from early
> to late forms of site-specificity. It also supports the modification of the schemas
> so that they can be better understood as constructed by models that emerged at
> different historical times in response to developments within museums and in the
> broader world... My view is that the early models are better distinguished by the

language used as a critical strategy, the general subject that that language makes available and by the mobility of the works as determined by the location or extension of the site with which they engage.[41]

Roberts' position needs be contextualised by noting that her own art practice falls within Kwon's phenomenological model. As Robert is a practicing artist and academic, it is

11. Margaret Roberts, *Untitled (rectangles)* (1991)

clear that Kwon's emphasis on progression and subsequent implied judgements of criticality undermines the integrity of her art. The problematic relationship between Kwon's loosely chronological models, levels of criticality, and historicism, will be addressed in chapter two, where many of the artworks examined fall into the phenomenological paradigm. The more recent works in particular support Roberts' position that criticality and the phenomenological site are not mutually exclusive.

Jason Gaiger also challenges the historicisation and limitations of Kwon's proposed models of site-specificity in his paper 'Dismantling the Frame: Site-specific Art and Aesthetic Autonomy' (2009). While he believes Kwon's attempt to identify and categorise this new style of art practice is well analysed and successfully links early site-specific art practice to current advanced art practice, he rejects the idea that it should be a third model of *site-specific* art, mostly because the artworks included in these three models are too varied to share the same name. He also claims that by focussing on art from the 1960s onwards, Kwon overlooks historical disputes over art's autonomy.[42] As I mentioned at the start of this chapter, art has long been made for specific locations, whether it be altarpieces for churches or statues to fit a building's architecture. Gaiger argues that even early portraits made for the house or office of the commissioning sitter, should not be considered 'siteless' or 'nomadic' artworks, even though site-specificity as

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[41] Margaret Roberts, 'Models of Site-related Art Practice: Critical Potential and Mobility in the Phenomenological Model of Site-specific Art,' *The International Journal of the Arts in Society* 4, no. 3 (2009): 222.
[42] Jason Gaiger, 'Dismantling the Frame: Site-specific art and Aesthetic Autonomy', *British Journal of Aesthetics* 49, no. 1 (2009): 55.

we currently understand it is a recent art form. He emphasises that these works were commissioned and destined for a specific location, rather than the art market, and consequently the neutral museum space or collection. Gaiger also notes that artworks were integrated into the buildings in some of the early-modern museums in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth century. Therefore, the notion of aesthetic autonomy, where art objects are detached from their immediate surroundings, is a relatively recent one.[43]

In Kwon's example of Mark Dion's *On Tropical Nature*, which was mentioned earlier, she claims that multiple sites operate simultaneously. It is the last site, a 'discourse concerning cultural representations of nature and the global environmental crisis,'[44] that Gaiger finds problematic. Kwon goes on to argue that 'cultural debates, a theoretical concept, a social issue, a political problem, an institutional framework (not necessarily an art institution), a neighbourhood or seasonal event, a historical condition, even particular formations of desire are deemed to function as sites.'[45] She acknowledges that site-specific art still requires 'locational and institutional circumstances,' however 'the *primary* site addressed by current manifestations of site specificity is not necessarily bound to, or determined by, these contingencies in the long run.'[46]

12. Gustave Courbet, *The Stonebreakers* (1849-50)

Identifying a concept as 'site', Gaiger argues, 'extends the term beyond its legitimate usage and threatens to undermine the coherence of her account.'[47] The features Kwon uses to identify her third model are too vague. In particular, Gaiger claims that citing a 'discourse or field of knowledge' as a criteria fails because 'it is arguably the case that *all* art, including the non-site-specific art of earlier periods, occupies a position within a wider field of knowledge, ideas, and debates.'[48] He gives the example of Gustave Courbet's painting, *The Stonebreakers* (1849-50), which addresses issues such as rural

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[43] Ibid., 55-56.
[44] Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 28.
[45] Ibid., 28-9.
[46] Ibid., 29.
[47] Gaiger, 'Dismantling the Frame,' 46.
[48] Ibid., 29.

poverty, class hierarchy, the toil of manual labour, and realism as an artistic strategy. These issues, he argues, 'can be said to belong to a mid-nineteenth century "discourse".'[49] He also points out that many of the examples Kwon uses to illustrate institutional critique, such as the artworks by Haacke and Ukeles, also raise issues external to the museum and art world, despite their museum location. Additionally, those works that Kwon places within the third paradigm function within the museum while raising wider issues. Gaiger notes that in Kwon's analysis of Fred Wilson's art practice, for instance, she distinguishes his museum-based interventions from institutional critique because the work tackles non-art issues while mobilising the site. Yet, the work is inextricably linked to the museum, and Gaiger argues 'it must be a matter of interpretation whether the 'primary' site of such work is physical, institutional, or discursive.'[50] Kwon's insistence that 'discourse' be considered site, therefore threatens the very notion of site and, consequently, the 'locational anchor that characterizes the other two paradigms'[51] is lost. Gaiger's criticism also applies to Meyer's account of his mobile site, described as 'an in-between site, a nonplace, a ruin.'[52] To define site-specific art by its sitelessness suggests that perhaps these artworks may need to be understood as an entirely separate art form.

Gaiger argues that the advanced art practice Kwon identifies as discursive site-specific art could be better recognised as 'a progressive relinquishment of the principle of aesthetic autonomy.'[53] He proposes an alternative to her phenomenological, institutional, and discursive paradigms of site-specificity; instead, this evolution of art forms can be understood as confronting the 'physical, institutional, and discursive conditions of art making that had been occluded under modernism.'[54] The three paradigms also mark a continued attempt to 'liberate' art from its Modernist autonomous status. While Modernist artists saw the literal frame or plinth as the artwork's firm boundary, in the first paradigm Gaiger observes that artists incorporated the physical site into the artwork, thereby abandoning the notion of the autonomous artwork. Artists working within the second paradigm called into question the autonomy and neutrality of the art institution.

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[49] Ibid., 49.
[50] Ibid., 50.
[51] Ibid., 51.
[52] Meyer, 'The Functional Site,' 31.
[53] Gaiger, 'Dismantling the Frame,' 46.
[54] Ibid., 51.

With the third paradigm, art practice then steps outside the museum, focusing on wider social issues and broadening art's reach. Overall, Gaiger claims:

> it is opposition to the modernist conception of aesthetic autonomy – rather than the increasingly tenuous conception of 'site' – that links the different parts of Kwon's account together and which establishes a line of continuity between the minimalist and post-minimalist practices of the 1960s and contemporary project-based art.[55]

Furthermore, Gaiger claims that in developing her third paradigm, the continuing dominance of the institution in the art world is overlooked.[56] This last point is significant in relation to my project because of the range of sites examined in this project, including both art and non-art museums. While contemporary art in historic houses may be considered an outsider, surplus to the house museums' key function, the project is still tied to and reliant on existing institutions of art. As I noted earlier, the evolution of art projects in non-art museums is a relatively recent trend, and one that has largely grown in the last fifteen years. Thus, Kwon's models are unable to properly account for this development, nor for 'virtual' sites that have emerged with the internet and other technological innovations, even though she briefly acknowledges these new 'electronic spaces.'[57] Admittedly, these virtual sites also fall outside the scope of my thesis, although an exploration of 'cyberspace-specificity', such as Second Life, and even the Google Art project, could be an interesting future research topic.

1.3 Installation Art Versus Site-specific Art

As mentioned earlier, there is a fine line between site-specific and installation art. Site-specific art can often also be identified as installation art, and consequently many books focussed on installation art include relevant examples or address issues related to site or place. Key books include Claire Bishop's *Installation Art* (2005); the identically named book edited by Nicolas De Oliveira, Nicola Oxley, and Michael Petry, with texts by the theorist and artist Michael Archer; and Julie Reiss' *From Margin to Centre: The Spaces of Installation Art* (1999).

Often installations will be tailored to a particular space, as Claire Bishop explains:

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[55] Ibid., 53-4.
[56] Ibid., 51.
[57] Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 29.

the space, and the ensemble of elements within it, are regarded in their entirety as a singular entity. Installation art creates a situation into which the viewer physically enters, and insists that you regard this as a singular totality.[58]

From Bishop's definition, it would appear that all installations have some element of site-specificity due to its relationship with the space it occupies; yet the two terms are not necessarily mutual. Just as Bishop distinguishes between the installation of artworks and installation art by arguing that a simple installation of artworks places the installation as a secondary concern to the works themselves, we can distinguish between site-specific installation and non-site-specific installation by the level of engagement with the site. When the 'space' in Bishop's definition, becomes a meaningful 'place', whether it is in relation to the physical site, context or institutional framework, a work in turn *may* be understood to be site-specific.

Additionally, for a work to be site-specific in a museum – which is the main concern of my research – it is not enough for a work to be created with the exhibition space in mind, as many artists imagine (or hope) that their work will be shown within the white walls of a gallery. If commissioned by a gallery, an artist will often know the space in which an artwork will be located, and tailor the number or scale of the works to suit the space, or else the placement of works is manipulated or grouped so as to influence the viewing of the artworks. For a work to be site-specific in the critical sense of the term, the site – whether it be literal or not – has to be an integral component of the work.

1.4 The Museum as Frame

We usually think of frames as physical objects placed around paintings, but the museum as a physical and ideological body can also be considered a frame. The museum is often considered neutral and free of politics, and yet it is driven by distinct ideals and agendas. The influence of the museum – both ideologically and aesthetically – on the work of artists has been a growing area of interest, with books such as James Putnam's *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium* (2001), exploring this evolving relationship between artist and institution. Other publications that explore the museum's framing effect,

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[58] Claire Bishop, *Installation Art* (London: Routledge, 2005), 6.

include Brian O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*,
Kynaston McShine's *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* (1999), and Arthur Danto's
After the End of Art: Contemporary Art and the Pale of History (1997). Chapter four of
Martha Buskirk's *The Contingent Object of Contemporary Art* (2003), and Daniel
Buren's 'Function of the Museum,' (1970) are also significant texts.

Putnam's *Art and Artifact* is a broad survey of art projects that have drawn inspiration
from the museum's systems of display, categorisation and ideology. *Art and Artifact*,
unlike many similarly themed books, covers a diverse range of museums, including
heritage homes. Like Putnam, my aim in including heritage homes along with natural
history and the more traditional art galleries, is to provide an interesting comparison
between the different institutions and systems of display. While a great number of the
included examples are not site-specific, Putnam covers a number of the issues relevant to
a critical examination of site-specific art within a museum context, particularly in
relation to my chapters three and four, where I discuss artworks that question the official
histories promoted in various institutions. Putnam points out that 'many artists have

13. Andy Goldsworthy, *Sandwork* (1994), British Museum

found a particular affinity with natural history,
archaeology and ethnography collections, especially
those with displays that have escaped
refurbishment,'[59] which can be observed in the
practice of Australian artists Fiona Hall, Louise
Weaver and Caroline Eskdale, for instance. Putnam's
interest in the relationship between artist and museum
also extends to his curatorial practice. His 1994
exhibition, *Time Machine*, at the British Museum, for
example, combined contemporary art and historical
artefacts from the museum collection.

O'Doherty's *Inside the White Cube*, is a collection of highly influential essays published
throughout the 1970s, which critique the ideology of the museum. The 1999 edition of
Inside the White Cube used for this research project, contains an updated forward by
Thomas McEvilley, which provides an accessible and reasoned update to O'Doherty's

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[59] James Putnam, *Art and Artifact: The Museum as Medium* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2001), 31.

arguments. The term 'white cube' has since been widely adopted to refer to the ideal

Modernist gallery space, with its illusion of neutrality. O'Doherty writes:

> With postmodernism, the gallery space is no longer 'neutral.' The wall becomes a
> membrane through which esthetic and commercial values osmotically exchange.
> As this molecular shudder in the white walls becomes perceptible, there is a
> further inversion of context. The walls assimilate; the art discharges. How much
> can the art do without? This calibrates the degree of the gallery's mythification.
> How much of the object's eliminated content can the white wall replace?[60]

Despite the fact that the supposed illusion of the gallery space has been 'unveiled' by

both artists, such as Haacke and Buren, and theorists such as O'Doherty, McEvilley and

Danto, it is important to recognise that museums to this day, to some extent, continue to

promote a 'neutral' space for the presentation of art.

Buren's pivotal 'Function of the Museum' has been re-published in journals and books

since the French artist and theorist first wrote it in 1970. His argument is similar to

O'Doherty's in that he aims to reveal the ideologies of the museum, arguing that the

museum is a place with a 'privileged' triple role: aesthetic, economic, and the mystical.

Buren notes that 'the Museum makes its 'mark', imposes its 'frame' (physical and moral)

on everything that is exhibited in it in a deep and indelible way.'[61] He also claims that it

is the artist that creates this frame, rather than the museum itself. Significantly, Buren

continues to make site-specific works, aimed at deconstructing the museum space.

Buren's 'Function of the Studio' (1971), a similarly deconstructive essay, is republished

in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect* – a catalogue produced in conjunction with the

exhibition at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 1999.[62] Buren argues that the

studio is rarely the focus of institutional critique, and yet it is 'the *unique space* of

production' as opposed to the museum as '*unique space* of exposition.'[63] The studio is a

kind of 'filter', Buren argues, and during a work's production, it 'must be isolated from

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[60] Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 79.

[61] Daniel Buren, 'Function of the Museum,' *Artforum* 12, no. 1 (1973): 68.

[62] Another significant exhibition that focussed on art inspired by the museum was *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing and Archiving in Art*, held at P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, New York in 1998. It was accompanied by a catalogue that includes a number of theoretical essays. See Ingrid Schaffner and Matthias Winzen, eds. *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing and Archiving in Art* (Munich: Prestel, 1998).

[63] Daniel Buren, 'Function of the Studio,' in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, ed. Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 221.

the real world.'[64] A studio is 'a *stationary* place where *portable* objects are produced'[65] and yet the studio is the only space in which the art object is truly 'in place.'[66] Thus, the only time that the public is able to view a work of art is when it is out of place, in other words, in the museum.[67] Most critically, Buren suggests that the influence of the museum's uniformly white walls and predictable display is such that studios mimic the cubic shape, the lighting, the 'neutrality', and consequently 'compels the artist to banalize his own work in order to make it conform to the banality of the space that receives it.'[68]

Along with Buren's paper, *The Museum as Muse* reprints an anthology of significant artists' writings on the museum, including texts by Marcel Broodthaers, Andrea Fraser, Robert Smithton and Ad Reinhardt, all of whom are associated with institutional critique. In addition to the artworks produced for the 1999 exhibition, the catalogue documents historical works that, as the title suggests, respond to the museum. One of the major obstacles to researching site-specific art is the art form's tendency towards ephemerality, and thus any interpretation of works is reliant on secondary documentation, such as photographs. Images of early site-specific art are often hard to source and so this catalogue is an important reference for those works that fall under the category of institutional critique.

Reflecting the current interest in the subject of institutional critique, a number of other books containing artists' writings have been published recently. *Institutional Critique: an Anthology of Artists' Writings* (2009), edited by Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, and a collection of *Institutional Critique and After* (2006) symposia papers, examine the historical and continuing legacy of institutional critique.

The artist and critic Andrea Fraser's 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique' (2005), challenges the 'unquestioning' historical status of institutional critique and the common criticism that artists associated with the term, such as Buren, Asher and Haacke, have become institutionalised. She argues that these artists never used the term

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[64] Ibid., 222.
[65] Ibid.
[66] Ibid.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid.

'institutional critique'; in fact, the first written use of the term was in an essay written by her in 1985, and that the term was 'shorthand for "the critique of institutions".'[69] Institutional critique, she argues, has inadvertently come to be associated with 'visions of revolutionary overthrow,'[70] where ' "art" and "artist" generally figure as antagonistically opposed to an "institution" that incorporates, co-opts, commodifies, and otherwise misappropriates once-radical – and uninstitutionalized – practices.'[71] Yet on examination of the writing by Asher, Broodthaers, Haacke, and Buren –and Fraser cites Buren's 'The Function of the Museum' and 'The Function of the Studio' – it is clear that their criticism is aimed more at 'artistic practice itself' than the museum.[72] Examining Asher's writing, Fraser claims that 'the institution of art is not something external to any work of art but the irreducible condition of its existence as art,'[73] concluding that

14. Hans Haacke *MOMA Poll* (1970)

'institutional critique has *always* been institutionalised.'[74] Furthermore, because 'the art institution' includes not just the museum, but sites of production, collectors' homes, art criticism, art schools, viewers and the public spaces that art may be exhibited in;[75] by trying to 'escape the institution of art,' artists have in fact expanded the institutional frame.[76] Far from being against the institution, works like Haacke's *MOMA-Poll*, is 'an attempt to *defend* the institution of art from instrumentalization by political and economic interests.'[77]

As I explained in the introduction, my decision to rename chapter four 'institutional dialogue' rather than 'critique' was in part an attempt to distance the discussion from the loaded term outlined in Fraser's essay. The notion that the effect of the art institution is

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[69] Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique,' *Artforum* 44, no. 1 (2005): 279.
[70] Ibid., 280.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.
[73] Ibid., 281.
[74] Ibid., 282.
[75] Ibid., 281.
[76] Ibid., 282.
[77] Ibid.

inescapable, regardless of an artwork's site, is also demonstrated throughout the thesis; art might be produced, performed, placed outside the museum, however, everything from funding and audience to methods of display in are still heavily influenced by the art institution.

A number of other texts focus on the framing effect of the gallery space, including Michael Carter's *Framing Art: Introducing Theory and the Visual Image* (1990) and Gale MacLachlan and Ian Reid's *Framing and Interpretation* (1994). The chapter on 'Framing Visual Signs' in *Framing and Interpretation*, traces the history of the frame in art before arguing that the gallery can be thought of as a 'circumtextual frame or semiotic space which, among other things, makes it possible to distinguish the *objet d'art* from similar or even identical everyday functional objects.'[78] Like Buren and O'Doherty, the authors point out that 'gallery visitors often "forget" that an artwork is viewed within a series of embedded circumtextual frames,'[79] listing didactic texts, lighting, adjacent artworks and the curatorial premise as other often unnoticed 'frames.' Carter, MacLachlan and Reid are all Australian academics, and so their examples are less American-centric than many comparable texts. For instance, Carter examines the critical reception of the National Gallery of Australia's (NGA) layout following its 1982 opening, citing critics, such as David Bromfield, who thought its design was weighted towards a Modernist art history, and one inappropriate to Australia. Bromfield saw Canberra's gallery format as emulating New York's Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), arguing:

> to walk through the major galleries is somewhat like turning the pages of a cheap American paperback of art history. One comes to the Monet waterlilies and then the Pollock. There is no other way around the building. It has been designed to force you to see things 'this way.'[80]

Bromfield and Carter make the point that a museum's collection and layout frame the visitor's experience. Because it is Australia's national museum, to some extent these features also frame our nation's cultural identity. By placing American Abstract Expressionism as a central focus, and thereby marginalising Australian art, what does it

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[78] Gale MacLachlan and Ian Reid, *Framing and Interpretation* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1994), 31.
[79] Ibid., 34.
[80] David Bromfield, 'Never Mind the Quality,' *National Times*, October 10-16, 1982, 12. Cited in Michael Carter, *Framing Art: Introducing Theory and the Visual Image* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1990), 174.

tell us about our own self-worth? As Ian Burn puts it: 'exhibitions are about how our art is represented to ourselves. They are also about how we represent our culture to others, in other social geographies.'[81]

The priorities of the NGA have changed since Bromfield wrote his article. After its major redisplay of Australian art in 1994, Daniel Thomas noted the change in the presentation of Aboriginal art from an outdated 'primitive' categorisation, to a post-colonial one. 'Two centuries of indigenous and whitefella Australian art cohabit on more equal terms,'[82] he wrote, and while he felt the display could be improved, he conceded 'it is a splendid beginning for a renewed Australia undergoing mental re-colonisation by Aboriginal thought.'[83] The recent 2010 renovations to the gallery have again improved the representation of Indigenous Australian art. For instance, *The Aboriginal Memorial* (1987-88) was moved into a specially constructed rotunda at the entrance to the gallery demonstrating a change in priorities. The memorial was produced by the Ramingining artists to coincide with the Australian bicentennial, and comprises two hundred decorated hollow log coffins – one for each year of the European occupation. Since its acquisition in 1987, the installation has become a defining element of the NGA's collection.[84]

15. Ramingining Artists, *The Aboriginal Memorial* (1987-88)

However, the eleven new Indigenous art sections have not escaped criticism, with Richard Bell labelling the area 'Darkies' corner'[85] in response to the continued separation of Indigenous art from that of the rest of the Australian collection.

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[81] Ian Burn, 'Is Art History Any Use to Artists?' In *Dialogue: Writings in Art History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 12.

[82] Daniel Thomas, 'Australia Renewed: the New Galleries of Australian Art at the National Gallery,' *Art and Australia* 32, no. 2 (1994): 192.

[83] Ibid.

[84] Franchesca Cubillo and Wally Caruana, eds. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art: Collection Highlights* (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2010), 22.

[85] Helen Musa, 'New Galleries for the National Gallery of Australia,' *The World of Antiques and Art*, no. 80 (2011): 19.

Key to interpreting the notion of framing is what I term the 'semiotic space' of the museum. 'Semiotic space' in the context of a gallery or museum refers to the signs or symbols present in these institutions that give the space meaning. One of the key semiotic functions of the museum is, in fact, its ability to identify something as art. The cultural codes embedded in a museum space affect the way in which we view a work of art, and might include the objects within the museum, the colour of the walls, material frames and plinths, didactic texts, or even accompanying catalogues. Museums use techniques such as frames and white walls in order to try and separate the artwork from its surroundings, yet because this practice is culturally normalised, these strategies are often 'invisible' to the museum visitor.

MacLachlan and Reid describe the relationship between artwork and exhibition space, and note that it is impossible for an artwork to be unaffected by its surrounding environment:

> Since painting, like literature, is cut off from the original circumstances of its production, it is vulnerable to reframing in the literal sense and, more metaphorically, to the reframing that occurs as a result of its placement in different semiotic 'fields'. The art gallery itself is one such field. How we view a painting is thus determined … by its presence in a particular space and its relation to other paintings and works of art in that space.[86]

While there is always a relationship between art and site, for a self-contained art object this relationship is usually unconscious, or at least out of the artists' control. With site-specific art, the relationship between art and site is deliberate. The work intentionally relates to and interacts with the space in an active and meaningful way. A dialogue is formed.

Like MacLachlan and Reid, Buck and Dodd note the significance of gallery display, with an emphasis on historical change. In their 1991 book and related BBC series, *Relative Values*, they provide an overview of the history of the museum, from the Western world's first public museum – the Louvre – through to the galleries of the 1980s. 'Hanging is no more neutral than any other aspect of the art world,'[87] they argue. To truly understand the influence of the 'neutral' white on wall-mounted art, we only need

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[86] MacLachlan, *Framing and Interpretation*, 31.
[87] Louisa Buck and Philip Dodd, *Relative Values* (London: BBC Books, 1991), 139.

to compare it to the nineteenth-century salon style, where paintings were hung densely and uncategorised, filling the entire wall surface.[88]

Furthermore, Ian Burn believes that the dominant Modernist approach to display, which is tailored to an autonomous art, effectively de-contextualises art from eras outside Modernism. He gives the example of Victorian academic pictures, and claims that this lack of context 'exaggerated their sentimentality in the eyes of the "disinterested self-sufficient" viewer.'[89] His essay, 'The Art Museum, More or Less,' calls for an alternative to the overwhelmingly Modernist and therefore singular interpretation of art history and, while it was written in 1989, his criticisms are still quite valid today. He notes that unlike academic art history, the museum's interpretation of history is translated spatially, 'a "temporary geography" within the (often arbitrary) limits of a building.'[90] He adds:

> In the art museum, space is assigned to particular artists, art forms, movements, national traditions. Decisions are made to exclude, segregate, disenfranchise, marginalise, affiliate, homogenise, with certain kinds of art virtually guaranteed occupation. This provides the basis of authority of the art museum and the organisation of its physical spaces becomes the means of declaration – a spatial expression of power relations in the art industry.[91]

Burn argues that as a post-colonial society, we have an opportunity to revise Australia's art history, so that Modernism is not privileged over all other art forms and eras, although he is scathing and doubtful of the larger state galleries' ability and willingness to change.[92] He asserts that the 'Australian art' promoted by museums needs to reflect the country's multiculturalism; it needs to include art by the Indigenous population, and consider the relationship between Australian art and that from overseas. After all, 'with a multitude of pasts relating to a single community, more recognition should be allowed to the idea of Australian art as the expression of a specific cultural community not bound by a single nation(alism).'[93]

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[88] Ibid., 139.
[89] Ian Burn, 'The Art Museum, More or Less' in *Dialogue: Writings in Art History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991), 170.
[90] Ibid., 168.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid., 173.
[93] Ibid., 171.

1.5 New Museology

I have referred to general museum theory texts in conjunction with those specifically examining art museum issues. For instance, Tony Bennett's *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (1995), looks at the history and issues surrounding a wide range of museums, including art, natural history, and war memorials. While Bennett is not writing from an art perspective, his inclusion of Australian examples makes this book an excellent resource because it outlines a number of curatorial hurdles and weaknesses which I argue, in chapter three, are often the catalyst for artistic response.

James Cuno's *Whose Muse? Art Museums and the Public Trust* (2004) addresses the role of the museum in society, museum architecture, visitors and politics, with a focus on art museums. Cuno's book and Eilean Hooper-Greenhill's *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (2000) address the way in which museums produce meaning, and the way in which the conception of the museum has changed rapidly over the last century. Hooper-Greenhill proposes that the new museum, which recognises the shortfalls of the nineteenth-century notion of the museum, be called the 'post-museum.'[94] The post-museum is driven by education and yet it no longer treats visitors as passive learners.[95] Hooper-Greenhill's theories on the educational role of museums, 'meaning-making' and the changing relationship between viewer and institution will be discussed in detail in chapter three and four, particularly in relation to the histories presented by Australia's Historic Houses Trust.

Suzanne Oberhardt is critical of Hooper-Greenhill's demonisation of the museum. Oberhardt argues that the claim that the division of space within the museum separates the 'producers of knowledge' (back of house/administrators) and 'consumers of knowledge' (visitors), 'smacks of conspiracy theories.'[96] In academic discourse, she claims that the museum is anthropomorphised and viewed as a 'hyperframe' that

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[94] Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.
[95] Ibid., xi.
[96] Suzanne Oberhardt, *Frames within Frames: the Art Museum as Cultural Artifact* (New York: Peter Lang. 2001), 28.

enforces a 'mastercode' for seeing art objects.[97] Oberhardt believes that the academic

view of the museum is one of authoritarianism, elitism and oppression, warning:

> such a perspective sees 'marginalized groups' as a variable in a cause-and effect
> relationship: the art museum displays images/objects which *cause* some people to be
> marginalized. Similarly, to suggest that by bringing the artifacts of popular culture into
> the art museum it will somehow empower people is equally absurd.[98]

Examining the two extremes – the 'deified museum' and the 'demonised museum' – she

claims that when we deify, 'it becomes sacred; it then represents sensual and romantic

love; it is elitist in an inclusive way because of its aspirational and inspirational role, and

it has a moral and authoritative voice.'[99] Alternatively, the demonised museum is

'profane; it eroticizes and objectifies the body; it is elitist in a way that is exclusive; and

through its authoritarian profile, it acts as an agent of oppression.'[100] Many of the texts

referred to in this thesis acknowledge the former view but frequently concentrate on the

museum's shortcomings, tending towards the latter view. However, the extremes

described in *Frames within Frames*, are almost comical, hysterical, and those theorists

who are critical of a museum's exclusionary practices are rarely without cause. For

instance, when Burn noted in 1989, the failure of Australia's state institutions to reflect

the art and culture of this country's population, he raised an issue that is still not resolved

today. Only recently, in late 2011, the AGNSW's Aboriginal art curator resigned over

the gallery's perceived neglect of her department.[101] While the representation of

Aboriginal art in this country's galleries has improved, certain groups continue to be

marginalised.

Like Bennett's book, the collection of essays in *Museums and Communities: The Public

Culture*, (1992) edited by Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer and Stephen Lavine,

focuses on a wide range of museums, rather than just those containing art. None of the

essays in *Museums and Communities* or Karp and Levine's similar *Exhibiting Cultures:

The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, (1991) specifically mention site-specific

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[97] Ibid., 6.
[98] Ibid., 3.
[99] Ibid., 4.
[100] Ibid., 7.
[101] Joyce Morgan, 'Letter Reveals Frustration that Forced Perkins to Quit Gallery,' *The Sydney Morning Herald*, September 26, 2011. http://www.smh.com.au/entertainment/art-and-design/letter-reveals-frustration-that-forced-perkins-to-quit-gallery-20110925-1krtp.html

art, yet these key museum texts address many themes and issues that are important to an in-depth understanding of artistic responses to any museum.

In the introduction to *Exhibiting Cultures*, Karp observes that 'every museum exhibition, whatever its overt subject, inevitably draws on the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make it. Decisions are made to emphasize one element and to downplay others, to assert some truths and to ignore others.'[102] Like Hooper-Greenhill, Karp recognises the role of the museum as meaning-maker, and highlights the potential risk of cultural bias, and while he admits that museums are now more aware of these shortcomings, many unfortunately 'have failed to reflect this changed view,'[103] something that is evidenced in many of the historic houses around Australia. Consequently, in chapters three and four, I highlight the often narrow and white male-centric history presented to the public as 'truth.'

Like many of the theorists mentioned so far, Karp highlights the museum's assumed neutrality, arguing that it 'enables them to become instruments of power as well as instruments of education and experience.'[104] Michael Baxandall's 'Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects',[105] similarly outlines the conditions under which museums construct worth. The very display of an object marks it as valuable, and by consequence, the culture that produced it is also deemed important. Additionally, museological display methods, such as vitrines, are influential in themselves, but when objects are combined in these cabinets, 'additional implications of relation'[106] are involved. The influence of museum exhibition methods, and the way in which artists have played with the embedded meanings of display, is a recurring theme throughout this thesis. Writing predominantly about ethnographic exhibits and cultural difference, Baxandall's essay is particularly relevant to the examination of non-art projects in chapters three and four, although his ideas can be universally applied to any object placed in a museum.

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[102] Ivan Karp and Stephen Lavine, eds. *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington: Smithsonian Books, 1991), 1.
[103] Ibid., 4.
[104] Ibid., 14.
[105] Michael Baxandall, 'Exhibiting Intention: Some Preconditions of the Visual Display of Culturally Purposeful Objects,' in *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, ed. Ivan Karp and Stephen Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Books. 1991), 33-41.
[106] Ibid., 34.

1.6 Place

The social geographical concept of 'place' is key to any discussion on contemporary site-specific art. As mentioned previously, many of the artworks examined in this thesis use the notion of place as a starting point or inspiration. When I was narrowing my topic from a general examination of Australian site-specific art practice, I noted that sites with a loaded history or significant cultural interest tend to be those targeted for site-specific response. Ex-industrial sites, bush trails and coastal walks are popular, but the art museum – usually just viewed as a house for art – kept coming up as an object of artistic interest in itself. Museums, including non-art museums, as noted in the many texts discussed above, are hardly neutral sites; they are significantly loaded places. Museums influence the way in which we view objects in their collection, assign value to objects through acquisition, and both mirror and affect the way we view our culture.

While Lippard distinguishes site-specific from place-specific art,[107] as discussed earlier, I believe that the term site-specific should be viewed as an umbrella term that encompasses place-responsive art. Even though the term 'site' has different connotations to 'place' – site infers an empty space, while the latter possesses social and cultural meaning – the term 'site-specific' is commonly used to describe artworks that respond to a location's sense of place. The difference between space and place is also significant, particularly in art, where we commonly use the term 'space' to describe the interior of a gallery (exhibition space, art space, museum space). Lippard observes that the term often 'represents the desentimentalized (some would say dehumanized) postmodern version of place.'[108] However, she views space as 'a physical, sometimes experiential component. If space is where culture is lived, then place is the result of their union.'[109] Furthermore, while it is generally believed that culture 'defines place and its meaning to people… place equally defines culture.'[110] Alternatively, Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1991) distinguishes 'social space', which is similar to the concept of place, from 'abstract space.'

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[107] Lippard, *The Lure of the Local,* 274.
[108] Ibid., 9.
[109] Ibid., 10.
[110] Ibid., 11.

Due to the difference between the terms 'site' and 'place,' throughout this thesis I occasionally use the terms place-specific or place-responsive to emphasise the work's focus on a site's social, cultural or historical significance. For instance, Anne Graham's work, *The Macleay Women* (1997), took inspiration from the daughters of the original owners of the Historic House Trust-managed Elizabeth Bay House, and Michael Goldberg's work, *A Humble Life* (1995), questioned the trust's account of the house's history by re-introducing the presence of servants. Both works focussed on the site's

16. Michael Goldberg, *A Humble Life* (detail) (1995)

history, the politics of the house's restoration and museum conversion, as well as the institution's representation of this history. The histories of the house, as well as the trust's representation of history are equally the subject of critique. These artworks respond not to the spatial aspects of the site, rather, they respond to the site's sense of place and politics.

Most of the texts referenced in this thesis that address the notion of place are art-related, such as Lippard's *The Lure of the Local*, Kwon's *One Place After Another*, and Tacita Dean and Jeremy Millar's *Art Works: Place* (2005). The edited book *Space Invaders: Issues of Presentation, Context and Meaning in Contemporary Art*, also focuses on the placement of art, particularly public art, and the meaning produced by this placement.

Lippard's later chapters are particularly focussed on public art and its relationship to communities. Like many theorists, she is critical of the lack of place-specificity in public art.[111] Yet, she argues that it is 'easier to make locally meaningful art in a *place* than on a "site." Art in a more neutrally "public space" (park, corporate, and development contexts) is already displaced.'[112] It is also important, she argues, to establish the definition of the 'public' in public art. It could mean 'private art in public spaces or as

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[111] Lippard's criticisms target public art in the United States; however, as I will examine in chapter five, it is a common criticism of Australian public art as well.
[112] Ibid., 270.

art intended to be understood and enjoyed (or even made) by "the public".'[113]
Additionally, the term 'the public' is problematic. She suggests that if it is taken to only
mean 'civic,' 'then art becomes complicit with all the state's abuses of citizens' rights;
alternatively, "public" is understood as a place determined by the people who use it.'[114]
Too much public art focuses on the civic interpretation, ignoring the community and
sometimes even spoiling the area with, as artist Krzysztof Wodiczko describes it,

> the most pretentious and patronizing environmental pollution. Such beautification
> is uglification; such humanization provokes alienation; and the noble idea or
> public access if likely to be received as private access.[115]

Kwon's book also focuses largely on public art in her later chapters, particularly art
actively involving local communities. Like Lippard, she is critical of a number of the
high-profile exhibitions that claim to be about place, such as the Münster Sculpture
Project that occurs every ten years in the German town, and Jacob's *Places with a Past*
(1991) in Charleston, USA. While Lippard questions the validity of commissioning non-
local artists to produce place-specific art, Kwon suggests that these exhibitions are as
much about economics as art. The production of place-specific art that highlights the
'uniqueness' of a city in a globalised world is driven by 'quasi-promotional agendas.'[116]

With globalism, place has become an important distinguishing tool for tourism as well as
a sense of local identity, and artists who work in response to a site, who are able to
reinvigorate or rediscover a sense of place, are often sought after by museums and
communities. Kwon notes the trend of nomadic artists completing projects or residencies
throughout the world, akin to 'critical-artistic' services.'[117] She describes the process:

> The project will likely be time-consuming and in the end will have engaged the
> 'site' in a multitude of ways, and the documentation of the project will take on
> another life within the art world's publicity circuit, which will in turn alert another
> institution for another commission.[118]

While Kwon seems to view the artist's new role as the 'progenitor of meaning'[119] quite
negatively, suggesting that it is little more than a clever public relations tool, I believe

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[113] Ibid., 272.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Wodiczko cited in ibid., 272.
[116] Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 53.
[117] Ibid., 50.
[118] Ibid., 46.
[119] Ibid., 51.

that many positives can come from an artist's involvement in such projects. We can see these benefits, for instance, in Goldberg's work at Elizabeth Bay House. It is important to question the 'official histories' portrayed in our public institutions, and art is one of many mediums through which to critically analyse our cultural heritage and the institutions that tell our country's history. Jennifer Barrett and Jacqueline Millner also note that amongst other benefits, the involvement of artists in non-art museums can result in the engagement of wider audiences, and give artists the opportunity to work with valuable objects that may not normally be accessible.[120]

As I noted earlier, there are gaps in Kwon's models, however, one of the key strengths of *One Place After Another* is her critical analysis of the primary issues relating to and influencing site-specific art practice. Her analysis is overly negative; however, her uncompromising criticism of external influences, such as financial imperatives, place-making as a consequence of globalisation, public art policy, governmental bureaucracy, as well as the changing role of the artist, contribute significantly to our understanding of an expanded art institution. In this thesis, I refer to and build upon Kwon's arguments on these issues, discussing them in relation to Australian examples. Some of the differences between Kwon's local American art scene and Australia's, particularly in regards to arts funding, are quite stark.

Conversely, while my own focus is on site-specific art in Australia's public museums, my research can be applied elsewhere. The site-specific artistic strategies I have identified, for instance, can be used to analyse museum interventions internationally. The development of these strategies also builds upon other existing models of site-specific art, such as those established by Kwon, Meyer, Crimp and Lippard, but is also more focussed. By drawing from a wide range of theoretical sources, including non-art specific texts on museum studies and place, I have developed a new way of understanding and interpreting site-specific art in Australia's public museums.

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[120] Jennifer Barrett and Jacqueline Millner, 'Australian Artists and the Museum,' Museums and Gallery Services Queensland, August 2009.
http://www.magsq.com.au/_dbase_upl/Barrett%20paper%20FINAL.pdf, 8.

The Australian Scene

1.7 Literature Relating to Site-specific Art in Australia

As mentioned in the introduction, most writing on site-specific art in Australia is in the form of journal articles or catalogue essays, particularly in relation to specific events, artists or artworks. Research addressing site-specific art in Australian has also focussed on select events or periods, rather than an in-depth investigation that encompasses the art form's foundations in the late 1960s to the present. This research includes Carolyn Barnes' thesis 'Art – a Rule to be Broken: an Examination of the Development of an Australian Avant-garde in the Context of Australian Earth, Installation and Site-specific art, c.1968-1973,' completed in 2002; and Goldberg's 1996 thesis: 'Site-specific Installation in Colonial Heritage Sites: a Re-reading of the Historic House and its Civic and Domestic Origins in Early Sydney.' Goldberg initiated a number of exhibitions of site-specific art at Elizabeth Bay house, starting with his own work, *A Humble Life* (1995), which was part of his master's degree. As early examples of critical art projects in Australian non-art museums, Goldberg's artistic and curatorial projects are used as key examples throughout this thesis.

Katherine Gregory's 2004 PhD thesis – 'The Artist and the Museum: Contested Histories and Expanded Narratives in Australian Art and Museology 1975 – 2002' – while not on the subject of site-specific art per se, examines a number of different ways in which artists have interacted with and challenged Australian museums. Her thesis identifies four approaches used by artists: oppositional critique, figurative representation, intervention and collaboration; and explores these themes through case studies of the artists Peter Cripps, Fiona Hall, and Narelle Jubelin, as well as the curator Peter Emmett. Her subsequent 2011 paper on Emmett's curatorial strategies[121] is key to my discussion in chapter four which considers art projects in the Hyde Park Barracks museum. While Gregory examines a number of issues relevant to my research, her focus is on the outcomes of such art projects, rather than the art itself. The art projects examined tend to

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[121] Katherine Gregory, 'Art and Artifice: Peter Emmett's Curatorial Practice in the Hyde Park Barracks and Museum of Sydney,' *Fabrications: The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians Australia & New Zealand* 16, no. 1 (2006): 1-22.

be oriented towards the archival aspects of the museum, rather than addressing the museum as site. However, her in-depth interviews with the artists and curator in question are still valuable resources.[122]

Non-art museums, such as historic homes and natural history museums, are attractive as exhibition sites for a number of reasons and the motivation for involvement in such projects varies widely. Sydney-based academics Barrett and Millner, in their paper 'Australian Artists and Museums,' list seven strategies used by artists:

- Artists challenging the museum's institutional authority
- Artists examining the construction of history
- The artist as curator
- Artists working with museum architects and interior designers
- Artists highlighting the use of taxonomic modes of display and categorization in the museum
- Artists engaging with the aesthetics of collection
- Artists developing a new interface with the public through performance.[123]

While Barrett and Millner's list relates to non-art museums, these strategies can be identified in art museums as well. For instance, as part of the 2008 Biennale of Sydney, Gordon Bennett submitted a proposal to rehang the AGNSW's colonial and Indigenous art collections so that the artworks, which are usually kept separately, would be shown side-by-side. While the proposal was rejected, the inclusion of the scaled diorama in the biennale still promoted a powerful message about the art gallery's construction of history.[124]

In the introduction, I outlined my own set of models based on strategies commonly used by artists when producing site-specific artworks in museums.[125] The models I have developed are more extensive, and while many overlap with Barrett and Millner's, the strategies I have identified relate specifically to site-specific art practice in both art and non-art museums. They range in criticality, from artworks that celebrate aspects of the institution or function as interpretive tools, to works that challenge the museum's

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[122] Unfortunately, I only became aware of, and read, Gregory's thesis in the last six months of my PhD, and therefore it has had little influence on my research. However, her paper on Emmett that I accessed earlier in my research, greatly informed my discussion on the Hyde Park Barracks and Museum of Sydney.

[123] Barrett, 'Australian Artists and Museums,' 3.

[124] Bennett's 'proposal' will be discussed in more detail in chapters two and four.

[125] See page 8.

authority. They also vary in scope – most of the artworks examined in this thesis focus on the particular museum in which they are located, however, some artworks reference multiple sites or more universal concerns relating to museological display and/or the institution of art. The relationship to site is equally as diverse, with some works relating to spatially or physically to the museum space, while others re-interpret the institution's archives or presentation of history.

The following chapters will refer to these strategies, although there is little discussion of works that fall into the last category, that is, artworks that uncritically celebrate a museum's collection or features. The earlier artworks discussed in this thesis – those produced in the late 1960s and 1970s – tend to fall into the first, fourth and seventh categories; in other words, works that physically relate to a site, challenge the museum's authority, and/or critique the wider institution of art. However, it is important to emphasise that site-specific from this era predominantly focussed on the art museum, public spaces, or the natural environment. The siting of critical art specific to non-art museums, such as botanic gardens and historic sites, is a relatively recent trend.

One of the defining aspects of Australian art in the 1970s, wrote Paul Taylor in 1984, was the 'coupling of the visual arts with the written word,'[126] including art education, writing and publishing. In the introduction to the compilation of key essays from the 1970s, *Anything Goes*, Taylor argues for its necessity because Australia is in danger of forgetting the critical and often ephemeral art from that decade, with museums and publishing companies still clinging to 'the easy popularity of superstar artists, clichéd Australian subjects and nostalgic histories.'[127] One of the defining aspects of my research is in the collection of a large number of site-specific art projects in Australia from the late 1960s to the present. Texts like *Anything Goes*, which re-publish articles such as Daniel Thomas' 'Art and Life: the Actuality of Sculpture,' and 'The Situation Now' by Terry Smith, therefore, highlight some of the more significant experimental exhibitions and artists in the seventies.

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[126] Paul Taylor, ed. *Anything Goes: Art in Australia 1970 – 1980* (Melbourne: Art & Text, 1984), 6.
[127] Ibid., 6.

The role of art criticism in the development of experimental art in Australia throughout the seventies can be demonstrated in the sudden increase in art journals in that decade, such as *Other Voices*, *Art and Text,* and the feminist publication, *Lip*. Prior to that decade, *Art and Australia* was the sole specialist art publication in Australia, and even then, the journal was only established in 1963. Although it was, and arguably still is,

considered a fairly conservative publication, it nonetheless provided the first regular forum for the discussion of local art and design. That the journal still exists made it a starting point for my research. By reading the issues from 1963 onwards, I was able to see how art styles, exhibitions, and art criticism developed from the sixties to the present. I was also able to detect the changes in terminology used to describe art forms, such as installation, site-specific and performance art.

Art and Australia, vol. 7, no. 3, 1969

Another significant publication, *Artlink*, established in 1981, continues to publish their quarterly themed issues, responding to topical trends, issues or art forms. The edition, *Mining the Archive,*[128] coincided with the growing interest in art projects related to the non-art museum. In this issue, for instance, is Naomi Cass' article on one of the art projects sited in the Percy Grainger Museum. These projects responded to the outdated display methods in the Melbourne University-based institution, and will be discussed in further detail in chapter three. Goldberg's Elizabeth Bay House project, *Artists in the House!*, also features in the issue, again, reflecting the emergence of art projects sited in historic houses and sites. An earlier 1992 issue, *Museums on the Edge,*[129] published just prior to the growth of critical art in non-art museums, nonetheless picks up on the interest in the museum as subject, as opposed to just a vehicle for exhibiting.

While many of the journals established in the 1970s and 80s no longer exist, *Art and Text, Lip* and *Other Voices* included, many of their articles are re-published in anthologies of key Australian art texts, demonstrating their continued importance.

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[128] *Artlink: Mining the Archive*, guest edited by Zara Stanhope, vol. 19, no 1, 1999.
[129] *Artlink: Museums on the Edge*, guest edited by Louise Dauth, vol. 12, no. 1, 1992.

However, the anthologies, such as *What is Installation?*, often concentrate on articles that address less traditional forms, such as installation or performance art, giving the false impression that these art forms were practiced widely, and frequently written about. Yet *Art and Australia*, for instance, barely mentions these new art forms throughout the late 1960s, 70s and 80s, and our public museums remained focussed on painting and traditional sculpture. The lack of recognition for this experimental art was in part due to the fact that these new art forms were yet to be named, a dilemma facing critics that is discussed later in this chapter. While commonly used terms now, 'installation' was not used in *Art and Australia* until 1980,[130] and the term 'site-specific' does not appear until the early 1990s.[131]

Nonetheless, the inclusion of mainstream media articles in some of these compilations, such as the article written for *The Australian* newspaper in 1969 about Christo and Jeanne-Claude's influential *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, One Million Square Feet, Sydney Australia* (1969),[132] demonstrates the then impact of the site-specific installation on the local community. We now know that the work was a significant catalyst for site-specific art in Australia, that it inspired a number of young artists who assisted with the installation of the work, and is one of the best known Earthworks of the period; however, the newspaper article also confirms the significance of the project even in 1969.[133]

18. Christo and Jeanne-Claude *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, One Million Square Feet, Sydney Australia* (1969)

Also key to my research are the catalogues accompanying the large-scale exhibitions, such as Australian Sculpture Triennial, Australian Perspecta, the Biennale of Sydney and Fieldwork. They reveal the evolution away from stand-alone sculpture and painting to

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[130] In Ross Lansell's article, 'Australian Art Scene in the 1970s,' *Art and Australia* 18, no. 2 (1980): 133-144.
[131] From what I have observed.
[132] Thomas, Laurie. 'Christo.' In *The Art of Persuasion: Australian Art Criticism 1950-2001*, 97-98. Sydney: Craftsman House, 2002.
[133] Other anthologies include: *What is Appropriation: An Anthology of Critical Writings on Australian Art in the '80s and '90s*, edited by Rex Butler.

the present mix of art forms such as sound and video art, performance, installation and site-specific art, in addition to traditional media. In the Sydney Biennale's case, the exhibition spaces have also widened to include the historic Cockatoo Island, the Sydney Botanic Gardens, Opera House, and land around the city's waterfront.[134] Other historical catalogues, such as the one produced in conjunction with Dennis Colsey's exhibition *Hand and Eye: a Survey of Artists Materials and Techniques* (1970), demonstrate that the large public galleries, in this case, the AGNSW, do not necessarily reflect the broader art trends of the time. The catalogue describes the show as a survey of 'the different materials and techniques used by artists in painting, sculpture, ceramics, and tapestry.'[135] Yet, with the exception of Robert Klippel's paper collage, no other work in the survey exhibition indicates that a significant change was occurring in Australian artists' attitudes towards materials, methods, and the very meaning of art.

1.8 The Development of Alternative and Site-specific Art in Australia

Site-specific art in Australia emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s. One of the first major site-specific art projects undertaken in Australia was French artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude's above-mentioned *Wrapped Coast,* a massive installation in which a section of Sydney's cliff face was wrapped in rope and fabric. A number of the young local artists who assisted with this project acknowledge its lasting influence, such as installation artist Joan Grounds,[136] and the painter Imants Tillers, who was at the time an architecture student.[137] In an *Art and Australia* review, critic Donald Brook declared it 'the most important event in Australian art in years,'[138] raising questions about the meaning of art and the relationship between 'aesthetics, politics and economics.'[139] Brook's comments were perhaps an understatement, because the project remains one of the most well-known and influential installations in Australian art history.

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[134] The original Sydney Biennale was held in the Sydney Opera House.

[135] Dennis Colsey, *Hand and Eye: A Survey of Artists Materials and Techniques*. Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1970, n.p.

[136] Julie Ewington, 'In the Wild: Nature, Culture, Gender in Installation Art,' in *What Is Installation? An Anthology of Writings on Australian Installation Art*, ed. Adam Geczy and Benjamin Genocchio (Sydney: Power Publications, 2001), 37.

[137] Daniel Thomas, 'The Artists and their Australian Context' in *An Australian Accent: Three Artists, Mike Parr, Imants Tillers, Ken Unsworth*, ed. John Kaldor (Sydney: John Kaldor, 1984), 13.

[138] Donald Brook, 'The Little Bay Affair,' *Art and Australia* 7, no.3 (1969): 230.

[139] Ibid., 232.

The *Wrapped Coast* project was made possible by Australian art collector and patron, John Kaldor, and was the first of many influential art projects. Unlike many local art benefactors who sponsor scholarships for Australian artists to travel overseas, Kaldor's approach has predominantly emphasised bringing influential overseas artists to Australia to make art, which are almost always sited in public spaces.[140] Daniel Thomas saw this approach as 'a way of sharing [Kaldor's] delight in the stimulus of difficult new art with the art world of Australia, an art world which he knew in the 1960s to be short of stimulus.'[141] Kaldor also initiated and financially backed curated exhibitions of Australian artists both locally, such as the early *I Want to Leave a Nice Well-done Child Here* (1971) curated by the internationally renowned Harald Szeemann, and overseas, such as *An Australian Accent* (1984). The Kaldor Art Projects have tended to include artists working with experimental art forms, many of the projects being site-specific and usually independent of traditional gallery spaces. While the extent of influence that the visiting overseas artists had on the local community can never really be measured, Australian critics such as Elwyn Lynn[142] and Charles Green[143] have acknowledged these artists' influence as role models to young Australian artists.

19. Gregor Schneider, *21 Beach Cells* (2007)

While the Little Bay project might be the most famous of Kaldor's public art projects, subsequent site-specific projects include Christo and Jeanne-Claude's lesser known *Wool Works* at the NGV, and on a later visit, their *Wrapped Vestibule* at the AGNSW; Sol Le Witt's 1977 *Wall Drawings* at the NGV and AGNSW; Richard Long's *A Straight Hundred Mile Walk in Australia: A walk along a line, returning to the same campsite each night* (1977) and respective site-

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[140] One of Kaldor's projects took place overseas. *An Australian Accent: Mike Parr, Imants Tillers, Ken Unsworth* (1984) was his eighth project, and played an important role in promoting Australian art to an American Audience. Sophie Forbat, ed. *40 Years: Kaldor Public Art Projects.* (Botany, NSW: Kaldor Public Art Projects, 2009), 146.

[141] Daniel Thomas, 'The Artists and their Australian Context,' 13.

[142] Elwyn Lynn remarks on the dangers of trying to judge the exact influence of visiting artists in his article 'The Power Gallery of Contemporary Art: Acquisitions 1980-81,' *Art and Australia* 20, no.3 (1983): 365.

[143] Charles Green, *Peripheral Vision: Contemporary Australian Art 1970-1994*, (Sydney: Craftsman House, 1995), 13.

specific works at the AGNSW and the NGV; Ugo Rondinone's *Our Magic Hour* (2004) at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA) and *Clockwork for Oracle* at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA); Urs Fischer's work at Cockatoo Island in 2007; Gregor Schneider's dystopian work on Bondi Beach in 2007; and Bill Viola's *The Tristan Project* (2008) in St Saviour's Church, Redfern. Tatzu Nishi's *War and Peace and In Between* (2009), which was built around the iconic equestrian statues that flank the AGNSW's entrance, will be discussed in detail in chapter two in relation to the semiotics of the art museum.

Further influential international artists started to visit Australia with the introduction of the Biennale of Sydney. While the first Biennale in 1973 was a fairly small and domestic affair, later exhibitions throughout that decade attracted internationally renowned figures such as Buren, Marcel Broodthaers, Mario Merz, and performance artists Ulrike Rosenbach, and Marina Abramović and Ulay. The Sydney Biennale continues today to attract major artists and curators from around the globe and actively encourages site-specific artworks. In fact, the press release for the 2008 Biennale particularly singles out the site-specific activities on Cockatoo Island for promotion, signalling the art form's more mainstream, or at least fashionable, position in the art world.[144]

1.9 The Mildura Sculpture Triennials

Despite their relative geographic isolation, the Mildura Sculpture Triennials were key in the early development of site-specific art in Australia. What began as the Mildura Prize for Sculpture in 1961, an exhibition of Modernist object-based sculpture, by 1970 was showing some of the most cutting-edge contemporary art in the country; this sudden change exemplified by Thomas' remark in 1970 that 'sculpture of this kind did not exist in Australia three years ago.'[145] The triennials continued to provide a platform for many of Australia's best-known established and then emerging sculptors until 1982. In *Peripheral Vision*, Green claims that 'until the Sydney Biennales from 1979 onwards,

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[144] The press release announced, 'in another first, the Biennale will exhibit more than 30 site-specific artists' projects on Cockatoo Island,' yet only about six of the works could confidently be identified as site-specific – perhaps an illustration of Buren and Kwon's arguments outlined earlier, that the term is subject to misuse.

[145] Daniel Thomas, 'Mildura Sculpture Triennial,' *Art and Australia* 8, no. 1 (1970): 50.

[the triennials were] the most important museum representations of advanced art'.[146] While the 1970 triennial showcased a number of experimental works such as William Allen's *New Zealand Environment* (1970), and Tony Coleing's *Wind Construction* (1970), it was the following event in 1973, in which new art forms, such as installation and site-specific art, were widely embraced. Subtitled *Sculpturscape* to indicate an expanded 'gallery space', artists were prompted to make art outside the Mildura Regional Gallery, taking advantage of the surrounding scrubby land and river beds. Under the directorship of Tom McCullough, artists were encouraged to experiment and push the boundaries of the meaning of art, with McCullough declaring

> The Sculpturscape exhibition will be a post-Christo landscape in which an Australian public gallery becomes totally concerned with the outstallation of important works of art which define, react/respond to, contradict, transform, merge with or consciously ignore the set environment.[147]

In fact, Noel Hutchinson remarks in his *Art and Australia* review; that the only restrictions placed on the artists was 'their pocket, imagination and ability.'[148]

20. John Davis *Tree Piece* (1973)   21. Domenico de Clario, *Untitled* (1973)

Graeme Sturgeon in his survey publication on the triennials, *Sculpture at Mildura*, argues that the most successful works in the 1973 event were those that attempted to work with the surrounding environment, where 'sculptor and landscape combined to speak with one voice.'[149] This dialogue between environment and art, for instance, can be seen in the artworks by Domenico de Clario, King Fisher, and John Davis. For his aptly titled *Tree*

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[146] Green, *Peripheral Vision*, 34.
[147] Letter from Tom McCullough to participating sculptors, 22 September 1972, cited in Graeme Sturgeon, *Sculpture at Mildura: The Story of the Mildura Sculpture Triennial, 1961-1982*, (Mildura: Mildura City Council, 1985), 50.
[148] Noel Hutchinson, 'Sculpturscape '73,' *Art and Australia* 11, no. 1 (1973): 76.
[149] Sturgeon, *Sculpture at Mildura*, 55.

Piece (1973), Davis wrapped trees in various materials. De Clario also used the trees growing on site, creating a string maze wrapped around and between existing logs, trees and branches. Kevin Mortensen's *Objects in a Landscape* (1973) comprised a number of rope and bitumen mounds dotted throughout the dry scrub in response to the surrounding environment. Clive Murray-White responded in a slightly different way, making work

22. Kevin Mortensen, *Objects in a Landscape* (1973)

that referred to the environment's previous history as a rubbish tip, stating that his work was intended 'to work well in that environment by not confronting it, but existing in it, rather like the way that we stumble across bits of old machinery, junk. After all it, was a reclaimed garbage tip, and there were many reminders of that as one walked around the site.'[150]

Artists in the following Mildura Sculpture Triennials continued to explore notions of site-specificity. In 1975, for instance, Mortensen moved into an empty shop site, hiring an actor to play out his elaborate deception, *Delicatessen* (1975). Davis' sparse installation, *Place* (1975), consisting of a small white painted board, black and white photographs and film, was an investigation into the sculptural process.[151] Alison Cousland and Margaret Bell planted a flower garden amongst the Mildura scrub, and de Clario created another scatter piece, described as a 'garbage garden' by Sturgeon, which was 'unfocused, hermetic, and unrelated to any existing tradition or model for the making of sculpture.'[152] Sturgeon adds:

> In addition to the various forms of sculpture which could be accommodated within some kind of traditional definition, (installations, earthworks) the 1975 Mildura exhibition included other activities only remotely related to sculpture and which had crept in as it were, under the wire. Video, film, performance, photography, gardening, rituals, kite flying and various arcane forms of conceptual art all claimed to be 'sculpture.[153]

What Sturgeon highlights was the dilemma artists and critics faced when trying to categorise and name these extremely diverse new artistic forms in this period. As

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[150] Ibid.
[151] Ibid., 78.
[152] Ibid., 70.
[153] Ibid., 71.

Donald Brook, an influential critic and proponent of this new art, wrote in the late 1980s: 'the post-object art of the 1970s to which I believed I was contributing was not one movement but at least a dozen, travelling in almost as many directions.'[154] It was clear that the art being produced at Mildura no longer fit neatly into the traditional categories of painting and sculpture. Articles and essays from the 1970s excitedly discuss these new art forms, yet for want of a better word they were still predominantly referred to as 'sculpture',[155] or to a lesser extent 'earthworks', 'impermanent art,' 'post-object art,' 'dematerialised' art,[156] or even (sarcastically) 'other schemes.' Whatever the word used, Sturgeon claims that the 1973 *Sculpturscape* indicated that the very concept of 'sculpture' had changed, a message that is emphasised throughout his book.[157] In a *Nation Review* article, Brook assessed that 'the new art is not primarily the manifestation of a positive doctrine … it is rather a range of objects, activities and ideas formed in general by negating or inverting one or more features of the traditionally established paradigm of art.'[158]

1.10 The Sixties and Seventies

It is important to acknowledge the massive shift in the understanding and production of art from the 1960s to the 70s in Australia, enough for Thomas to confidently name 1969 as the year that Australian art changed.[159] In the 1960s, painting was the ruling art form in a conservative art scene. White male painters such as Brett Whiteley, Sidney Nolan, William Dobell and Arthur Boyd fill the pages of *Art and Australia* throughout the 60s, just as they did the galleries.[160] The less frequent articles on sculpture would usually note the art form's neglect, such as Elwyn Dennis' rather poetic lament: 'sculpture is the

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[154] Brook cited in Green, 1995 p. 13.

[155] Daniel Thomas suggested in 1976 that sculpture is 'claimed' for non-sculptural practices because of the medium's 'prestige,' referring to examples as extreme as Joseph Beuys' argument that 'the formation of a thought is already sculpture.' Daniel Thomas, 'Art and Life: the Actuality of Sculpture,' in *Anything Goes: Art in Australia 1970 – 1980*, edited by Paul Taylor (Melbourne: Art & Text, 1984), 104.

[156] A reference to Lucy Lippard's 1973 essay, 'Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object.'

[157] Sturgeon, *Sculpture at Mildura*, 60.

[158] Brook cited in Sturgeon, *Sculpture at Mildura*, 60.

[159] Thomas, 'Art and Life,' 98.

[160] Even though Art and Australia was the nation's first and only art journal from 1963 until 1970, international journals, such as *Art International*, included the work of Australian artists and writers, and were read and widely distributed before and throughout this period. Thomas, 'The Artists and their Australian Context,' 2.

difficult one. Of Australian arts, sculpture is not only the neglected offspring, it's the skeleton in the closet, the ghost in the attic and the ants in the kitchen.'[161]

However, it was not only the art that changed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Alternatives to the state galleries and commercial galleries were established, such as the Sydney-based artist-run space Inhibodress in 1970. Inhibodress showed experimental works by artists such as Mike Parr and Peter Kennedy, and while it was only in existence for two years, the gallery was influential in the early careers of a number of young artists, and provided an alternative exhibition space to the conservative large public institutions. Melbourne's Pinacotheca also opened in 1970, and although it was a commercial gallery, it nonetheless supported alternative art forms, showing installations and performances by artists such as Robert Rooney, Mortensen and de Clario. With the exception of Pinacotheca and Tolarno in Melbourne, and Gallery A and Watters Gallery in Sydney, commercial galleries in Australia in the 1970s tended to ignore the new art, preferring to continue promoting the boardroom-suitable Colour Field or formalist abstraction paintings of the 1960s.[162]

The large institutions were tolerant of the new art forms to an extent. Green assesses that one of the main concerns of 1970s Australian art was to 'recreate art institutions':[163]

> The art of the 1970s was characterised by pluralism, but the result of pluralism tended towards a dependence on institutions which were, in turn, occasionally forced to set aside inertia and conservatism to confront the new art… If most experimental art was critical of the museum, it was equally true that much 1970s art could be seen as art only within the museum or the walls of commercial galleries, which were doggedly identified by artists as places where 'anything goes.'[164]

The relationship between artists practising this new art and the country's public museums had a paradoxical relationship. While the most 'radical' art of 70s was shown in these large public museums, the museums also practised strict exclusionary policies, particularly when political issues were in question.[165] In 1975, protests by politicians and visiting American curators resulted in the Art and Language exhibitions at the AGNSW

[161] Elwyn Dennis, 'Sculpture past and present,' *Art and Australia* 5, no. 1 (1968): 600.
[162] Green, *Peripheral Vision*, 31-2.
[163] Ibid., 13.
[164] Ibid., 29.
[165] Ibid., 31.

being banned.[166] At the NGV that same year, the then Director, Gordon Thomson, ordered the partial removal of Domenico de Clario's *Elemental Landscapes*, prompting angry protests by artists and students.[167] De Clario's installation explored similar themes to his works at Mildura and Pinacotheca, yet as Green points out 'remained largely lost to the museums that they covertly and poignantly addressed.'[168]

23. Domenico de Clario,
Elemental Landscapes (1975)

De Clario's *Elemental Landscapes* was admittedly provocative. The installation made reference to two Colonial landscape paintings: Longstaff's bushfire painting and Phillips Fox's *Moonrise*. These paintings were displayed along with dust collected by the museum cleaners and other found objects, such as photographs, rusty cans, and the contents of the artist's car boot. According to the artist, these 'discarded objects of an urbanised consumer society formed the landscapes of the unnatural world,'[169] thereby challenging romanticised notions of Australia's natural environment. Each 'elemental landscape' corresponded to the physical space of the gallery's Murdoch Court. The installation originally included an active heater and full kerosene tin, although he eventually agreed to switch off the heater and exhibit an empty tin. Considering these objects' proximity to the precious paintings in the gallery's collection, it is easy to see why the museum director was alarmed. The director deemed the installation "'offensive to the paintings' and 'dangerous' to the other work in the collection,"[170] but ultimately the threat was more symbolic that physical. De Clario's installation not only challenged the very definition and nature of art, but also the museum's collecting policies. More specifically, he questioned the ongoing relevance of the gallery's prized landscapes, with their 'sentimentalised view of Europeanised nineteenth-century Colonial painting,'[171] to an increasingly urbanised Australia. De Clario admits that at the time, there was no 'critical context', and that rather than seeing

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[166] Ibid.
[167] Ibid.,16.
[168] Ibid.
[169] Domenico de Clario, *The Seventh Arit (Elemental Landscapes: 1975-1993)*. Exhibition catalogue (Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1993), n.p.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.

the work as a serious examination of Australian identity, the trustees accused the artist of 'using the collection to "bounce [his] work off".'[172]

Interestingly, the artist was invited back to the NGV in 1993 to exhibit a reincarnated version of *Elemental Landscapes*. Adapted to accommodate the museum's insurance policies (no live flames still), the invitation can be seen as an apology of sorts, but also an announcement to the art world that the institution had changed and was supportive of these newer art forms.

In the 1970s, art museums still revolved around the notion of permanent collections, which largely comprised self-contained artworks.[173] While one of the key roles of the large public institutions is to acquire artworks, Green claims that Australian museums in 1970s and 80s often rejected the acquisition of the new experimental art forms, 'justified by an alleged unsuitability for museum display.'[174] However, Green also concedes that in retrospect some attempt was made by public institutions during the 1970s and early 80s to purchase photographic documentation of performances, albeit small.[175]

1.11 The Eighties

Many commentators simplify the Australian art scene in the 1980s, arguing that after the experimental and confrontational decade of the 70s, artists returned to more traditional media, such as printing, self-contained sculpture, and in particular, painting. However, exhibition catalogues and articles from that era indicate a more diverse scene. Regular exhibitions such as the Biennale of Sydney and the survey series Perspecta, which started in 1981 and continued biannually at the AGNSW until 2000, showed work such as Michiel Dolk and Merilyn Fairskye's site-specific *Positions Vacant – Painters and Decorators. Refs. Required* (1983). The large 'disposable mural' (as the artists termed it) at the 1983 Perspecta, was described by a questioning Keith Looby as 'a vision of disbelief, [depicting] gallery trustees, directors and guards collaboratively propping up

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[172] Ibid.
[173] Thomas, 'Mildura Sculpture Triennial,' 50.
[174] Green, *Peripheral Vision*, 31.
[175] Ibid., 30.
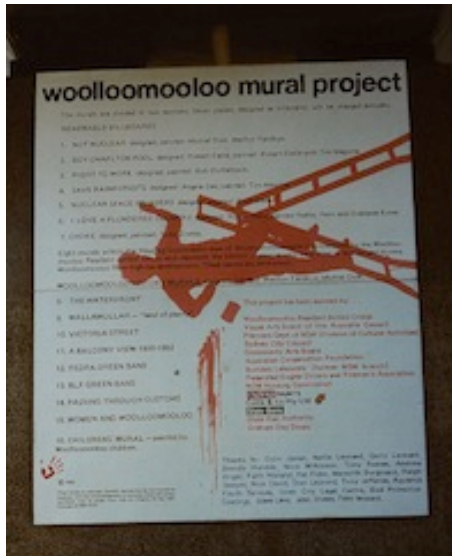
24. Michiel Dolk and Merilyn Fairskye,
Woolloomooloo mural project (1982)

propaganda art.'[176] The artists' other work, *Documentation for a Woolloomooloo Mural* (1982), was located 'in-situ' in the nearby Sydney suburb.

The function of permanent public art in Australia also came under the spotlight in the eighties, with the eventual removal of Ron Robertson-Swann's *Vault* (1980) (also derogatorily known as *Yellow Peril)*. The bright yellow abstract sculpture was commissioned for Melbourne's new civic square, but was removed after a year due to public protest.[177] It signalled a move away from the 1960s and 70s notion that abstract sculpture was a timeless art, towards a public art that had a greater dialogue with the community and surrounding space, in other words, towards site-specific art. Interestingly, Serra's *Tilted Arc* was also installed in the early eighties, and while it survived at the intended site longer than *Vault*, it was also eventually removed following public outcry. The development of Australian public art will be considered in detail in chapter five, from Robertson-Swann's *Vault*, to the recent interpretive installation by Brook Andrew, *Warrang* (2012) outside the MCA, which relates to the history of the waterfront site and the artist's Aboriginal heritage.

25. Ron Robertson-Swann *Vault* (1980), city square.

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[176] Keith Looby, 'A Kaleidoscope of Artists: Australian Perspecta 1983,' *Art and Australia* 21, no. 2 (1983): 172.

[177] *Vault* was moved to Batman Park in 1981, and then again to its current site outside ACCA in 2002.

1.12 The Nineties and Beyond

Australia's public museums continued to grow in number, and by the early 1990s, a number of galleries devoted solely to contemporary art had been established. The Power Bequest Collection, previously housed at the University of Sydney, moved to a large Art Deco building at Circular Quay, and renamed the MCA in 1991. In addition, other smaller spaces opened, such as the Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA), ACCA in Melbourne, and Artspace in Sydney. The larger state-run institutions, which had once rejected the political and post-object art of the 1970s, also became more accommodating of these alternative art forms, best illustrated by the de Clario's repeat *Elemental Landscapes* in 1993.

26. Ross Gibson and Kate Richards, *Bystander* (2006)

In the 1990s, artists and curators started to look beyond the white-walled art institutions to more unconventional exhibition spaces. Coco Fusco & Guillermo Gomez-Pena performed *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit Sydney* at the Australian Museum in Sydney as part of the postcolonial themed 1992 Biennale of Sydney, *The Boundary Rider*. In addition to his 1996 thesis on site-specific art in colonial heritage buildings mentioned earlier, Goldberg curated a series of shows throughout the late 1990s in Sydney's Elizabeth Bay House called *Artists in the House!*, which included works by artists such as Ken Unsworth, Anne Graham, and Aleksander Danko. In an attempt to enliven the Grainger Museum, artists Ros Bandt, and later, Louise Weaver and Caroline Eskdale, were invited to respond to the collection. Bandt produced a sound artwork, and Weaver and Eskdale quietly integrated their sculptures into the museum displays. Other examples include Ross Gibson and Kate Richards' interactive *Life after Wartime* series at the Police and Justice Museum, where they worked with the institution's neglected archives; Peter Cripps' installation at the Museum of Economic Botany in the Adelaide Botanic Gardens; and Fred Wilson's

Viewing the Invisible (1998) at the Ian Potter Museum of Art, where he drew from the university's medical history, art, and anatomy museums collections. Also significant was the multi-sited *Archives and the Everyday* (1997) where artists, including Susan Norrie, Anne Brennan, Robert MacPherson, Fiona Hall, and Anne Ferran, were assigned to install works of art in a range of Canberra institutions responsible for the management of Australia's public archives, such as the Australian War Memorial, National Library of Australia, and the Australian Archives in Old Parliament House.

27. Mary Scott, *Every Minute of Every Day* (2009)

In Tasmania, the use of historic homes and sites has become a recent feature of the state's 10 Days on the Island program. Port Arthur, the notorious convict penitentiary, was host to over twenty artists in 2007, including Fiona Hall, Brigita Ozolins, Leigh Hobba and Anne Ferran, all of whom produced work in response to the loaded site. The 2009 program expanded to incorporate multiple historic colonial homes throughout the state, and artists like Mary Scott, John Vella and Lucy Bleach made work in response to the institutions' architecture and collections.

Museums, particularly those that examine Australia's social and cultural history, have discovered that art projects, either temporary or permanent, are yet another strategy in which to interpret or communicate stories of the past. The curator Peter Emmett, for instance, collaborated with artists in the establishment of the Hyde Park Barracks and Museum of Sydney (MoS) in the 1990s, arguing that unlike historians, artists can get away with poetics, and have the liberty of re-imagining histories in alternative ways. The recognition that art has the ability to not just communicate and interpret but also *question* Australia's cultural heritage is a key driver for many of these new art projects in non-art museums. The relationship between the host institution and artist may not always be amicable, as in the case of Goldberg's Elizabeth Bay House projects, however, the presence of art in these sites can often increase public interest and maintain a critical dialogue between museum, artist and public.

28. Brook Andrew, *Warrang* (2012)

The art projects discussed in this section, such as the Mildura Sculpture Triennials, *Wrapped Coast,* and Domenico de Clario's *Elemental Landscapes,* have been selected to demonstrate the development of experimental art practice in Australia from the late 1960s onwards. The 'sculptures' produced for the triennials in the early seventies challenged the very meaning of art, and while writers and critics were unable to define the new art forms, they are among the earliest Australian site-specific and installation artworks exhibited in high-profile exhibitions. The development of site-specific art, from Davis' *Tree Piece* to Andrew's 2012 *Warrang*, illustrates the way in which the art form has become mainstream in Australian art practice, as well as the changing attitudes of the major state galleries and evolving themes addressed by artists.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have established the key existing literature on site-specific art, as well as relevant texts on museum studies, and place, and have outlined many of the issues affecting contemporary art practice in relation to site-specificity. I have also examined the development of alternative and experimental art in Australia, and have highlighted the role of the major state galleries, curators, critics and philanthropists in the rise of site-specific art.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there have been no in-depth studies of site-specific art in Australia, and the dominant texts on the art form tend to concentrate on examples from the United States of America, and to a lesser extent, Western Europe. One of the aims of my thesis, therefore, is to apply existing knowledge on site-specific art to Australian examples. Additionally, existing models, such as those developed by Kwon and Meyer, do not fully account for the range of site-specific art projects considered in this research, and so I extended the models, developing my own list of strategies used in the development of museum-sited artworks. In these art projects, I

have observed recurring themes, many of them unique to Australia, such as the lack of female and Aboriginal representation in the nation's official histories as conveyed by museums. Consequently, my models were largely developed by tracking these popular areas of inquiry. Furthermore, while my thesis focuses on Australian examples, it is possible to also apply my models at a global level. This chapter does not pretend to be a complete history of site-specific art theory or Australian art, but rather, it establishes a foundation upon which the following chapters will build.

Chapter Two

Semiotics and Spatial Politics:
The Art Museum

Which some call fine, and some call frantic;
While others are or would seem as sick
Of repetitions nicknamed Classic.
For my part all men must avow
Whatever I was, I'm classic now.

Lord Byron[1]

Site-specific art developed in the late 1960s, partly as a reaction against the restrictions
and dominance of the art museum, and so it seems almost contradictory to be discussing
site-specific art within these institutions. With many contemporary art galleries still
aspiring to the Modernist 'white cube' aesthetic, opportunities to react to, or even be
inspired by such spaces, might also appear scarce. Despite these limitations, the museum
remains a meaningful and loaded place, and as will be demonstrated in this chapter,
Australian galleries have collectively inspired a significant number of site-specific
artworks.

The artworks discussed here will illustrate the complexities of the museum as an
exhibition space, with a particular emphasis on artworks that engage spatially with the
museum as site. Examples of this engagement include a response to the physical or
semiotic aspects of the museum, or the politics of gallery layout, architecture and display.
I argue that it is the more unusual features of the museum that encourage site-specific
response, such as the AGNSW's decorative entrance vestibule, or the QAG's 'water
mall.' These features act as 'hot spots' and have repeatedly been the focus of
installations that relate to the unique architectural space. Furthermore, despite Kwon's
assertion that artworks that fall within her phenomenological model, that is, works that
relate to a fixed site in a physical or spatial sense, are less critical than those that involve
multiple, or mobile sites, I will demonstrate through examples that works that sit in

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[1] Cited in L. Mordaunt Crook, *The Greek Revival: Neo-Classical Attitudes in British Architecture 1760-1870* (London: John Murray, 1972), 66.

spatial dialogue with the art museum site can be far more complex than suggested in her text. Additionally, although many of them have elements of institutional critique, they do not fall comfortably into her definition of this second model. Instead, I propose that in line with my own models introduced earlier in this thesis, we should consider these artworks in terms of the artist's intention and strategy, as well as the relationship between artwork and museum.

This chapter will critically analyse the semiotic qualities of the art museum, along with artworks that respond to these spaces, in four parts. The first section looks at the 'classical museum,' with a focus on the AGNSW, a neo-classical building that not only demonstrates the evolution of art spaces in Australia, but also echoes the development of Australian culture, from the aspirational British colony that looked 'home' for architectural inspiration, to the current white-walled Modernist extensions. The distinctive neo-classical façade, entrance, and decorative colonial art rooms have been the focus of many site-specific artworks that operate in dialogue, or in reaction to, these complex semiotic spaces. I argue that compared to these older sites, which provide a semiotic 'hook' to which artists respond, the white walled Modernist gallery space is somewhat limiting. The section also examines the way in which museums convey a hierarchy of value through collecting policies, display methods, and gallery layout, and I look at a number of significant artworks that highlight the ideologies of the institution.

The second section examines the 'Modern museum,' using the QAG as a key example. The gallery's distinctive 'water mall' - a flowing body of water dividing the gallery space - is a bizarre architectural inclusion for a building that requires strict humidity control. This unusual feature actively encourages site-specific response. As big name museum architects, such as Frank Gehry and Zaha Hadid, increasingly look to art, rather than theory for inspiration, there are complaints that the art comes almost secondary to the building itself.[2] So while art is increasingly responding to the physical and spatial features of the museum, the architecture is also responding to this style of site-specific art, resulting in a strange blurring of roles, or at least distinction between, creative disciplines. Comparatively, the QAG's newer site – the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA) – which epitomises the contemporary white cube space, is lacking in such distinctive

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[2] This subject is explored in depth in Hal Foster's recent book *The Art-Architecture Complex* (2011).

features and thus tends not to encourage such artworks, although artists have produced site-specific artworks in the gallery's distinctive toilets, for instance.

The tendency to respond site-specifically to a museum's odd or distinctive features will be examined also in relation to the TMAG, Australia's only state museum that combines art, social and natural history. Despite the fact that many galleries are seen as white-walled 'blank slates,' it is often the individual differences between museums, such as unique architectural features or collections, that tend to inspire site-specific artworks. For the TMAG, this distinction is the combination of art and natural history museum. Site-specific artworks often incorporate the non-art aspects of the museum, by either using natural history specimens or artefacts, or installing work in areas such as the zoology or geology departments. The differences in display methods and aesthetics between the usually strictly separated art and museum sections will be discussed in relation to key artwork examples.

The last section examines the recent worldwide trend of converting ex-industrial sites into art museums. Certain features of these sites tend to be retained and emphasised, such as rusty machinery, roughly hewn beams and/or the building's façade. In Australia, these sites frequently have a complex colonial history. The emphasis on the building's history and industrial aesthetics have led me to term these conversions the 'raw museum.' Two exhibitions by Mike Parr at the ex-industrial Cockatoo Island and the TMAG's Bond Store, respectively, demonstrate the influence of an artwork's surroundings on our interpretation of a work. Parr's insistence that he use the rough, dark, Bond Store as an exhibition space, despite the museum's original intention otherwise, reflects the growing interest in unusual exhibition spaces. This popularity can be explained in part as a response to the restrictions of the minimalist white cube space, as these sites, with their complex semiotic environment and/or history provide artists with a hook to which they can respond. Additionally, I use Parr's exhibitions to outline an extension to Kwon's existing models of site-specificity. Recently, artists have been installing existing artworks *site-specifically* in dialogue with the exhibition space, altering or enhancing the existing concepts embedded in the works of art. Kwon's schema does not allow for this category of site-specific response, and so this section of the chapter outlines the significance of this recent trend.

The relationship between artists and art institutions is not necessarily a comfortable one, and in the late 1960s and 70s this was particularly the case. As mentioned in chapter one, a number of artists and writers during this period worked to expose the ideologies of the museum. Daniel Buren, in his pivotal essay 'Function of the Museum,' argued that in its aesthetic role, 'the museum is the frame and effective support upon which the work is inscribed/composed. It is at once the centre in which the action takes place and the single (topographical and cultural) viewpoint for the work.'[3] Brian O'Doherty similarly wrote that 'with postmodernism, the gallery space is no longer "neutral"… The white wall's apparent neutrality is an illusion,'[4] and asks 'is the artist who accepts the gallery space conforming with the social order?'[5]

In *Relative Values*, Buck and Dodd also describe the deceptive qualities of the Modern museum's space:

> Deprived not simply of all distraction but of a context for the art other than the space that it is in, the visitor attends to the art object in its own right, which is placed, icon-like, in its own space against the dazzling white wall. And in that brilliant space does not anything that is displayed appear to be art?[6]

In other words, the framing effect of the museum has the ability to enshrine almost any object as art, whether it is a urinal or a scrunched ball of paper.

The museum is also referred to as a kind of shrine, a 'temple of art,'[7] or 'mystical body of art.'[8] An extension of this notion is that the authority of the museum alone, regardless of its exterior architecture, forms a type of barrier. Henri Lefebvre, explaining the prohibitive effect of 'abstract space', writes:

> It is impossible to say how often one pauses uncomfortably for a moment on some threshold – the entrance of a church, office or 'public' building, or the point of accepting a prohibition of some kind. Most such prohibitions are invisible. Gates and railings, ditches and other material barriers are merely the most extreme instances of this kind of separation.[9]

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[3] Buren, 'Function of the Museum,' 68.
[4] O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 79.
[5] Ibid., 81.
[6] Buck, *Relative Values*, 139.
[7] Ibid., 142.
[8] Buren, 'Function of the Museum', 68.
[9] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 319.

Identifying the museum as a 'heterotopia,' Foucault too, describes the inaccessibility of such institutions. To enter, he observes, 'the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures.'[10]

The effect of this described prohibition is compounded by the physical characteristics of many museums. O'Doherty argues,

> A gallery is constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church. The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you click along clinically, or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly, resting the feet while the eyes have at the wall. The art is free, as the saying used to go, 'to take on its own life.' The discreet desk may be the only piece of furniture. In this context a standing ashtray becomes almost a sacred object, just as the firehose in the modern museum looks not like a firehose but an esthetic conundrum.[11]

O'Doherty describes an extreme example of the Modernist gallery space, and in a literal sense, one rarely found in the major state galleries in Australia.[12] The prime location of many of the galleries – such as the MCA, AGNSW, GOMA and the NGV – means that windows are often included in the design of the building to capture the waterfront or cityscape views. Additionally, most of the larger galleries have been renovated in a haphazard fashion, keeping older sections while adding more and more extensions to accommodate larger collections and temporary exhibitions.

Paint generously supplied by

Dulux

Seared Earth P09.F8
Dreamland P44.B2
Soft Straw P13.H4
Elusive Blue P38.B1
Squids Ink P42.B7
Dairy Made P13.H8
White Flag P05.A1H ½ strength
Miracle P43.B4
Royal Curtsy P42.H9

29. Dulux sponsorship plaque at the NGV

While these galleries still use many of the aesthetic devices described by O'Doherty – a lack of shadows, white walls, specific hanging systems – it is often the departure from this rigid Modernist gallery aesthetic, whether it be the gallery's architecture, or even flaws, that invite site-specific art. The vestibule in the AGNSW has been the subject of multiple site-specific artworks, as has the water mall in the QAG and the unique combination of natural history and art at the TMAG. It is important, also, not to take the notion of the white cube

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[10] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces,' *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 26.
[11] O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 15.
[12] However, it describes well many of the smaller contemporary galleries such as the Experimental Art Foundation in Adelaide, and Artspace in Sydney.

literally. A wall can be painted yellow instead of white (as has recently been the case at the Dulux-sponsored NGV), but the same general principles exist. The subtleties of O'Doherty's theories seem to be missed by many museum directors, or at least ignored. A decade after writing his influential book, he critically observes that 'the gallery space has again become the unchallenged area of discourse.'[13]

Despite its prejudices and ideologies, the museum remains central to the art world, and is a coveted exhibition space for many artists. The museum provides a critical audience, notoriety, and a much desired spot on an artist's CV. In recent years too, a number of specific museums for contemporary and experimental art have been established, and even those traditionally associated with conservatism such as the large state galleries, are now relatively accommodating of alternative art forms. There is also a growing acknowledgement that the museum or art institution is not limited to the physical boundaries of the building's walls. An artist working outside the museum is merely extending the reach of the art institution, and public spaces are no longer necessarily considered more pure or innocent than the museum.

Museums provide an important role in the display and development of art in this country and for an artist who works outside the traditional methods of art display, such as in the area of site-specific environmental art, this museum-orientated dominance can pose a problem. Yet, for some environmental artists the museum's artificiality can act as a foil, or even be turned upon as a subject of interrogation. The museum, rather than being a neutral space, acts as a key participant in gallery-based site-specific environmental art. Artists might respond to museum display methods, the framed landscape, the tightly regulated humidity and temperature controls, or the museum's isolation from the 'real' world.

Regardless, the expansion of exhibition spaces outside the museum in the 1970s was key to the development of site-specific and installation art in Australia, best illustrated in the range of experimental art forms generated at the Mildura Sculpture Triennials. Outdoor exhibitions and sculpture parks, festivals and Artist Run Initiatives are commonplace nowadays, yet in the 1970s, opportunities beyond the museum walls were somewhat

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[13] Published as an afterword in the revised 1999 edition. O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 113.

limited. There is no doubt, for instance, that McCullough's invitation to work outside the gallery in dialogue with the scrubby Mildura landscape, even if still within the institutional framework, was a key contributor to early site-specific art in Australia.

2.1 The Classical Space: Art Gallery of New South Wales

The AGNSW, with its architectural mix of historical styles and trends, demonstrates the way in which the semiotics of a gallery space can affect not only a viewer's reading of the artworks within, but also inspire site-specific works of art. The building, with its neo-classical sandstone portico entranceway similar to that of a Greek temple, is flanked by bronze statues of horses and their riders, and surrounded by the greenery of the city's domain and botanic gardens. Significantly, it is the gallery's distinctive features, such as the equestrian statues, richly decorated colonial courts, and grand entrance vestibule that are continually the site of artistic response. As I mentioned in the introduction to the chapter, I will demonstrate that contemporary artworks responding to the physical or spatial aspects of the museum frequently address multiple and complex issues, despite the fact that Kwon infers that this model of site-specificity is less critical than her mobile model.

30. AGNSW exterior

The façade of the AGNSW was built in 1902, [14] and has been retained as the entrance and the public 'face' of the gallery; yet a quick circle of the gallery's rear exterior reveals its Modernist architectural truth. Such an entrance is not uncommon in museums and art galleries around the world, and as James Putnam argues, this type of classical architecture 'conveys an impression of power, religion and permanence.'[15] In addition to the invisible barriers described by Lefebvre and Foucault, and before the

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[14] The current façade is based on the New South Wales Colonial Architect W.L Vernon's 1895 design. The gallery was originally built in 1885, designed by John Horbury Hunt. However, Hunt's architecture was not popular with the trustees, and little of the original building remains today. Daniel Thomas, 'Building History,' *Art and Australia* 10, no. 1 (1972): 43.

[15] Putnam, *Art and Artifact*, 7.

viewer even steps inside the gallery, the physical exterior of the gallery has suggested notions of reverence and devotion.

31. AGNSW Vestibule

Inside, the neo-classical atrium entrance proclaims grandeur, decorated in various coloured marbles, symmetrically positioned columns, classical statues and fresh flower displays. By contrast, the area beyond the entrance is a vast Modern space - the result of a significant 1970s renovation to the then leaky, run-down, and dated building.[16] Following entry and to the right, the original old galleries can be seen through the large decorative archways embedded in the white walls. David Saunders, in his 1972 article on this juxtaposition of architectural styles, wrote that 'the meeting of the old and the new is a matter of special consideration… The choice has been to arrange the junction as if the new approaches the old but does not actually join.'[17] He also notes that the 'pre-twentieth-century works belong beyond those arches, younger art is in the new section,'[18] a policy that largely continues to this day.[19]

32. AGNSW vestibule looking through to the 1972 addition.

33. AGNSW interior

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[16] Annette Van den Bosch, *The Australian Art World: Aesthetics in a Global Market* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2005), 120.
[17] Saunders, David. 'Gallery Building.' *Art and Australia* 10, no. 1 (1972): 47.
[18] Ibid.
[19] In late 2009, the museum curators hung a selection of their Indigenous art collection in one of these old rooms, the significance of which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The art gallery's development from a woolshed-like structure in the late-nineteenth century to its current mix of classical and modern extensions, somewhat echoes the changes in the values, art and culture in Australia. The building of the current façade was initiated just prior to federation when New South Wales was a self-governing colony; however, the growing nationalism that ultimately resulted in the Commonwealth of the Australia, also contributed to the desire to establish a national art gallery.[20] The likeness of the AGNSW façade to that of London's National Gallery, the British Museum, or Edinburgh's National Gallery of Scotland, suggests not only the continued influence of the 'mother country', but also the drive to establish Australia as learned and sophisticated.[21] The fact that the gallery trustees insisted on the somewhat dated 'classical temple,' rather than Vernon's originally proposed, and relatively individual, Gothic-style structure,[22] illustrates the cultural conservatism of Australian society at the time. The bronze horse and rider statues were added later: *The Offerings of Peace* and *The Offerings of War* (1923) by Gilbert Boyes. Placed in mimicry of the exterior decoration of many older European galleries, the sculptures also illustrate Australia's

34. Gilbert Boyes *The Offerings of Peace* (1923)

then continuing conservatism, as well as a lack of independent style and identity. Despite the fact that they were produced after World War I, Michael Hedger observes that they 'emphasise nineteenth century nationalism and might and the horses' defiant expressions suggest a readiness and alertness contrary with more contemporary memorials.'[23]

The extensions that took place in the 1970s similarly reflected Australia's changing attitude towards the arts, as well as the changes in art itself. The renovations coincided with a significant increase in public investment in the arts, with Gough Whitlam

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[20] The institution's name was changed to the National Art Gallery of New South Wales in 1883, and although it became a redundant name after the 1901 federation of colonies, it was only changed back to its original name in 1958. Daniel Thomas, 'Institutional History,' *Art and Australia* 10, no. 1 (1972): 41.

[21] This assertion of nationhood echoes the popularity of neoclassical architecture in the United States of America a century earlier, at a time when they were establishing a young united nation.

[22] Art Gallery of New South Wales, 'History of the Building,' Art Gallery of New South Wales. http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/about-us/history/history-of-the-building/

[23] Michael Hedger, *Public Sculpture in Australia* (Roseville: Craftsman House, 1995), 109.

establishing the Australia Council for the Arts in 1973, extending the council established in 1968 by the earlier Prime Minister, John Gorton. The gallery, which had previously been more façade than depth, was extended to include more exhibition space, as well as educational facilities, café and gift shop – facilities demanded by the modern visitor. The Asian art gallery established as part of the subsequent 1988 national bicentenary extension, again, reflected Australia's growing interest in, and acknowledgement of, our geographic neighbours.[24] Then in 1994, although relatively late, the opening of a gallery space devoted solely to Aboriginal art, 'Yiribana', signalled the gallery's eventual recognition of the importance of Australian Indigenous culture.

Particularly significant is the institution's method of classifying and separating art from various eras and ethnicities. The distinct areas of the gallery, such as Yiribana and the Asian art space, subtly suggest varying levels of worth through wall colour, accessibility or gallery layout. These largely artificial divisions are often invisible to the visitor. For instance, it seems appropriate that the pre-twentieth-century works, with their gaudy gold frames are hung in the original galleries. The walls are painted in dark reds, mustard or olive, and some even have the original four hanging rails, accommodating the salon style hanging that was once customary. Interestingly, this outmoded style of hanging still seems fitting in these spaces. By contrast, the white-walled renovated spaces on the same level have low concrete-grid ceilings, and the works strictly adhere to the typical Modernist way of hanging, each work in its own space.

35. AGNSW Grand Courts

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[24] The development of the Asian art gallery also reflected the research interests of the then director, Edmund Capon.

The allocation of colonial art into older, and more traditionally decorated gallery spaces, while twentieth-century and contemporary art are hung in the renovated, white-walled areas of the gallery is common to many of Australia's other older institutions, such as the South Australian and Tasmanian state galleries. Just as the gold frames that adorn these pre-twentieth-century paintings are often invisible to the gallery viewer, the red walls and dense floor-to-ceiling hanging in the TMAG's colonial collection room often goes unnoticed, despite the influence of this semiotic environment on our viewing of the art.[25]

Like its grand façade, the AGNSW's pre-twentieth-century collection rooms communicate notions of permanence and worth. The coloured walls, patterned parquetry floors and decorative arches, along with the ornate and often disproportionately large gilt frames, powerfully connote value and importance. Yet, as described earlier, this embellished environment is reserved for pre-twentieth-century art, and the very idea of placing contemporary art into such an environment seems inappropriate. An exception to this rule is when artists deliberately incorporate this environment into their work, such as Mike Parr's performance *Major/Minor* (2008), and Gordon Bennett's *Untitled (Concept for the Art Gallery of New South Wales)* as part of the 2008 Biennale of Sydney.

36. Gordon Bennett, *Untitled (Concept for the Art Gallery of New South Wales)* (2008)

Gordon Bennett's artwork challenged the institutionalised division between the gallery's European-style colonial art and Aboriginal art collections, as communicated by the building's layout. His work proposed that the gallery end its segregation policy and move some of the colonial paintings into the Yiribana gallery and vice versa. The proposal extended also to the hanging of the works, with the European artworks being turned upside down. The relocated colonial paintings were to be turned upside down, referring perhaps to the way in which Aboriginal artworks are frequently discussed in terms of abstraction, and the subsequent accidental mis-hanging of paintings in an incorrect orientation. The work addressed the concerns

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[25] In late 2011, the TMAG commenced significant renovations. Many areas described in this thesis, such as the colonial gallery and zoology displays are no longer open to the public, although the issues discussed in relation to these spaces are still valid and relevant.

expressed by many visitors to the gallery: that while the nineteenth-century colonial collection is on the 'ground' floor at the entrance to the gallery, housed in the 'Grand Courts' (as they are officially called), the epitome of classic museum grandeur with its decorative arches, hanging rails and parquetry floors; the Yiribana gallery is relegated to the institutionally white-walled and concrete-floored 'basement' ('lower level three'), a newer section of the gallery.[26]

37. AGNSW Yiribana Gallery

The location of collections is never accidental, and because the museum is fundamentally a physical space, values are communicated via their placement. The authority of the museum to promote certain artists, movements and art forms at the expense of others, to exclude and homogenise, Ian Burn argues, is vocalised through these physical spaces - 'a spatial expression of power relations in the art industry.'[27] Bennett's artwork therefore was highly political, and the gallery's response embarrassingly token.[28]

The 'proposal', which was part of the 2008 Sydney Biennale and therefore not directly commissioned by the gallery, was unsurprisingly rejected; however, the scale models of Court 8 and Yiribana galleries were displayed outside the museum café on the second floor. But why the café location? Surely, the work would have functioned more critically if it had been shown in the Grand Court? Perhaps the café location was chosen to neutralise the artist's critical stance, or would its location in the gallery's showcase collection be seen to disrupt the viewer experience? It could be as simple as the

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[26] The politics extends also to gallery upkeep. In 2011, the respected Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander curator, Hetti Perkins, resigned from the gallery citing the lack of refurbishment of the Yiribana Gallery. While new Asian wings have opened, the shop and café renovated, and most other galleries updated, Yiribana has not changed for almost 20 years. Hetti wrote in her resignation letter to the AGNSW that her decision was made because of the museum's inaction 'to bring it up to the standard of other spaces … and to address the important issues of inadequate climate control and visibility within the building.' Joyce Morgan, 'Letter Reveals Frustration that Forced Perkins to Quit Gallery.'

[27] Burn, 'The Art Museum, More or Less,' 168.

[28] However, it should be acknowledged that institutions such as the AGNSW have an obligation to respect and conserve the works of all artists, even if they are long dead. Hanging paintings upside down would thus be compromising such responsibilities.

mediocre solution to a choice between exhibiting it in the Grand Courts or the Yiribana gallery. However, the Biennale's promotional photographs of Bennett's artwork are close-up images of the model with the Grand Court, rather than the café, in the background, suggesting divergent attitudes between the Biennale curators who commissioned the work, and the AGNSW staff.

As discussed, the Grand Court's deep red or green walls, highly ornamental archways and gold frames, connote worth. The salon-style mounting, encouraged by the original hanging rails, also relates to a bygone era, a pre-Modernist style that reads as customary as the sparse, isolated display of contemporary works of art. Significantly, the Aboriginal artworks in many state art museums, such as the NGV and AGNSW, are hung in the same style as contemporary art. The works in the Yiribana gallery, for instance, are hung at eyelevel against a white painted wall. Neither style of painting is 'natural' but the hanging style has become *naturalised* through convention. The works are thus re-contextualised as contemporary art objects in this environment.

38. AGNSW Grand Courts in 2009

The fact that this convention has become almost invisible was highlighted two years ago, when a number of traditional Indigenous artworks were moved from the Yiribana gallery to the Grand Courts. The Aboriginal artworks look odd in the gallery, but only because we are so used to seeing them against a 'neutral' white wall. The gallery stated that the move was due to the large number of complaints by visitors,[29] however, it is possible that Bennett's proposal was a catalyst, even if the move was not reciprocated by the re-location of colonial paintings to lower level three.

Like Bennett's 'proposal', Parr's video *Major/Minor*, responded to the AGNSW's Grand Court collection and display methods. Parr's video shows him sitting in a military

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[29] Conversation with AGNSW staff, November 22, 2009.

uniform, with a cast replica of his head on his lap, while the camera focuses alternatively on the paintings then on the artist's rigid profile. The background paintings include Australian 'classics' by Arthur Streeton, Tom Roberts, and Sydney Long, as well as the gallery's few token 'Virgin and Child' paintings, and the epic *Vive l'Empereur* (1891) by Édouard Detaille – 'a telling art-historical context for the Australian paintings.'[30] Daniel Thomas also suggested that the performance could be a response to John Howard's leadership and a 'manipulative fetishisation of militarism and nationalism.'[31]

39. Mike Parr, *Major/Minor* (2008)

The priorities of the AGNSW seem to lean significantly to the nineteenth-century colonial painting and Australian Modernism, and so it is understandable that Parr and Bennett focussed on the Grand Court as the subject of postcolonial critique. The content and format of the Grand Courts rarely appears to change, and to an extent, these galleries are symbolic of the continued dominance of colonial history in this country. Additionally, by siting their artworks in the grand courts, Parr and Bennett disrupted the generally accepted *physical* separation of collections, questioning the location of collections within the gallery, and more specifically, the disproportionate value we place on certain artworks in this country.

Unlike the pre-Modern paintings in the older galleries, contemporary art is rarely placed in overly ornate or gilt frames. If framed at all, minimalist frames, not dissimilar in aesthetic to the Modernist art space, are used. Just as Parr and Bennett have used the art historical associations of the colonial art galleries to their advantage, contemporary artists such as Perejaume exploit and highlight the connotations of physically framing art, particularly when the structure is gold-coated.

In *Marc a l'encesa* (1990), Perejaume examines both the paradoxical nature of pictorial representation, and the way in which the natural landscape is 'framed' in art. The work,

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[30] Daniel Thomas, 'Mind/Body: Mike Parr's Cartesian Corpse,' *The Monthly,* 2009.
http://www.themonthly.com.au/art-daniel-thomas-mind-body-mike-parr-s-cartesian-corpse-1404
[31] Ibid.

now in the collection of the AGNSW, consists of two gilt framed photographs depicting a large smouldering piece of frame in an unremarkable landscape. The charred remains of the massive frame sits on the floor in front of the pictures. One photograph is orientated in the 'landscape' position, the other in the unconventional 'portrait', the different photographic 'frames' allowing a slightly different view of the same scene. The photographs strictly adhere to traditional landscape image composition, with carefully composed percentages of foreground, hills and sky, as well as the silhouetted sun. The cropping mentioned earlier emphasises the paradoxically artificial construction of landscape photographs.

34. Perejaume, *Marc a l'encesa* (1990)

Perejaume's work draws our attention to the significance of the frame. The burning frame in the image is in turn framed by the photograph, which is framed by the physical gold border. The entire installation – the images and charred wood - is then framed by the museum. Additionally, the chunk of burnt frame sitting on the gallery floor, an object usually only used as a practical device rather than an artwork itself, is reduced in size to the point of uselessness. By placing a frame so that viewers can literally trip over the object, Perejaume compels us to consider not only the frames that edge two dimensional objects, but also the other 'circumtextual frames'[32] usually invisible to gallery visitors, such as didactic texts, lighting, the room, or surrounding artworks.

Interestingly, the work was most recently displayed on the dividing wall between the gallery's old courts and Modern space. Considering the sheer number of romanticised, pictorial depictions of the Australian landscape in the gallery's colonial collection, the installation's location is quite apt. However, it is important to note that this placement was decided by a curator; despite the work's powerful message and critique of the way in which landscape is depicted in art, the siting would have quite a different set of meanings if it had been the artist's choice. When the artist as an external, 'neutral' figure, chooses

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[32] MacLachlan, *Framing and Interpretation*, 34.

a site within the museum, the work's placement can be seen as part of the artist's authorship. Even though Perejaume's work is critical of museum display methods, and the work's placement outside the colonial section seems ideal, the potential power of institutional critique is lessened, and the critique is somewhat institutionalised.[33]

Strength in the artists' intention is evident in Bennett's works, for instance. Like Perejaume's installation, the physical manifestation of Bennett's work – the model – was installed by curators. However, the model was a relatively minor part of the work. The power of the artwork was in the proposal and arguably the art gallery's response (including the eventual placement of the model). The artist's intention was to propose a disturbance in the gallery's strict categorisation system, and by doing so he revealed the distinct roles between the curator and artist.
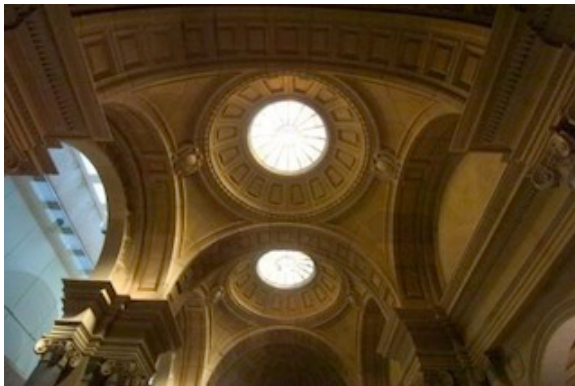
41. AGNSW vestibule ceiling

Like its Grand Courts, the gallery's entrance vestibule has also inspired a number of site-responsive artworks by artists such as Hilarie Mais, Linda Marrinon, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, Carolyn Eskdale, Jennifer Turpin, and Steven Holland. Again, the opulent use of coloured marble – a material that is both durable and relatively expensive – creates a lavish, albeit showy, environment. This loaded place is, as I have noted previously, a 'hot' site for artistic response. The marble has connotations of prestige and permanence, and true to the word's Greek origins (*marmaros:* 'shining stone') the surfaces are highly polished. The symmetrical space is aesthetically pleasing, and the thick columns are associated with strength in line with classical architecture. As I argued earlier, this architectural feature also reflects the conservatism of the AGNSW trustees and Australian society in the late nineteenth century. Importantly, this type of pre-Modern space was also designed to be enhanced by sculptures in the alcoves that border the scalloped apses. Traditionally, these spaces have housed classical marble figures and

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[33] The notion of institutionalised institutional critique in relation to the specific commissioning of artworks will be discussed further in chapter four.

bronze busts of the gallery's founders, however, since the 1980s, these recesses have also played host to contemporary site-specific artworks.

The first 'intervention,' Mais's series of abstract sculptures, *The Circle* (1985), was installed in the apse alcoves as part of the 1985 Australian Perspecta. Terence Maloon described the symmetrical groupings as a parody of the space, and 'the classical allusion is deflated by decorative (Art Deco) and emblematic allusions – both of which have an "inferior" status to art.'[34] He observed that unlike the busts that Mais's sculptures replaced, her sculptures were 'dissonant rather than consonant with their surroundings, they make a gesture of insubordinate individualism, a claim for the autonomy of art.'[35] Additionally, he notes that her sculptures included symbols associated with women and children to replace the male busts of the gallery's 'founding fathers.'[36]

However, he also describes the busts and classical figures as 'de-personalised, peripheral, decorative features which are subordinate to the overall architectural and institutional context.'[37] Yes, the public largely ignored the busts, but it is not because they were necessarily 'subordinate.' Rather, they were installed in a traditional form of dialogue with the vestibule site. The apses were designed with the sculptures in mind, and the sculptures were installed in order to compliment and arguably, complete the architecture. Of course, compared to Mais's disruptive objects, the busts seem almost invisible because we are used to viewing this coupling of classical architecture and art as a whole. This is where the precedents to contemporary site-specificity are most interesting: when we examine the relationship between pre-modern art and architecture, while the art is not site-specific in a contemporary, critical sense, the art is an integral part of the architecture. Mais's work both highlighted and disrupted this traditional relationship. Her abstract sculptures were installed in the alcoves designed to house art, and yet the obvious stylistic differences between art and environment meant that her work remained, to an extent, an outsider.

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[34] Terence Maloon, 'Hilarie Mais,' in *Australian Perspecta '85*, ed. Anthony Bond (Sydney: Art Gallery of NSW, 1985), 44.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Ibid.

Most recently, small figures by Marrinon have been installed in these apse niches. Standing on white circular plinths, which more than the figures alone, identify them as contemporary art, the cartoon-like plaster figures replace the usual classical marble ones. With names like *Gibson Girl* (2012), *Voltaire* (2012), and *Toulouse-Lautrec* (2012), the varied cultural references are in synch with the humorous mix of classical and cartoon figurine-like styles. Marrinon has continued the trend established by Mais in the eighties, of installing work in the vestibule. Unlike Mais, however, her figures reference classical statuettes, and thus the space in which the figurines are site-specifically installed. In both cases, the contemporary works have been installed in the areas designed for sculptural objects; however, many of the other vestibule interventions have not been as subtle.

42. Panoramic installation shot of Linda Marrinon's figures in the AGNSW vestibule, 2012

Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Wrapped Vestibule* (1990) sought to hide and disguise the celebrated space. Like their *Wrapped Coast,* constructed on their previous visit in 1969, the work involved covering the entire area – the columns, statues, seats and floor - with worn painters' drop cloth and rope. Despite the fabric's practical and unromantic initial use, the shrouding of the neo-classical architecture with old fabric recalled the use of draped cloth commonly associated with classical art and design.
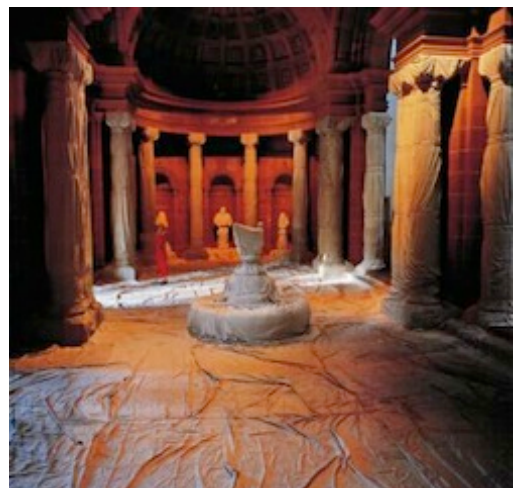
43. Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Wrapped Vestibule* (1990)

Wrapped Vestibule acted as an inverse frame. As outlined previously, the museum acts as a frame; yet the artists' act of wrapping and enclosing the gallery space also functioned as a frame to the museum. The framing was not as overt as their external wrapped museum projects: *Wrapped Kunsthalle* (1968) *Wrapped Floor and Stairway, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago* (1969) and *Wrapped Reichstag* (1995); however, the outcome is similar in that the physical space is disguised and visual pleasure denied. *Wrapped Vestibule* covered the gallery's only entrance, forcing visitors to walk on the artwork, and emphasising the invisible threshold described by Lefebvre. The method of disguise and the installation's humble materials thus undermined the museum's authority as communicated by the opulent marbles, mosaics and columns. The choice of the vestibule site was significant therefore not just because it disguised the decorative space so central to the AGNSW's identity, but also because it disrupted the visitors' physical and psychological introduction to the institution.

Carolyn Eskdale's *AGNSW Entrance, 6.04* (2004)[38] also obstructed the physical space by installing a furry white barrier through the centre. Like the white plinths that accompanied the Marrinon artworks, the colour alone identified the screen as an intruder. The white walls belong in the Modernist spaces, after all. The

44. Carolyn Eskdale, *AGNSW Entrance, 6.04* (2004)

screen was centred so that it did not disturb the symmetry of the space, per se, but standing at a height far above the average human, it denied the viewer the opportunity to see the entire space at once. The installation threaded itself exactly down the vestibule's middle, snugly fitting between the double marble columns, and the screen's axis did not overly restrict visitor movement. However, the materials, colour and minimalist geometric form seemed to rudely intrude on the vestibule's highly considered classical dimensions. The smaller blocks inserted into the apse nooks had a similar affect. They

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[38] *AGNSW Entrance, 6.04* was one of multiple works by the artist installed at the AGNSW as part of the 2004 Biennale of Sydney.

sat squarely in the middle of the alcove, yet their bright colour and blocky, minimal shape, disrupted the otherwise carefully coordinated space. Like Christo and Jeanne-Claude's installation, Eskdale's work framed the museum by blocking a panoramic view. In doing so, the viewer is prompted to use their imagination instead, to lift their gaze to the ceiling when faced with the white fabric wall, or examine smaller details, such as the patterned floor.[39]

Turpin's *Water Works III* (1991) also mimicked the symmetry of the vestibule, using it to enhance and emphasise order, artifice and induce feelings of reverie. The delicate structure of the artwork also contrasted with the heavy semiotic space. The artist remarked:

> Though the vestibule is a thoroughfare the *Water Works* I hope will enact a brief moment of poetry and, without dilution, spark the imagination with a perception of nature which intrudes on structured and sometimes monumental formalities.[40]
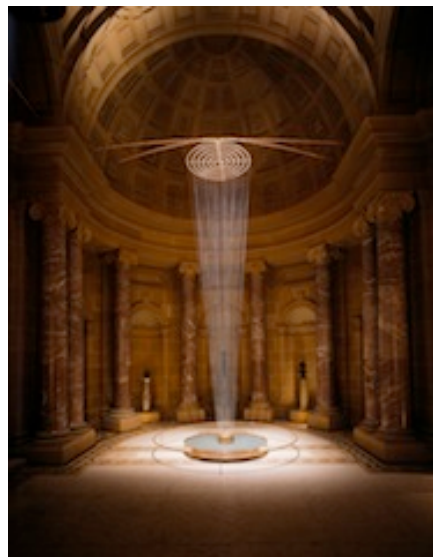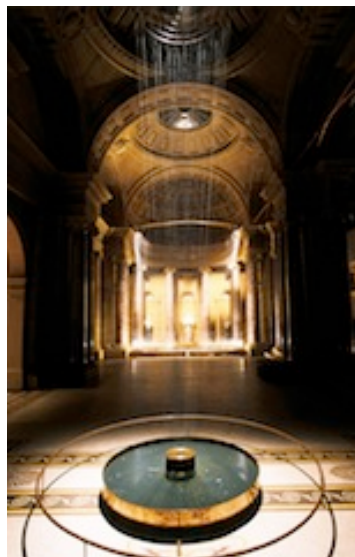
45, 46. Jennifer Turpin, *Water Works III* (1991)

Turpin's installation emphasised and drew attention to the symmetry of each vestibule apse. Tiny droplets of water were guided along two intricately constructed structures of nylon cords. On one end of the vestibule, the cords were arranged in a circular form, sitting comfortably within the rounded apse. On the opposite side, a line of water

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[39] A similar work by Eskdale at the Grainger Museum will be discussed in chapter three.
[40] Jennifer Turpin cited in Hansford, Pam, 'Jennifer Turpin,' in *Australian Perspecta 1991*, ed. Victoria Lynn, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: AGNSW, 1991), 96.

blocked access to the apse, subtly disrupting the vestibule's strict symmetrical order. The mysteriousness of the dramatically lit installation was compounded by the illusion that the water was defying nature by rising up the cords, and Pam Hansford observed that the work 'effectively turns the vestibule of the Museum into a grotto, a place which plays host to a fantasy of aquatic delight.'[41]

While Turpin used the vestibule to accentuate order, Steven Holland used the architectural grandeur of the vestibule as a foil to the lonely severed birds' wings he suspended from the ceiling. Holland's *Recollection* (1997) was exhibited as part of the 1997 Australian Perspecta, *Art and Nature*, and the installation sought to bridge 'the worlds of the traditional natural history museum and the art museum.'[42] Holland's aim was to emphasise the artifice of the gallery environment, commenting 'nothing much lives in a museum, only stories – even the moths are kept in mothballs.'[43] The collection of birds' wings was borrowed from the Australian Museum, but unlike usually strictly ordered natural history museum displays, Holland sets the animal artefacts free. The catalogue poetically describes the effect: 'Like the wings of angels, this ornithological collection hovers above visitors at the threshold of inside and outside, system and fantasy, freedom and captivity, nature and culture.'[44] Although Holland exhibited his borrowed birds in an art gallery, the interaction with natural history museum collections is a common strategy of site-specific response. Just as Perejaume's artwork calls into question the pictorial representation of landscape, artists such as Holland examine issues related to the human tendency to categorise and order nature, and the way in which plants, animals and other natural objects are categorised, archived and displayed in museums.

As demonstrated, the AGNSW's decorative vestibule has attracted a wide range of site-specific artworks. Some artworks sought to disrupt the classically symmetrical space, others to enhance it. Mais and Marrinon's sculptures replaced the classical figures and busts that the vestibule's apses were designed to house, aligning the relationship between their art and architecture with that of a pre-Modernist era, and in a way, highlighting the

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[41] Ibid.
[42] Victoria Lynn, *Australian Perspecta 1997: Between Art and Nature,* exhibition catalogue (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1997), 17.
[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid.

way in which this relationship has almost become invisible. Turpin used the symmetry to enhance and emphasise notions of artificiality and order in her *Waterworks*, and Holland worked the absurd juxtaposition between the opulent space and suspended severed birds' wings. Again, Christo and Jeanne Claude, and Eskdale denied visitors access to the full vestibule environment by re-framing the celebrated space.

In each case, the vestibule is an integral part of the artwork; the *museum* is an integral part of the artwork. This distinctive architectural feature, more than any other at the AGNSW, has repeatedly attracted the attention of artists, and has encouraged site-specific response. Importantly, in each example described above, there is a strong element of *spatial* response to the physical space, but also elements of institutional critique. Earlier in the chapter I noted that in her models, Kwon implies that art that responds spatially to a physical site (her first model) is less advanced or less critical than her institutional critique or mobile models. She also describes institutional critique as 'aggressively anti-visual,'[45] and yet many of these works critique the institution in addition to their spatial relationship with the site, whether it be an underlying feminist comment on the gallery's choice of vestibule sculptures or a physical and psychological interference with the gallery's treasured entrance.

Additionally, Kwon historicises both models, illustrating the first paradigm with examples from the 1960s/70s, such as the work by Morris, Smithton and Serra. The second model, described as largely occurring in the 1970s/80s is examined in relation to the work of Buren, Asher and Haacke. However, the trend we see here - works responding to the vestibule space - is fairly recent, the earliest example being Mais's *The Circle* in 1985. The works are quite unlike the earthworks and minimalist objects produced fifty years ago, even though they still refer to a literal, physical site. Additionally, while they have a spatial relationship with the site, each example is far more complex than Kwon implies in her description of the phenomenological model. For instance, Christo and Jeanne-Claude's installation does more than physically interact with the space. The artwork disrupts the gallery's prized foyer space, both visually and physically by re-framing the museum. *Wrapped Vestibule* cannot properly be explained by Kwon's phenomenological model, nor her institutional critique or discursive models.

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[45] Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 24.

This gap is the reason why her models need to be extended to accommodate contemporary site-specific artworks that interact with unusual or distinctive features in art galleries and museums, particularly if those features (like the vestibule) have a meaningful cultural and social history. I propose instead that we examine these artworks in terms of strategy and intention, which eliminates the misleading hierarchy of criticality and historicism. To imply that an installation like *Wrapped Vestibule* is somehow less 'critical' than, say, Dion's *On Tropical Nature* – a work that Kwon claims typifies the discursive model – seems like an unfair and overly generalised value judgement.

47, 48. Tatzu Nishi, *War and Peace and In Between* (2009), detail (*Offerings of Peace*)

The massive bronze sculptures that flank the AGNSW's entrance are features equally as culturally loaded as the vestibule, and they too have been the subject and site of artistic response. In 2009, the artist Tatzu Nishi turned the traditional equestrian sculptures into domestic objects by building rooms – a living room and bedroom, respectively – around the often unnoticed sculptures.[46] As described earlier, these types of sculptures are common outside older European museums, and the purchase and installation of Boyes' monuments in the 1920s reflected the institution's desire to emulate British museums, rather than forge an identity of its own. Like the busts in the vestibule, we are so used to seeing these kinds of sculptures in similarly classical settings, that they are barely noticed by the average passer-by.

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[46] The invigilators noted that a significant number of visitors remarked that they had previously hardly noticed or considered the permanent sculptures. Conversation with the author, October 14, 2009.

Nishi's 'rooms' looked like scaffolding from the outside, the legs and/or sandstone plinth of each sculpture still visible under the metal supports. Inside, however, the rooms were fully furnished. The eastern monument had its heads 'housed' in a living room. The horse's head appeared to sit on the coffee table, while the rider's was hidden in a cupboard that the visitor was allowed to open. The art

49. Tatzu Nishi, *War and Peace and In Between* (2009), detail

magazines suggested the usual inhabitants of the room had an interest in art, yet the furniture and ornaments conveyed only a surface sophistication. Unlike other installations in which people's identities have been suggested through house interiors, such as *The Collectors* in the Danish and Nordic pavilions at the 2009 Venice Biennale, Nishi's interiors did not appear lived in. Instead, the rooms are generic and unremarkable, rather like the equestrian statues.

50. Tatzu Nishi, *War and Peace and In Between* (2009), detail (*Offerings of War*)

The other horse was completely enclosed in a bedroom, and while the bed sheets are rumpled and photographs sit on a sideboard, the room could easily have been a hotel room rather than a lived-in place. Regardless, the disproportionately large horse rearing on a king-sized bed was absurd enough.

The opportunity for viewers to get close to the usually distant features of the sculptures was novel. Nishi created the illusion that parts of the sculpture were sitting, disconnected, in the rooms; however, he left traces of their original and continuing form and

function, such as the pigeon droppings on the living room heads or the exposed sandstone plinths and horses legs below the scaffolding. Such massive sculptures were never designed to be viewed at head height; yet by enclosing and reducing the sculptures to a mere living room object or an unlikely bedroom scene, the original intention and seriousness of these monuments are cleverly subverted. Additionally, because these traditional memorial sculptures are relatively common outside museums, libraries and

key public spaces, and are therefore easily
rendered 'invisible' to the average passer-by, not
only had Nishi drawn our attention to these
objects, but he assigned them a new and
contemporary, albeit temporary, meaning.

51. Michael Asher, *George Washington* (1979)

Nishi's installation recalled an earlier work by
Michael Asher, involving a bronze replica statue
of George Washington that usually stands
outside the Chicago Art Institute. Like the AGNSW's equestrian statues, *George Washington*, which is permanently installed in an exterior arch of the Institute, borrowed from European traditions. In 1979, Asher ordered that the statue be temporarily re-sited inside the Institute's eighteenth-century French gallery. Due to its style, the civic monument looked at home in the space; yet it was a fraud, a 1917 replica of a 1788 original. By relocating the work temporarily, Asher highlighted the European roots of America's patriotic civic culture.[47]

52. AGNSW, central modern space

The examples so far have been concerned with the distinct and heavy aesthetics of the gallery exterior, vestibule and older galleries. While the newer white-walled galleries appear relatively neutral and unobtrusive, as theorists such as O'Doherty and Buren have noted, this neutrality is merely a façade, an illusion. In addition to his writing, Buren has spent much of his career making '*in-situ*'[48] works deconstructing the museum space. The French artist produced such a work at the AGNSW as part of the controversial 1979 Sydney Biennale.[49]

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[47] Asher relocated the statue again in 2005.

[48] Buren's term for 'site-specific.'

[49] The controversies surrounding the Biennale, including gender representation, the number of European artists, the venue, and the many of the works' suitability for general unrestricted exhibition, were mentioned in nearly every article written on the event. In the editorial to the Art and Australia edition dedicated to the Biennale, Mervyn Horton writes: 'Whatever the art world, the critics and the public thought of the Biennale – and opinions about it varied from enthusiasm to condemnation – it did not pass unnoticed. Few art events in Sydney have been more controversial; probably none has caused more argument and disagreement prior to opening.' Mervyn Horton, 'Editorial,' *Art and Australia* 17, no. 2 (1979): 134.

Buren's contribution to the biennale was a column-shaped silhouette on the large harbour window of the then ground floor.[50] As with most of Buren's works, the biennale installation was concerned with revealing the 'aesthetic role of the museum.'[51] By using the window with the busy harbour-view background as a substitute 'wall' for the hanging of his work, Buren subtly draws attention to the fact that a gallery wall, even if painted white in an attempt to 'neutralise' it, is as much on display as the work that it supports. As noted earlier, many Australian art museums do not fit O'Doherty's description of the white cube in a literal sense, many of them on prime land and consequently sporting large glass windows to showcase the view. The presence of windows, of course, does not exclude these exhibition spaces from much of O'Doherty's criticism, and it is significant that Buren used the room's distinguishing feature – the window – as a key device. Even though a window seems relatively unremarkable, it was used as a foil to the space's even more unremarkable white walls. Of course, Buren's work is illustrative of Kwon's institutional critique model, however, we can also examine this example in terms of the schema I have developed. In addition to critiquing the general institution of art, his work challenges the semiotic space of the AGNSW's Modernist galleries. By examining Buren's installation in terms of strategy and intention, in addition to Kwon's site-defined models, we gain a better understanding of the way in which site-specific art operates in museums.

53. Marina Abramović and Ulay, *The Brink* (1979)

The presence of natural light also inspired *The Brink* (1979), by Marina Abramović and Ulay, at the same biennale. The performance artists from Yugoslavia and Germany, respectively, arrived in Sydney with no particular work in mind, but conceived the performance piece after viewing the courtyard space at the AGNSW.[52] Mike Parr, writing on the

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[50] Gary Catalano, 'The Withheld and the Unmasked: Some Notes on the Third Biennale of Sydney, 1979,' *Art and Australia* 17, no. 2 (1979): 158.
[51] Buren, 'Function of the Museum,' 68.
[52] Jonathan Holmes, discussion with the author, March 2, 2010.

performance described it as 'infinitely lyrical, clear, [and] profoundly psychological.'[53] While Ulay walked back and forth along the courtyard wall, Abramović walked along the edge of the shadow cast by the wall, their distance growing as the sun shifted west. The performance was largely dictated by external influences, so when clouds blocked the sun and dispersed the shadow, Abramović stopped, and their performance logically concluded once the shadow had filled the courtyard. It was at once a response to the physical courtyard space, but also an acknowledgement of elements independent of the museum. The work was as minimal as the space in which it was performed, an aesthetic also seen in their work, *Gold Found by the Artists* (1981) performed on a subsequent visit to Australia two years later, which will be discussed further on.
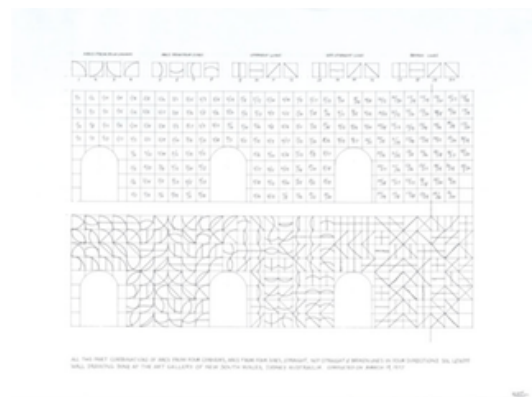
54, 55. Sol LeWitt, *All two part combinations of arcs from four corners, arcs from and four sides, straight, not-straight & broken lines in four directions* (1977) (left: installed, right: instructions for the installers)

Sol LeWitt's 1977 wall drawing, *All two part combinations of arcs from four corners, arcs from and four sides, straight, not-straight & broken lines in four directions*,[54] like Buren's installation, activated the AGNSW's white walls. It was adapted from an earlier work, and customised to the wall that divides the Grand Courts and Modernist galleries – the same wall where Perejaume's work was sited. The choice of wall was not accidental. His conceptual work, which was physically produced by Sydney art students to the artist's instructions, drew on the divisions that exist within the gallery and the symbolism of the classical arches that curl over the Modern walls in defiance of the otherwise distinct semiotic reordering. Despite the installation's contemporary art status, and

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[53] Mike Parr, 'Parallel Fictions: The Third Biennale of Sydney, 1979,' *Art and Australia* 17, no. 2 (1979): 182.

[54] Sol LeWitt's 1977 visit to Australia, where he produced wall drawings for the AGNSW and NGV, was initiated by John Kaldor, as was his later 1998 visit.

LeWitt's statement, 'I like the clearest, smoothest, least romantic walls,'[55] there is a clear reference to earlier forms of wall-based art, such as frescoes. In fact, the artist's fascination with Italian art and history, particularly their emphasis on drawing as 'the intellectual content of art,'[56] means that he accepts rough walls if they are Italian walls. It was in an old coarse-walled Romanesque Church in Spoleto, Italy, that the AGNSW work was first devised.[57] As with Buren's artwork, LeWitt's installation did not treat the gallery's white walls as neutral, but rather as symbolic of the categorisation of art styles and the way in which art is devised, produced and displayed. By targeting this particular wall, the pre-determined patterning wrapping itself around the arched doorways, LeWitt's work is not simply reacting to the physical site, but also the cultural symbolism embedded in the dividing wall.
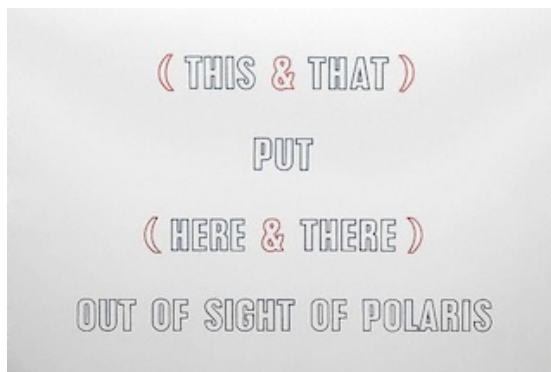
56. Lawrence Weiner *(This & That) Put (Here & There) Out of Sight of Polaris* (1990)

The original placement of Lawrence Weiner's *(This & That) Put (Here & There) Out of Sight of Polaris* (1990), on the lower level one mezzanine wall above the escalators, demonstrates the subtleties of locational site-specificity. The text-based work uses the gallery's white walls as the background onto which letters are attached. The work was commissioned for the 1990 Biennale of Sydney, and relates to an outdoor public artwork that he was developing in Holstebro, Denmark. The Danish sculpture was inscribed with '(Some of This) + (Some of That) Gently Placed Under the Light of Polaris,' and both works refer to the bright North Star that can be viewed only from the Northern Hemisphere.[58] Therefore, the artwork relates to multiple sites: the physical siting in the gallery, the gallery's southern hemisphere location, as well as the paired artwork on the other side of the earth.

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[55] Cited in Daniel Thomas, 'The Master of the Grid,' *The Bulletin*, April 2 (1977): 69.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Anthony Bond and Wayne Tunnicliffe, eds. *Contemporary: Art gallery of New South Wales Contemporary Collection* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2006), 104.

Despite Weiner's close supervision in the siting of the work in the gallery, and his obvious reference to Australia's location 'down under', he questions the significance of the site in his catalogue statement:

> Essentially the question is whether or not a change in venue does in fact bring about a change in value... Is the placement of the object in relation to the human being the point or is the placement of the human being in relation to the object the fact?[59]

Yet as Anthony Bond points out, Weiner's work, which for many years after the Biennale was located on a massive wall above the escalators that lead down to the contemporary and international collection, '[functioned] as a description of the international collection. Like the Biennale for which the text was commissioned, the collection is indeed an assortment of things gathered from all over the world and brought here out of sight of the North Star.'[60] The artwork remained on the wall for about two decades, a site significant because most visitors read Weiner's words while in transit from one area of the gallery to another. As the escalator moves visitors to the level below, there is only time to read the statement once before the work disappears *out of sight*, itself.[61]

Abramović and Ulay's *Gold Found by the Artists* (1981) also referred to multiple sites, and was the result of five months spent in the Australian outback where much of their time was spent alone in lengthy periods of silence. Abramović noted, 'it is quite logical that we went to the desert because of our kind of background, and the work we do. We minimalize… and we try to realize with pure

57. Marina Abramović and Ulay, *Gold Found by the Artists* (1981)

body and energy.'[62] The artwork, though performed in the gallery, evoked the isolation and harsh conditions of the Australian desert. In a feat of endurance, the artists sat at either end of a large table in silence for seven hours a day. At the end of each day over a

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[59] Block, Rene. *The Readymade Boomerang: Certain Relations in 20th Century Art, 8th Biennale of Sydney*, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1990), 310.

[60] Bond, *Contemporary*, 104.

[61] The significance of the work's original physical location is even more evident now the work has been re-installed on a wall on lower level two. While subtle, Weiner's original choice of an untouchable wall best viewed in transit, activated the work in a way that the current location simply does not.

[62] Abramović cited in Charles Green, *The Third Hand: Collaboration in Art from Conceptualism to Postmodernism* (Sydney: University of NSW Press, 2001), 167.

period of sixteen days, the artists would return directly to their accommodation and only consume water, an act of 'purification' but also partly for practical, toileting, reasons. In the middle of the long black table were 250 grams of gold nuggets, which the artists had found in the desert, a 24-carat gold leaf covered boomerang, and a live diamond back python[63] - perhaps a minimalist distillation of their desert experience.

Abramović and Ulay's performance refers to multiple sites: the desert where the artists had spent five months mostly alone, collecting gold nuggets and visiting Aboriginal communities, as well as the hosting gallery. Essentially, the lengthy and isolating desert experience was translated into the semiotically oppressed gallery space. Interestingly, the performance fits quite neatly into Kwon's discursive model of site-specificity, even if it pre-dates the theorist's key examples by a decade. If we accept the problematic notion of a concept as site, as included by Kwon in her discursive model, then we could add the role and worth of Aboriginal culture (as communicated by the artists' symbolic objects and time spent with indigenous communities), as another 'site.'

59. Antony Gormley, *Field for the Art Gallery of New South Wales* (1989)

In 1989, as part of an artist residency at the AGNSW, the British artist, Antony Gormley, produced two artworks also in response to his Australian desert experience. As with *Gold Found by the Artists*, Gormley's installations referred to multiple sites, thereby not only overcoming the restrictions of the minimalist gallery environment, but also using the semiotic space as an integral part of each artwork. *Field for the Art Gallery of New South Wales* (1989) was the first of Gormley's many site-specific 'fields,'[64] and was made in conjunction with *A Room for the Great Australian Desert* (1989).

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[63] Bond, *Contemporary*, 66.
[64] Ibid., 308.

The field consisted of 1,100 tiny twenty-two centimetre clay figures made, in collaboration with local students, from Australia's deep red-coloured desert soil.[65] In the cubic gallery space, the clumsy figures were arranged in concentric circles, with a walkway through the middle. The catalogue describes the experience of standing in the centre like being 'at the epicentre of an extraordinary field of energy. Although the field seems to radiate out from the centre, the eyes of the figures are all raised towards the viewer's face. It is an overwhelming sense of responsibility to be the recipient of so much mute appeal.'[66]

A Room for the Great Australian Desert, by contrast, can be experienced in person by only the privileged few who know of its location. For most, the concrete object exists only in our imagination, a photograph the only confirmation that the work exists.[67] The concrete shell is proportioned exactly so it can fit a 'crouching figure of a man (the artist),'[68] but in the photograph, it looks uncannily like one of Rachel Whiteread's room interiors, or perhaps even the interior of the white cube gallery space that housed the related *Field*. The unremarkable sparse landscape surrounding Gormley's object: red dry earth, desert grasses and wild flowers, could be anywhere in Australia's vast interior.

59. Antony Gormley, *A Room for the Great Australian Desert*. (1989)

60. Rachel Whiteread, *House* (1993)

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[65] Ibid.

[66] Anthony Bond and Antony Gormley, *A Field for the Art Gallery of New South Wales/ A Room for the Great Australian Desert,* exhibition catalogue (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1989), 3.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid., 2.

As mentioned, multiple sites operate simultaneously in Gormley's works. While both are initially experienced inside the museum, the viewer is forced to consider undisclosed sites elsewhere. The contradictory titles also refer to the displaced sites: a *room* in the desert, and a *field* in the gallery. Gormley's work highlights the conflicting relationship humans have with nature – on one hand we want to believe in the romantic notion of untouched wilderness, yet accelerated development and constant draining of natural resources means that the concept of 'wilderness' is perhaps only an archaic human construct, an illusion.

In the discussion of Gormley's installation, I stressed the limitations of the white walled space and the corresponding importance of a second site. I might have detailed a number of artwork examples that relate to the Modernist section of the AGNSW, but the opportunities for site-specific response are relatively slim compared to the loaded vestibule and Grand Court spaces, and it is those spaces that depart from the absolute white-walled spaces that encourage artistic response. In each white walled example, there was a particular hook – for Sol LeWitt it was the wall's function as a separation between the old and the new; for Buren, the *window* overlooking the harbour was used to divert the viewer's attention to the white wall, and the white wall itself was the subject of critique; and in Weiner's artwork, it was the work's relationship to visitor movement that made the original physical location – the location chosen by the *artist* - significant.

Interestingly too, most of the site-specific artworks referred to in this section were commissioned externally; that is, they were part of a festival or exhibition where the curator tends not to be directly employed by the gallery. Bennett, Eskdale, Buren, Abramović and Ulay were among those commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney. Nankin, Turpin and Mais were part of Australian Perspecta, and Sol LeWitt, Tatzu Nishi, and Christo and Jeanne-Claude were Kaldor Projects. This indicates a level of artistic and curatorial autonomy, which is no doubt partly responsible for the unconventional sitings of many of these works – sites where a dialogue between art and architecture can be formed.

Certain features of the AGNSW have consistently attracted site-specific response, such as the vestibule and the Grand Courts, and it is the features that are culturally loaded,

archaic, or unusual, that act as a 'hook' to which artists respond. Additionally, the AGNSW's physical layout and separation of collections and the hierarchy and values suggested by this institutional geography, have also inspired response. These site-specific strategies are not properly accounted for in Kwon's models, and thus this section has attempted to outline the way in which artists respond to various types of museum spaces, taking advantage of the AGNSW's mix of historical styles.

2.2 The Modern Space: The Queensland Art Gallery

The quirky inclusion of a pond (officially, the 'water mall') in the QAG seems an inappropriate architectural feature for a building that requires strict humidity and climate controls. Yet, as argued earlier, it is this departure from the generic white cube gallery space that has attracted and inspired site-specific art. The water mall is as much a hook to site-specific art as the AGNSW's vestibule. Apart from the water feature, the architecture is fairly unremarkable,[69] which is reflected in the fact that the site-responsive artworks have all focussed on this single unique design element.

The QAG, commissioned in the early 1970s is as much a symbol of the cultural change in Brisbane as it was in Australia as a whole. The state 'gallery' had officially existed since 1895 but until the QAG's opening in 1982, had never had a permanent, purpose built home.[70] A second adjacent site, GOMA, is officially part of the QAG, although its emphasis on art that is more contemporary and its individual branding means that it tends to be seen as a separate building.[71] The expansion of Brisbane's cultural precinct,[72] as it is now known, has challenged the state's traditional stereotype as a cultural backwater,

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[69] The heavy cubic features, mezzanine levels, mix of glass-walled naturally lit areas and windowless galleries, and indoor/outdoor sculpture gardens can be seen in other Australian galleries of that period, such as the NGA. However, following its opening, Peter Prystupa argued that the building was distinctly local. Along with the water mall, he commented that the building's outline 'complements the magnificent silhouettes of the distant mountain ranges,' the light and shade reflects the 'Mediterranean-like quality of Brisbane's climate,' and the covered walkways are akin to the verandas that rim the iconic Queenslander houses. Peter Prystupa, 'Interior Architecture of the Queensland Art Gallery,' *Art and Australia* 20, no. 4 (1983): 486.

[70] The original gallery was housed in the now demolished Town Hall building from 1895 until 1905 when it moved to the third floor of the Land Administration Building. From there it moved to the Exhibition Building Concert Hall in 1931 where it stayed until the purpose built QAG opened in 1982. Queensland Art Gallery, 'History,' *QAGOMA*. http://qagoma.qld.gov.au/about_us/history

[71] To minimise confusion, I will refer to Robin Gibson's 1982 building as the Queensland Art Gallery (QAG) and the newer building, designed by the firm Architectus, as the Gallery of Modern Art (GOMA).

[72] Sited nearby is the state's key performing arts venue and Queensland College of Art.

revealing the influence of large state institutions on a city (or country's) sense of cultural identity. While the AGNSW's original classical architecture reflects the values of a country that at the time looked to England for cultural and social legitimacy, the QAG's inclusion of the water mall was intended to distinguish itself from other institutions, a trend in museum architecture that has only increased since the 1970s.

The gallery is situated on the Brisbane River, and so the water mall, which runs parallel to the river, echoes the city's key geographic feature. From the building's inception, the water mall has been used as an exhibition space, with staff placing appropriate artworks from the gallery's collection, such as Emilio Greco's bronze *Bather* (1956), on raised platforms in the water. On the gallery's opening, Peter Prystupa observed that the positioning of such artworks 'gives one a foretaste for the exciting possibilities of relating sculpture and water in future displays.'[73] Yet, until the late 1990s, it was predominantly the curators rather than the artists deciding which works would be placed in or around the water.

61, 62. Cai Guo Qiang, *Blue Dragon and Bridge Crossing* (1999)

Most of the artworks responding to the water feature have been commissioned for the Asia-Pacific Triennials. For the third triennial, the Chinese artist Cai Guo Qiang produced a traditionally constructed bamboo bridge over the water, entitled *Blue Dragon and Bridge Crossing* (1999).[74] When the viewer reached the middle of the bridge, a laser would trigger a shower of water onto the unsuspecting participant, an act which Charles

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[73] Prystupa, 'Interior architecture of the Queensland Art Gallery,' 486.
[74] Charles Green, 'Beyond the Future: The Third Asia-Pacific Triennial,' *Art Journal* 58, no. 4 (1999): 86.

Green argues turned each person into 'an insistent traveller – even a pilgrim – over uncharted and lonely cultural waters,' adding that the work 'was both a cliché and an accurate diagnosis of Australia's position in Asia.'[75]

While Cai's work engaged with the water on a fairly literal level, Yayoi Kusama's 2002 'incarnation' of her famous *Narcissus Garden*, first shown uninvited at the 1966 Venice Biennale,[76] used the water's reflective qualities. The artist, well known for her distinctive polka dotted artworks, has long played with reflections, such as her boxed *Infinity Mirror* works where the viewer enters a room internally clad with mirrors. Typically, the floor is mostly water with just a small viewing platform, and the properties of this liquid results in a sixth mirror not quite as perfect as the rest. Likewise, in the 2002 water mall version of *Narcissus Garden*, the mirrored balls placed in the water infinitely reflected each other and the surroundings, the water providing an additional, albeit imperfect, reflective surface. Two small platform bridges curving around opposite ends of the water mall, allowed the viewer to physically enter the work, their gaze

63. Yayoi Kusama, *Narcissus Garden* (2002)

reflected back, distorted, dozens of times. The presence of water in the gallery already generates a soothing, contemplative atmosphere, and Kusama's work emphasises this mood. Although slightly obscure, Kusama wrote about her constructed environment, 'when we obliterate nature and our bodies with polka dots, we become part of the unity of our

environment, I become part of the eternal, and we obliterate ourselves in love.'[77] A smaller version of *Narcissus Garden* was shown at the MCA at Kusama's survey exhibition in 2009, and was installed on a ledge outside the gallery windows. Unlike the biennale and triennial versions, not only was the viewer unable to walk through the mirrored 'garden', they were also separated by the glass window. As a reflective surface and a physical barrier, the MCA garden did not encourage quite the same level of environmental 'unity' advocated by Kusama.

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[75] Ibid.

[76] Lynne Seear, ed. *APT 2002: Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, exhibition catalogue (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2002), 61.

[77] Kusama, cited in Laura Hoptman, Akira Tatehata, and Udo Kultermann, *Yayoi Kusama*, (London: Phaidon, 2000), 124.

Ai Weiwei also drew upon the reflective qualities of the water in his glitzy 2006 work *Boomerang.* The oversized and fully lit boomerang-shaped chandelier filled the cavernous space from floor to ceiling in what Sarah Tiffin described as 'a spectacular monument to consumption and display with a finely honed sting in the tail.'[78] The extravagant work commented on the aspirations of the increasingly affluent Chinese middle-class, where 'bigger is better' and 'worth and status can be measured in crystal drops': all 270,000 of them.[79] The chandelier's positioning over the mirror-like water, doubled its 'weight.' The vulgarity associated with such an over-elaborate object also starkly contrasted with the otherwise peaceful pond.

64. Ai Weiwei *Boomerang* (2006)

The most recent of the water mall commissions was an installation by Ayaz Jokhio, which consisted of a six-meter tall octagonal room in the middle of the water, again with a 'bridge' that allowed viewers to enter the work. Described as 'conceptual architecture' by the curators of the 2009 triennial, the work referenced Islam, as well as traditional Eastern architecture and design.[80] The structure sat easily in the space, and like the other site-specific works made for this site, the pond acted both as an inspiration as well as a 'frame' to the contemplative work.

65. Ayaz Jokhio,
A Thousand and Windows Too… (2009)

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[78] Sarah Tiffin, 'Ai Weiwei,' in *The 5ᵗʰ Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art*, ed. Lynne Seear, and Suhanya Raffel, exhibition catalogue (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2006), 5.
[79] Ibid., 4-5
[80] Suhanya Raffel (Curatorial Manager, Asian and Pacific Art) and Russell Storer (Curator, Contemporary Asian art), *APT6 –Audio Tour*, 2009.

GOMA's architecture is distinctive in a different way to the QAG. The tall ceilings and windows that typify the white-walled cubic gallery do not tend to inspire site-specific response to the same extent as the water mall. However, the most distinctive features of the gallery architecture are its tall ceilings, and floor to ceiling windows. As a

consequence, there is no distinct hook for site-specific response comparable to those at the QAG and AGNSW. Despite this relative absence, the drive to respond to something, *anything*, has resulted in artworks being sited in GOMA's toilets. Additionally, the windows that flood the expansive gallery foyer with light, has also been the subject of response in the 2009 Asia Pacific Triennial.

66. Wit Pimkanchanapong, *Cloud* (2009)

Wit Pimkanchanapong created a cloud of office paper and paperclips in the cavernous entrance. The descriptively titled *Cloud* (2009) was set against floor to ceiling glass, and from most viewpoints was viewed against the backdrop of a blue Queensland summer sky, slightly mirrored by the reflective surface. Again, the predominantly white cube spaces provide little opportunity for artistic response; instead, the catalyst for the installation is one of the building's few relatively distinguishing features.

67. Charwei Tsai, *Hand Washing Project 1* (2009)

Sited in the toilets at the same triennial was Charwei Tsai's *Hand Washing Project 1* (2009). As visitors washed their hands in the distinctive trough sinks, videoed hands were projected over the top, echoing their movements. For the related *Water Project* (2009) in the downstairs toilets adjacent to the gallery's education department, sea creatures were projected instead. This creep from regular exhibition spaces to the gallery's utilitarian areas demonstrates the desire of many artists to actively interact with just about anything.

White walls may still be the norm in most art museums, but they are also a barrier to creativity, discouraging a much-desired dialogue between museum architecture and works of art. While the growth in distinctive museum architecture, from the Guggenheim in Bilbao to Rome's MAXXI, could be viewed cynically as mere branding exercises, or alternatively (competing) art objects in themselves, any deviation from the ubiquitous white-walled space, whether it be as simple as a window, or more spectacularly, a pond, tends to inspire artistic response.

2.3 The Combined Space: The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

While Steven Holland's piece might 'bridge the worlds of the traditional natural history museum and the art museum,'[81] the TMAG literally combines them. Inspired by this marriage, a number of artists, such as Irene Bryant, Julie Gough, Milan Milojevic, Clair Barclay, Fiona Hall, and more recently Patricia Piccinini, have produced artworks specifically for the institution, referencing, or interacting with, some aspect of the zoology, geology, botany, anthropology, history or decorative arts collections. Particularly illuminating is the way in which the museum has divided and categorised the various areas, not just physically separating them, but by decorating each department accordingly, the art gallery section treated distinctly differently to the 'museum' section.[82] For instance, the visual art sections are predominantly brightly lit and painted white, the exception being the colonial section mentioned earlier, which is painted in the era-appropriate colours of dark red with white feature columns. The 'museum' sections, by contrast, have dark walls, mysterious spot lighting, and a dim glow.[83]

The TMAG's interdisciplinary nature stems from its history as the original collection of the Royal Society. Formally established in 1848, it became the state museum in 1885 and the public art gallery was established in 1889 following a building extension. Additionally, until 1950, the Royal Tasmanian Botanic Gardens was also managed by the

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[81] Lynn, *Australian Perspecta 1997*, 17.
[82] To lessen confusion, when referring to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery I will follow the museum's own labelling system, referring to the art gallery section as the 'gallery,' and areas such as the zoology, geology and anthropology sections of the TMAG as the 'museum.'
[83] The aesthetics of the natural history museum will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The TMAG is examined in detail in this chapter on art museums because of the distinct contrast between the institution's art and museum areas.

TMAG, demonstrating the museum's historical scope. In the late nineteenth century, when museums around the world were growing in number and scale, the then director of the museum, Alexander Morton, established an unusually broad collection, with a focus on Tasmania. In 1889, he established the 'Australia Room' at a time when the notion of national identity was unusual in Australian institutions.[84]

Peter Timms explained the continued combination as a result of financial limitations.[85] For more than a century, Tasmania has been Australia's least wealthy state, and so the money required to split the museum into single disciplines has not been available. However, Bill Bleathman, the current director, views the combination a positive feature of the TMAG,[86] a benefit reflected in the number of art projects that have drawn inspiration from the gallery's diverse collection. In fact, this dialogue between art and natural science collections has been actively encouraged in the past. For instance, the artist brief for the series of commissioned exhibitions called *Interventions* was to engage with the zoology and ethnography collections.
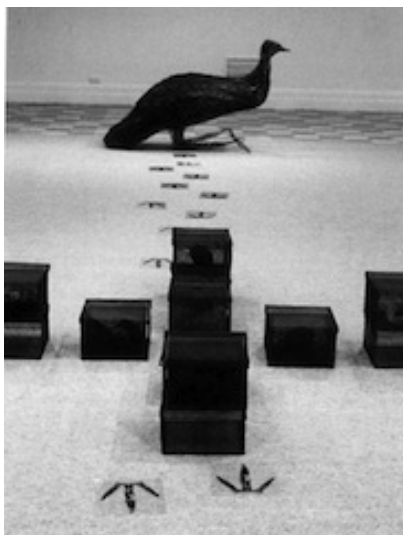
68. Irene Bryant, *Requiem* (1998)

Artists have addressed the interdisciplinary nature of the institution in a number of ways. One strategy is to incorporate artefacts from the anthropology or natural science departments into artworks installed in the art galleries. This ability to borrow items from these collections is a distinctive feature of the TMAG, and one unavailable to artists in other state art museums. Other artists have referenced items in these collections. For example, Bryant's installation, *Requiem* (1998), related to both the art and zoology collections. Footprints of the now extinct Tasmanian Emu were printed on the floor in a cross shape,

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[84] Joanne Huxley, 'History of the Museum,' in *Collection: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery*, ed. Matthew Baker, Caroline Mordaunt, Simon Cuthbert, et al. (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery. 2007), 2-7.
[85] Peter Timms, 'Time for an Upgrade: TMAG's New Director Takes on a Challenge,' *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 153 (2002): 16.
[86] Ibid.

alluding to the Djiwa's bark painting in the museum's Aboriginal art collection. [87]   A

chickenwire emu was seated at the end of one of the crosses, and at another, transparent

black boxes contained hollow white boxes, 'a reference to the specimen boxes and

skeletal remains in the Museum's zoology collection.'[88]   Another box contained a

linoleum and dyed feather floor, referring to an emu skin rug also in the museum's

collection. Among the emu eggs in the centre of the cross was one egg carefully

engraved with Colonial artist William Porden Kay's watercolour, its emu subject

included for its 'exotic' connotations.[89]

Bryant's multiple references literally pointed to four other vastly different areas of the

gallery, thereby combining the usually separate Indigenous art, colonial art and craft, and

zoology departments in the contemporary art section. Her work highlights the distinct

and forced categorisation of the various museum departments and demonstrates their

interrelatedness, as well as the benefits of combining a museum and art gallery.

A similar effect was evident in Piccinini's 2009 survey exhibition, *Evolution*; however,

Piccinini's approach was quite different. Rather than reference the non-art sections of

the museum from within the contemporary art galleries, Piccinini installed a number of

artworks in the zoology, geology and colonial art rooms. She placed one sculpture in the

museum's wildlife diorama, for instance, but also collaborated with the original creator,

Brian Looker, to build an additional faux diorama in the visual art section of the building,

confusing the usually distinct separation of the art and zoology departments.

69. Patricia Piccinini, *Bottom Feeder* (2009)

[87] David Hansen, 'The TMAG Commissions 1998,' *Artlink* 19, no. 1 (1999): 20.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.

Piccinini's *Bottom Feeder* (2009) was installed in the museum's iconic zoology diorama, an environment of local birds, mammals and fish in their 'natural' habitat. The creature, with a shark-like head, human body, canine legs and oversized bottom, had supposedly 'evolved' to consume rubbish, which was also specially scattered throughout the diorama.[90] The figure sat comfortably in the environment, as did (worryingly) the rubbish. The plastic bottles, chip packets, and other discarded objects are so commonplace in Tasmania that they easily appeared invisible.

The specially created diorama in the contemporary art section of the gallery was titled *Perhaps the World is Fine Tonight* (2009). From the doorway, the diorama appeared as if it too could be part of the zoology department, with the carefully shaped and coloured rock formations, aged logs and shrubs, taxidermied Tasmanian Devils and eagle in mid-flight. However, on approach, an unidentifiable creature held by the two eagles was visible, as well as a small girl asleep on a rock. Like *Bottom Feeder*, the narrative in this artwork was ambiguous. The creatures were unlikely and slightly repulsive, but at the same time, familiar; the diorama environment, pseudo-scientific. The museum diorama stands for truth and reality, yet these creatures suggested an alternative dystopian existence.

Many of Piccinini's other creatures were placed on standard white plinths throughout the gallery, and the difference between the two display methods was striking. Away from the dramatic spot lighting and shadows favoured by the zoology department, these creatures seemed less real. The frame of traditional natural history display methods subtly altered our reading of these creatures, a phenomenon particularly fitting for an artist whose practice is inspired by biology and genetics.

Works were also placed in the fossil and geology room. Sharing the cabinet with genuine artefacts were two of Piccinini's *Not Quite Animal* (2008) series. Like her silicon creatures, the shiny bronze sculptures resembling bones, were obviously mutant, yet unsettlingly familiar. The works were spot-lit in a glass cabinet, and treated like all the other artefacts in the darkened room, the 'preciousness' of these objects

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[90] Artist talk, TMAG, Hobart, March 17, 2009.

communicated through these traditional methods of museum presentation. As with the comparison between *Bottom Feeder* and the plinth-based creatures, the effect of this museumified display was particularly noticeable when compared to the similar bronze 'artefact', *The Uprising* (2008), which was located in the relatively sparse contemporary art section.

70. Patricia Piccinini, *The Embrace* (2005)

Another work, *The Embrace* (2005), was placed upstairs in the colonial art section. Four leather pods were mounted on the wall beneath the prized John Gould still life paintings. One pod sat open, housing a seemingly demure large-eyed creature grooming itself. Another pod was empty, its occupant horrifyingly clinging on to the face of a female viewer – a viewer that, on closer inspection, turns out to be a hyperrealistic sculpture. The pods and creatures look clearly out of place in the ornate gallery, and although the pods are hung salon style like the paintings around them, it is obvious that these creatures are foreign in more than one sense. Piccinini's art does not *belong* in this semiotic environment.

The Embrace and the *Not Quite Animal* works were not created specifically for the TMAG, yet they were *installed* site-specifically. The installation of these pre-existing artworks in the geology and colonial sections, respectively, substantially altered the meaning of these works. This change in meaning ultimately reveals the way in which the museum environment frames our interpretation of any object placed within it, and also highlights the forced categorisation that exists in combined museums, such as the TMAG. The fact that the works were successfully installed site-specifically, also demonstrates the problematic definition(s) of the term, site-specific, which predominantly refers to work made with a particular site in mind. As will be discussed in the next section in relation to the work of Mike Parr, the museum's ability to alter the

meaning of an artwork, and the artist's knowing manipulation of this occurrence, is an underestimated aspect of contemporary site-specific art practice.

The site-specific strategies most common at the TMAG are those that reference its interdisciplinary nature, either integrating parts of the collection into installations, or siting artworks in areas outside the contemporary gallery section. Again, the frequency of these kinds of intervention is due to the combined nature of the museum, and the unusual blend of art, ethnography and natural science in a single institution provide a variety of hooks to which artists can respond.

2.4 The Raw Space: Mike Parr at Cockatoo Island and the Bond Store

A decade after O'Doherty wrote *Inside the White Cube*, he mused 'so much has been buried as if it never happened… Illusions are back, contradictions tolerated, the art world's in its place and all's well with that world.'[91] As I have stressed throughout this chapter, the term white cube should not be taken literally. It is a term that applies to the often invisible display strategies and ideologies of the art museum, and many of O'Doherty's observations can equally apply to the new arts centres that are being established in converted ex-industrial buildings around the world. Whether permanent exhibitions spaces or not, these spaces provide a semiological or socio-historical 'hook' to which artists can respond, and the growing popularity of such conversions must be acknowledged if we are to understand the current relationship between art museums and artists. This section will examine the work of Parr at two ex-industrial exhibition spaces, and the relationship between the work and semiotic environment. However, first it is

71. Istanbul Modern

important to establish some of the reasons why this trend has occurred.

O'Doherty announced that 'illusions are back' in the 1980s, and while the art world has changed significantly in the last three decades, the illusions O'Doherty describes are still just as relevant, and

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[91] O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube*, 109.

to an extent, many museum directors are in denial of the fact. I have attended lectures and specialised tours led by museum staff where they have stressed, "we're not a white cube gallery." One such space was the Istanbul Modern. Their reasoning was that the gallery, which has prime views over the Bosphorus, used to be a shipping warehouse. The museum has retained the exposed pipes on the ceiling, emphasising their presence by painting them red. Yet, their walls are white, the painting areas neatly partitioned, and the video works are tucked away in the ubiquitous 'black cube.' The gallery used the same strategies of neutralising the space as most contemporary art galleries. However, most interesting was the museum director's anxiety about the museum being labelled a 'white cube' space, as well as the obvious misconceptions about the term. The anxiety also explains the popularity of industrial to art centre conversions, where original features are retained. By retaining original pipes, machinery, railway tracks, roughly hewn wood pillars, scarred walls, they distance themselves from the most literal interpretation of 'the white cube,' and the ideology explained in O'Doherty's influential text. Perhaps industrial nostalgia is the new 'white cube.'

The popularity of industrial conversions can also be explained by the need to distinguish the museum from other institutions. Recent newspaper articles have celebrated the massive visitation numbers at Brisbane's GOMA, for instance. To receive funding, the museum needs visitor numbers; to have visitor numbers, the museums need the public's attention. A popular way of boosting visitor numbers is the popularist blockbuster exhibitions, such as GOMA's Picasso (2008), Andy Warhol (2008), or Surrealism (2011) exhibitions.[92] Alternatively, a museum can highlight its unusual architecture or past use. The Guggenheim in Bilbao attracts visitors and media attention based on the architecture alone, and the fact that a gallery used to be a shipping warehouse or powerstation can also have the same effect. Rome's Macro, which is a converted slaughterhouse and Peroni beer factory, for instance, advertises this distinguishing feature on its website homepage.

On a practical level, old factories often successfully accommodate contemporary art forms. Site-specific artworks will often respond to the historical or spatial features of the museum, integrating the building's industrial past. Additionally, these buildings meet the

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[92] Queensland Art Gallery, 'Past Exhibitions,' *QAGOMA*. http://qagoma.qld.gov.au/exhibitions/past

demand for increasingly large exhibition spaces, the Tate Modern's turbine hall being one of the more well-known examples. The turbine hall is a key distinguishing feature of the museum, and the regular installations, for which the key requirement is some kind of dialogue with space, even have their own name, 'the Unilever series.'[93] Another institution, MASS MoCA, was established in a nineteenth-century factory complex in North Adams, Massachusetts, in the late 1980s. The catalyst for this conversion was the need to accommodate increasingly large artworks – something that the space-restricted local museums simply could not manage.[94]

72. Matadero Madrid, interior courtyard

73. Matadero Madrid, entrance to 'Open X Works'

These new arts spaces are often in gentrified areas where industry has become unviable, and the industrial buildings are of an era where powerstations and breweries were designed beautifully, as opposed to the brutally functional concrete structures favoured by industry today. In the case of MASS MoCA, Matadero Madrid (ex-slaughterhouse), and the old Eveleigh Rail Yards in Sydney - now called Carriageworks - the art centres' presence has resulted in local investment and economic benefits. Instead of bulldozing the Eveleigh Rail Yards and rebuilding from scratch - a method favoured in the past – the original features of these historical structures have been retained. This preservation not only reflects our society's changing attitude towards cultural heritage, but also the romanticised nostalgia associated with the industrial. The art world has a rust fetish, and the converted factory now signifies an arts institution that is truly contemporary.

Lastly, and importantly, for the artists who actively seek semiotically complex and/or historically loaded sites, these conversions present an opportunity to actively relate art to

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[93] Named after the corporate sponsor, Unilever.
[94] MASS MoCA, 'History of the Site,' *MASS MoCA*. http://www.massmoca.org/history.php

the space in which it is exhibited. Artists such as Buren and Asher might have successfully reacted to the white walls in the 1970s and 80s,[95] yet the range of possible responses remains fairly slim. Thus, the development could be viewed as a reaction to the deliberately isolating aesthetics of the Modernist museum, even though the white cube environment still dominates contemporary art display.

In Australia, these ex-industrial spaces frequently also have a convict history - a history that is usually plagued by tales of abuse and injustice. For an artist responding to such sites, it is tempting to make new work to actively explore and respond to the site's past. The loaded environment also means that any artwork placed in the space can easily be overwhelmed by its surroundings, particularly if it is not produced with this site in mind. Additionally, we are so used to viewing works in white walled spaces that any change to this viewing environment is easily distracting. So how can artists or curators install existing work in these spaces without it (at least) negatively affecting the artworks? The two Parr exhibitions in a Cockatoo Island building (2008), and the Bond Store at the TMAG (2008-9), provide a model of how existing works can be installed in dialogue with these loaded environments without being overwhelmed or negatively affected. And one of the key factors in the successful installation of Parr's works was the subtle acknowledgement of the environment's significant influence.
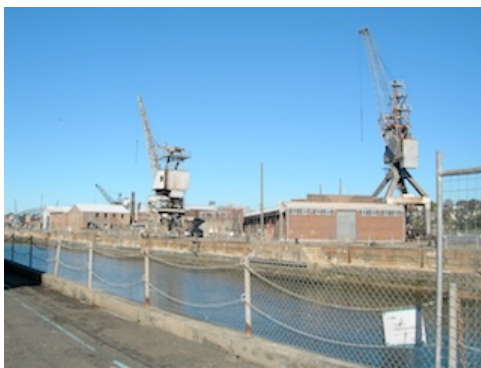
74. Cockatoo Island

Cockatoo Island is the largest island within Sydney harbour, and one with an important history. The former imperial prison, industrial school, reformatory and gaol, is now going through a partial renewal. It is littered with weird and wonderful machinery, decrepit and dusty warehouses, and beautiful colonial buildings, many of which have housed artworks for the 2008 and 2010 Sydney Biennales.

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[95] See, for instance, Asher's 1970 untitled installation installed at the Gladys K. Montgomery Art Center Gallery, Pomona College, California.

Parr's body of work for the 2008 biennale, titled *MIRROR/ARSE*, occupied the entire floor of an old building once used by the navy, and included a large number of re-presented videoed performances, some dating back to 1973, in various rooms and spaces throughout the building. Interestingly, the empty rooms, the ones that did not hold artworks seemed equally as important to the overall installation. In the Navy building, Parr recognised the same 'labyrinthine oppression of…architecture and the ambience of "discipline, punish",'[96] that he had encountered as a cleaner of the 'sailor's house' in Sydney's Rocks in the 1960s, and later as a clerk for the Navy. 'All these buildings seemed clotted with indefinable abuse, mindless routine and pigeon holing,'[97] he noted.

75. Cockatoo Island, Navy building exterior

76. Cockatoo Island, Navy building interior. One of the rooms left deliberately empty by Parr.

The Bond Store, on the other hand, was used as one of two venues for Parr's survey exhibition *The Tilted Stage* (2008-9), and is one of many heritage buildings that make up the TMAG. Unlike most of the neighbouring buildings, however, the Bond Store is rarely used; in fact, until Parr's exhibition all four floors of the warehouse had been closed to the public for over 180 years.[98] Also significant is that unlike the other buildings, the Bond Store has been mostly unaltered since it was completed in 1826.[99] The building's physical state with its dark interior, roughly hewn wooden floors and beams,

77. Bond Store, TMAG

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[96] Mike Parr, email interview with author, June 19, 2009.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 'Mike Parr: The Tilted Stage,' *Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery*, 2008. Accessed June 19 2009. http://www.tmag.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=1738
[99] Huxley, Joanne. *Site: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery*, (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 2008), 22.

century old graffiti, cobwebs, and damp musty smell, makes it an interesting space in which to exhibit art, and one which is significantly different to the traditional gallery space. Like the Navy building on Cockatoo Island, Parr sensed the loaded history in the site, and his re-presented artworks (or in his words, the 'return of the repressed'[100]) intensified this feeling.

As noted throughout this chapter, the space in which an artwork is exhibited has a significant influence on the viewer's interpretation of an artwork, whether they recognise it or not. These framing elements can be divided into a number or interrelated categories, including the aesthetics of the gallery space, installation methods, the use of physical frames or plinths, or accompanying texts or statements. The existing physical state of the Cockatoo Island and Bond Store buildings, therefore, subtly altered our reading of Parr's pre-existing artworks. Cockatoo Island was in an extremely dilapidated state, with layers of dust, broken doors and walls, grime and seagull carcasses.[101] The Bond Store's environment, as described earlier, with its rough wooden interior, cobwebs and historical graffiti, was similarly influential.

78. Seagull carcass in the Navy Building, Cockatoo Island

The act of navigating the respective spaces also encouraged a particular reading of the works. Parr's videos are frequently violent and confronting, documenting performances where the artist sews his mouth shut, holds his finger over a candle flame for as long as possible, beheads chickens, or chops off his (fake) arm. Consequently, at Cockatoo Island it was easy to be fearful of what would be just around the corner,
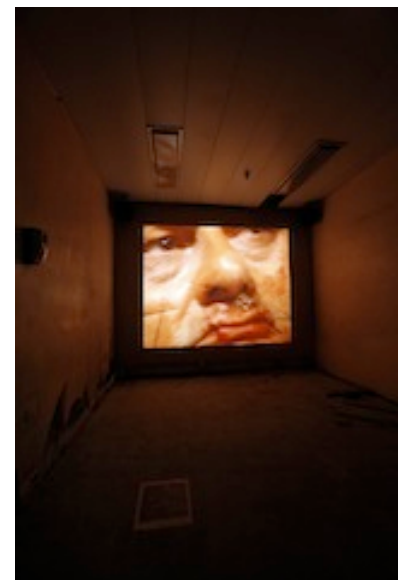
79. Mike Parr, *Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi (Democratic Torture)* (2003), installation shot at Cockatoo Island

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[100] Parr, email interview with author, June 19, 2009.
[101] The seagull carcasses were particularly intriguing because they were located near Parr's videoed performance of chickens being decapitated.

particularly as the accompanying shrieks, screams, moans, crashes and retching could be heard well before encountering the videos. The building held a significant number of small rooms, and navigating the claustrophobic and unevenly lit corridors was unnerving. As mentioned earlier, many of the small rooms were deliberately left empty and accessible to the public (despite the National Trust's attempt otherwise), to emphasise 'the dialectic of presence and absence.'[102]

The lack of sound insulation at both sites meant that the sound accompanying the projections was uncontained and floated throughout the buildings, invading the space of other works. In particular, the sound of vomiting from *White* (2004-08), mixed with a backwards *Fur de Lise* from *Not the Hilton* (2002), was a hauntingly strong and recurring sound in both

80. Installation shot of Mike Parr's *The Tilted Stage*

exhibitions. Unlike many exhibitions where sound is seen as something to be contained, the lack of insulation and therefore containment of sound in the Bond Store appeared to be a positive thing. It was hard to identify exactly which soundtrack belonged to each work, the result being a mixed accompaniment that united the entire exhibition.

81. Mike Parr, *The Wax Bride* (1998), installed at the Bond Store

82. Mike Parr, *The Wax Bride* (1998), installed at the AGNSW

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[102] Parr, email interview with author, June 19, 2009.

At the Bond Store, each floor was accessible only by narrow stairs. *Wax Bride* (1998), located on the ground floor, was hidden behind a wooden cage-like structure, dramatically lit and closely accessible only when accompanied by a gallery attendant. The inclusion of this bottom level, where the floor is made up of a century of compacted dirt and dust, and the air is stagnant and damp, was particularly indicative of the intentional dialogue between the site and existing works of art. The cobwebs on the ceiling remained, hanging silhouetted against the lights above *Wax Bride*; the *Black Wax Wedge* (2007) appeared to rise from the dust on the ground; and a pile of spare wood acted as an informal plinth to a gilt framed photograph of the artist, which otherwise leaned against the wall in the dimly lit space.

83. Mike Parr, *Cartesian Corpse* (2008)

The 'for as long as possible' performance, *Cartesian Corpse* (2008), which was a key part of the *Tilted Stage*, was the only work specifically conceived for the exhibition.[103] Parr was intrigued by the proportions of the top floor of the Bond Store, commenting: 'the ceiling seemed to compress the broadness of the space and the square windows reminded me of blind Modernist eyes. I felt that Malevich was looking in through the windows.'[104] The exhibition title was indicative of Parr's performance platform. The 'stage' was tilted on an angle and had a hole in the middle through which the artist's head poked, seemingly disembodied. Unlike the floorboards of the Bond Store, the stage's boards were richly polished, and although it was a large object, it was dwarfed by

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[103] After the performance, Parr's head was replaced with a life cast portrait head, *Minor* (2008), originally used in his performance, *Major/Minor* (2008) in the AGNSW grand courts.
[104] Ibid.

the space. The floorboards acted as an object familiar and recognisable – a grounding of sorts - in an artwork that was otherwise anything but. Like Malevich, who used a well-known visual communication method – painting - to create revolutionary abstract artworks, Parr used the recognised relationship between traditional performance and stage as a foil to the seemingly static act. Additionally, the work's placement in a corner of the top floor, and its scale relative to the space, seemed contrary to the theatricality usually associated with performance.

A third influential factor was the placement and proximity of artworks to each other. On Cockatoo Island, the sheer mass of often confronting videos and overlapping sounds, contributed to the overwhelming experience. In one of the disused bathrooms, Parr placed a number of stainless steel buckets filled with urine, each bearing the label 'Made in Australia'; the smell of which permeated the entire space adding to the already noxious atmosphere.

Our reading of Parr's *MIRROR/ARSE* was also guided by the biennale context. To reach the Cockatoo Island site, visitors had to walk across the island past rusted machinery, flocks of birds, and didactic texts educating visitors about the island's colourful past.[105] Likewise, the Bond Store's place in local history and connection to the TMAG influenced the viewer experience. For locals, the anticipation and novelty merely in accessing the Bond Store was significant, because the exhibition marked 180 years since the entire building was open to the public. Thus individual expectations or beliefs would also frame Parr's work.[106]

Parr's exhibitions at Cockatoo Island and the Bond Store bring to our attention the framing effect of the gallery space, white cube or otherwise. Just as everyday objects placed in a gallery environment take on altered meanings when transferred into this semiotic space, the meaning of works, normally viewed within a traditional gallery environment, are 're-framed' when transferred into loaded sites such as Cockatoo Island and the Bond Store.

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[105] While the Cockatoo Island building's naval history intrigued Parr due to his personal history and experiences, the historical aspects of the site were not explicitly referenced in his installation.
[106] Since the *Tilted Stage*, the Bond Store has played host to multiple exhibitions and events, some of which are site-specific. A notable event was part of the 2011 MONA FOMA festival, where musician Jon Rose performed from the top of the dilapidated lift shaft to an audience gathered in the courtyard below.

This framing effect becomes particularly evident when viewing images of the same works in comparative environments. For instance, a comparison between the installation of *Wax Bride, Wax Wedge, Drip Portrait* or *Bronze Liars* in the AGNSW and the Bond Store, demonstrates how the atmosphere of a work is so easily altered by its surrounding semiotic environment.

85. Mike Parr, *Bronze Liars (minus 1 to minus 16)* (1996), installed at the AGNSW

84. Mike Parr, *Bronze Liars (minus 1 to minus 16)* (1996), installed at the Bond Store

The image of *Bronze Liars (minus I to minus 16)* (1996) in the AGNSW depicts a series of bronze heads on plinths in a regimented, grid-like formation; the installation of which echoes the strictly cubic and repressed white-walled environment. Parr's documentation image of the Bond Store sculptures, by comparison, strategically includes some of the building's historic convict graffiti in the background, indicating that the historical and rough environment was of significance to the artist. The dark lighting, and irregular and relatively diffuse installation, also led to an altered reading of the sculptures.

Parr's installation of the 'liars' responded to the physical aspects of the site – the 'architectural cracks'[107] – but also the 'glimmerings of memory and anxiety… disposed like obstacles on the way to an object.'[108] So while the artwork consisted of a series of pre-existing, self-contained objects, they functioned in dialogue with the site. The works in the Bond Store, he observed, 'became snares to trap undifferentiated forces… a

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[107] Parr, email interview with author, June 19, 2009.
[108] Ibid.

process of magnification and isolation … pressure points like those used in acupuncture to set up flows.'[109]

The dialogue between Parr's artworks and site was unmistakable, however, it was a misleadingly subtle response to the respective environments. With the exception of the performance that accompanied *The Tilted Stage*, the site-specificity of his work – in Kwon's sense of the term, at least - was questionable.[110] As noted earlier, abandoned industrial sites or heritage buildings – loaded sites – encourage site- or place-specific art, which often refer to the cultural or social aspects of the site, its history or physical attributes in a fairly obvious or didactic way. Parr's use of the site was more of a *dialogue* than a response.

Therefore, while it might appear that Parr was oblivious to the sites' cultural history, due to his use of conventional systems of gallery display, such as labelling, plinths, framed photographs and projection screens, as well as the re-presentation of past works, was in fact an informed and subtle dialogue with the space. Even though both exhibitions were set out not unlike regular survey shows, Parr was very aware of the meaning embedded in each site, and used it to heighten the anxiety already induced by his work. Parr's installations promote a fairly unique, and not at all sentimental way of using heritage buildings as exhibition spaces.

When asked where his work sits within the institution, Parr replied that it sits 'uneasily,' or at least, the work 'makes conventional spaces uneasy.'[111] When the TMAG exhibition was being planned, Parr visited Hobart and took a tour of the museum. The Bond Store was not originally planned as an exhibition space; however, Parr said that he felt that he 'needed' to install work 'site-specifically in these old and somewhat dilapidated spaces…. that these spaces would draw out the anxiety that is latent/overt to all my work… and I felt that this anxiety was situated, embodied by these spaces.'[112] Both the Cockatoo Island and the Bond Store sites in effect re-contextualised, or even re-

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[109] Ibid.

[110] In my first postgraduate presentation as a PhD candidate in 2008, I proposed to the group of students and staff that Parr's work at these two locations was site-specific – a notion that many found problematic, because existing definitions of site-specificity did not take into account the installation of pre-existing artworks site-specifically.

[111] Parr, email interview with author, June 19, 2009.

[112] Ibid.

performed Parr's works. Yet, it was not a *passive* re-contextualisation. Parr's intention was to re-present his videoed performances, sculptures and photographs in a way that encouraged an altered reading within the space.

The artist's role in the installation of the works is integral to this model of site-specificity. The artist as author has the authority to alter the meaning of an artwork in a way that a curator simply does not. This is not to say that the meanings of works cannot and do not change when the curator is responsible for the installation; however, when an artist is responsible the *intention* is significantly different. Additionally, Parr edited the performance documentation specifically for the Cockatoo Island exhibition. The changes were slight, but as Parr argues 'the difference produced by repetition is small, violent, crucial,'[113] and the combination of works, and spaces combined 'cohered to expose a kind of latency [and] implication.'[114] 'The unconscious of the works as a whole,' he noted, formed 'a kind of glaring blindness of repetition, impulse.'[115] By re-presenting and combining artworks produced over thirty years, and emphasising a dialogue between art and environment, Parr was able to emphasise certain threads in his art practice.

These two exhibitions suggest that site-specific installations need not necessarily be new work, and that the existing models of site-specific art may need to be re-examined. As argued at the beginning of this chapter, while the current models of site-specific art promoted by Meyer and Kwon cover a wide interpretation of site-specificity, when referring to *physical or literal* sites they tend to consider work made *for* a particular site, and fail to account for what occurs when existing work, such as the Parr examples, is intentionally installed in a site where the relationship between the artwork and its environment creates some form of meaningful dialogue. As art is increasingly displayed in less conventional gallery environments, such as Cockatoo Island and the Bond Store, it is possible that a new kind of site-specific art can be identified – that which makes intentional use of its semiotic environment to enhance or change the meaning of *existing* work.

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[113] Ibid.
[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.

Conclusion

This chapter traces an evolution of exhibition spaces in Australia, from our neo-classical monument to nationhood to the new 'industrial chic' exhibition spaces. Museums have always articulated national identity, and have the ability to emphasise or privilege certain artists, styles, eras or ethnicities over others. As a predominantly physical space, features like museum layout, wall colour, or hanging methods, subtly communicate value and influence interpretation. Site-specific art, such as the works at the AGNSW by Parr and Bennett, has the ability to actively question these spatial politics in a far more public way than any academic journal or thesis can.

Distinguishing features, whether it be the museum's display methods, or its distinctive architecture tend to encourage site-specific response, and with contemporary museum architecture leaning closer to the visual arts, and the visual arts growing in scale and production, it suggests that this kind of dialogue between the museum building and works of art is only going to increase. These changes are why Kwon and Meyer's existing site-specific models based on defining the physicality and/or mobility of the site, need to be reconsidered and extended to take into account the complexities of current artworks that relate spatially or physically to art museums, and this is best done by examining artists' intentions and strategies, in addition to the relationship between art and institution.

The relationship between museum and artist does not always have to be provocative, and this chapter has demonstrated the way in which site-specific artworks can meaningfully engage with - or even celebrate - Australia's distinctive exhibition spaces in subtle ways without being overly didactic or critical. Hal Foster describes this relationship as a 'battleline;'[116] and it is true to an extent. The Modernist philosophy, that art should be quarantined from its surroundings, still dominates our attitude towards this relationship. Instead of trying to repress the connection, perhaps it is time we recognised and encouraged the dialogue between art and exhibition space.

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[116] Hal Foster, *The Art-Architecture Complex* (London: Verso, 2011).

Chapter Three

When the Walls Aren't White:
Site-specific art in Non-art Museums

What is beautiful to the artist becomes beautiful. What is poetical to the poet, becomes poetical. So let's visit museums with artists and poets.

-Dominique de Menil[1]

The title of this chapter, 'When the Walls Aren't White,' refers to Brian O'Doherty's popular notion of the 'white cube,' which was discussed in the previous chapters. Interestingly, while art museums continue to champion the 'neutral' interior, artists are turning to sites outside the museum – sites that provide greater interactive opportunities and inspiration for site-responsive artworks. This chapter examines art projects sited in a range of non-art museums, such as historic houses and sites, ethnographic, social and cultural museums, natural history museums, and botanic gardens. These mostly ephemeral projects demonstrate the extent to which art can successfully critique existing social order, culture, and inequality. The projects are predominantly critical, questioning the particular institution's display methods, re-presenting archives, or addressing underplayed or ignored histories. Australia has a disputed past, and if we accept that museums concurrently reflect and establish a country's cultural values, the practiced exclusion of certain population groups, such as Indigenous Australians, in our nation's museums is a shameful actuality. As these diverse art projects will show, art's very marginality makes it an ideal device to critically examine this country's cultural assumptions and norms.

I also argue that the limits of Kwon's site-specific schema are most obvious when examining the trends in non-art museum based art projects over the last decade and a half. The first two models – phenomenological and institutional critique – are largely located within the art museum, and the third (discursive) model is predominantly sited in

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[1] Dominique de Menil cited in Rachel Kent, 'Artists and Collections: a Working Partnership.' *Artlink* 19, no.1 (1999): 11.

public space. However, the projects examined in this chapter seem to sit somewhere in between the second and third models. They critique their host institutions, but sit outside the gallery, and thus they cannot be properly explained by Kwon's models alone. Instead, if we consider an artwork in terms of the artist's intention, strategy and thematic drive, rather than defining and locating the site(s), we can better understand the role that site-specific art projects play in non-art museums.

In the last chapter, I described the growing popularity of ex-industrial buildings to art museum conversions. While these conversions tend to aestheticise the industrial space, the attraction is in part due to the fact that it is a meaningful site. The allure of heritage houses and natural history museums could be seen therefore as similarly symptomatic of a backlash against the Modernist notion of aesthetic autonomy.

In contrast to the minimalist aesthetic of the Modern gallery space, many of the historic homes that have played host to recent site-specific art projects in Australia – such as Elizabeth Bay House or Clarendon House – are often crowded with ornate decoration, relics and period furniture, and tend to recreate scenes of a particular era's inhabitants. Natural history and cultural museums, while maintaining strict genre-specific categorisation and exhibition methods, also create an alternative semiotic environment to that of the average art museum. Botanic gardens, which could be considered open-air museums, are different again. Interestingly, however, across the board, artists tend to critique social or cultural issues even in natural history and botanic museums, such as the social construction of nature, methods of museological display or taxonomy, or the way in which certain types of knowledge are promoted over others.

Of course, the conditions under which art is displayed in non-art museums differ greatly to art museum exhibitions. Art is very much the outsider, and yet many non-art institutions have expressed demonstrated benefits to such collaborations, citing greater public visitation and a widened audience. Additionally, many artists have noted that non-art museums are actually easier to deal with than their art-focussed counterparts.[2] Significantly, the trend of commissioning artists to undertake art projects in non-art museums, established in the early 1990s, demonstrates the changing role of the museum

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[2] Barrett, 'Australian Artists and Museums,' 7.

in contemporary society, and consequential change in relationship between visitor and institution.

A significant precedent to such artistic interventions was *Raid the Icebox 1 with Andy Warhol* (1970), where Warhol was invited to 'curate' an exhibition based on the Rhode Island School of Design's collection. The resulting display of carefully arranged women's shoes and stacked hat boxes reflected the artist's interest in consumer culture, yet it also promoted quite a different way of displaying museum objects.[3] For the collector and philanthropist who initiated the project, Dominique de Menil, the proposal, quoted above, reflected an alternative way of treating archives that was quite ahead of its time. The notion of artist as curator is relatively commonplace today, notably in the work of artists such as Fred Wilson and Mark Dion, yet in 1970 it was highly unusual. Additionally, while the key emphasis of most contemporary museum interventions is not necessarily beauty, many of the artworks tend to mimic and ultimately aestheticise museological methods of classification and display.

However, the aims and emphasis of art projects in non-art museums vary greatly, and the strategies used by artists are equally as varied. They can be proposed in order to invigorate a tired or inconsistent collection or space, as in the case of the multiple projects at the old Grainger Museum in Melbourne. They often explore issues related to the collection of information, classification, trade and museum presentation, illustrated by exhibitions at the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens, the Police and Justice Museum, or the natural history-focussed Australian Museum. They are instigated by curators or artists who wish to interrogate certain representations of history, or at least present alternatives to a museum's 'official history', by highlighting the absence or dismissal of marginalised groups and individuals, illustrated by Michael Goldberg's exhibitions at Elizabeth Bay House. The *Port Arthur Project* (2007) and *Trust* (2009) exhibitions sought to forge new interpretations of the Tasmanian heritage sites. Additionally, for the curator of the Port Arthur and *Trust* projects, the importance of community and sensitivity to place meant that participants were mostly local artists. When projects are initiated by museums, it is often with the aim of attracting a wider and more varied audience. Alternatively, sites such as Cockatoo Island are used in the context of a larger

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[3] Kent, 'Artists and Collections,' 11.

festival, where cities work to promote the uniqueness of a place, and the site is as much of a drawcard as the work itself (although as the previous two Sydney Biennales have demonstrated, the success of the works is often undermined or confused by the novelty and distracting nature of the site).

However, I also examine under-acknowledged motivations for both artist and institution, including academic requirements and the need for museums to be seen as self-critical in an age of growing political correctness. Like Kwon, I am critical of the way site-specific art is used to promote a uniqueness of place, sometimes at the expense of criticality. I also argue that the more archaic or problematic displays – displays that have not been updated in a while, such as the old Grainger Museum, and the dioramas at the Australian Museum – tend to be hooks for site-specific response in a similar way to the AGNSW vestibule.

86. Installation shot of Roger Ballen's photographs at the *2010 Biennale of Sydney*

Artworks produced for sites such as Port Arthur, the Australian Museum or Cockatoo Island are far more likely to have a meaningful relationship with the site than those sited in the relatively isolating modern gallery space. This does not necessarily mean that the work is site-specific, but when art is shown in a loaded environment, a viewer is likely to have a heightened awareness of the surroundings, and it is important that artists and curators take this changed relationship between art and environment into consideration. For instance, since 2008, the Cockatoo Island heritage site has been used as a key exhibition space for the Biennale of Sydney. Works of art are forced to compete with rusty sinks, archaic machinery, crumbling structures and painted signs or graffiti, all of which tend to be already aestheticised in the context of an arts event. Thus there is a risk that artworks will get lost in this environment, a risk that seems to be countered if the work has a level of dialogue with the site, even if the relationship is not necessarily deep enough to be site-specific. Like Parr's *MIRROR/ARSE* installation on the island, Roger Ballen's photographs in the 2010 Biennale demonstrate how works of art, while not made

specifically for the site, can work in dialogue with a space. Ballen's grotesque and disturbing black and white images of constructed environments of found objects, animals, and/or emaciated figures in putrid surroundings, sat comfortably in the small decaying colonial cottage with its raw floorboards, dirty exposed sink, and flaking paint. Comparatively, the historical posters, newspapers and films of Black Panther member, Emory Douglas, placed in the same building in the earlier 2008 Biennale, seemed at odds with the space. As a result, the significant power of Douglas' political and social message was diminished and undermined.

As stressed in the previous chapter in relation to ex-industrial conversions, art in white-walled gallery spaces can, to an extent, get away with a lack of dialogue with the site. However, in a more complicated semiotic environment such as Cockatoo Island or Port Arthur, where viewers are not trained to see the surroundings as 'invisible' (as is so often the case with the museum environment), it is more important that the work or installation of the work actively engages, or at least acknowledges, its surroundings.

3.1 Historic Houses and Sites: the Port Arthur and Trust projects

The *Port Arthur Project* and *Trust* exhibitions undertaken in Tasmania in 2007 and 2009, respectively, are part of a growing trend of staging art projects in Australian heritage sites. Gaining popularity from the early 1990s, these projects have predominantly focussed on issues concerning place, history, and institutional authority. Overseas, the expansion of art projects from the museum to heritage sites, and the consequential interrogation of the site as place, can most famously be seen in the Munster Sculpture Projects from 1987 onwards,[4] and Mary Jane Jacob's *Places with a Past* (1991) in Charleston, USA.

In Australia, among the first critical heritage site-based art projects were Michael Goldberg's installations in a number of properties managed by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales. The projects at Elizabeth Bay House, undertaken in the mid-1990s as part of Goldberg's research Master's degree, interrogated the dominant and rosy

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[4] The 1987 'Skulptur Projekte' was not the first of these once-a-decade events. The first event in 1977 was relatively conservative with an emphasis on self-contained sculptures.

history presented by the trust's curators, as well as early colonial society's reliance on convict labour.[5] Although Goldberg's projects at the house museum will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter, it is important to note the significant role of academia in the development of his projects, because many of the art projects examined in this thesis, particularly those sited in non-art museums, have some relationship to academic research, either through participating artists, curators, or in some cases university-affiliated museums. For instance, the Port Arthur and *Trust* projects were initiated by Noel Frankham, then head of the Tasmanian School of Art at the University of Tasmania, and many of the participants had an academic art background. Therefore, in both exhibitions there was an emphasis on research and criticality that reflected both an academic approach to art as well as certain research requirements – a factor that will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

The *Port Arthur Project* was sited at the former penal settlement as part of the 2007 *Ten Days on the Island* biannual festival, with twenty-three artists making work in dialogue with the site.[6] Port Arthur's paradoxical status as a historical site of

87. Port Arthur Historic Site

incarceration and horrific abuse, Aboriginal genocide, its current popularity as a tourist site, and the strange beauty of the waterfront sandstone ruins on the tip of the Tasman peninsular, make it an obvious target as a loaded site for artistic response. The settlement was established in 1830 as a timber station, and housed the most notorious of the colony's criminals, many of them secondary offenders. Soon the penal settlement was a functioning shipyard, thanks to convict slave labour. Manufacturing grew to include blacksmiths, shoemakers, carpenters, tailors, and stonemasons, in an attempt to make Port Arthur self-sustaining. In 1853, the Separate Prison was completed, and signalled a change in punishment style from physical to psychological. It closed as a

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[5] As part of his master's, Goldberg also produced a work in the house museum, Tusculum, in Potts Point, examining the politics of colonial land grants and real estate.

[6] Participating artists: Christl Berg, Lucy Bleach, Tracey Cockburn, Nicole Ellis, Anne Ferran, Linda Fredheim, Ruth Frost, Lola Greeno and Vicki West, Fiona Hall, Leigh Hobba, Colin Langridge, Fiona Lee, Karen Lunn and Milan Milojevic, Anne MacDonald, Anne Mestitz, James Newitt, Brigita Ozolins, Justy Phillips, Helena Psotova, Alyssa Simone, Lucia Usmiani, Matt Warren, and Elizabeth Woods.

prison in 1877, and despite multiple attempts to demolish the buildings 'and obliterate the memories they held,'[7] and the destruction of many of the structures by bushfires, it was eventually preserved as the Port Arthur Historic Site in 1971, and is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Interestingly, it was tourism that ultimately saved the site from destruction, and Tasmania's convict past is now actively celebrated and marketed.[8]

Although many of the more sturdy buildings, such as the isolation cell block and court are fairly well preserved, the site is partly in ruins, to which many artists responded by mapping out the now absent structures. Relatively few artworks directly critiqued the tourist experience and its significance to the tourism industry's Tasmanian 'brand'; however, many highlighted gaps in the institution's presentation of history, such as the lack of recognition given to women and the local Indigenous population.

88. *Port Arthur Project* site map

Most of the artists responded to the site's history, and seemed drawn to locations that best communicated notions of grief and isolation, such as the prison cells, sentry box, and church. Like Parr's description of his immediate reaction to the Cockatoo Island building as being 'clotted with indefinable abuse,'[9] the overarching atmosphere at Port Arthur is similarly one of abuse and misery, and this ambience was unsurprisingly reflected in many of the artworks. Additionally, the site is haunted by the more recent 1996 Port Arthur Massacre, as it is commonly called, which resulted in the violent shooting deaths of thirty-five people and injuries to a further twenty-one, all perpetrated by a single individual, Martin Bryant. His choice of site was not accidental – he chillingly observed 'a lot of violence has happened there. It must be the most violent place in Australia. It seemed the right place.'[10] This most recent horror is a sensitive topic, particularly as many Tasmanians know at least one person involved in the event, so

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[7] Peter Timms, *In Search of Hobart* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2009), 134.
[8] Richard Tuffin, 'Port Arthur Penal Settlement,' *Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies,* last modified 2006. http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/P/Port%20Arthur.htm
[9] Parr, email interview with author, June 19, 2009.
[10] Bryant cited in Timms, *In Search of Hobart*, 138.

it is unsurprising that only one artist addressed the issue. The convicts, however, Peter Timms notes, 'exist solely in the past, safely out of contention.'[11]

Trust followed the *Port Arthur Project* two years later as part of the 2009 festival. Instead of focussing on a single site, the exhibition was sited in five historic house museums around the state: Home Hill (1916) in Devonport, home to the political couple Joseph and Enid Lyons; Runnymede (1840) in Hobart, originally home to a whaling family and named after their favourite ship;[12] the former mining and railway manager's house, Penghana (1898), in Queenstown; Oak Lodge (1831) in Richmond, and the massive Palladian-style Clarendon House (1838) near Evandale. Participating artists[13] were commissioned to research the site, its original inhabitants, or its general history, with the aim of producing original and critical, yet accessible, artworks that contribute to our understanding of these usually neglected historic homes. Like the project at Port Arthur, the method of intervention was not dictated, and the artworks ranged from large-scale installations, performance, video and/or sound artworks, to framed photographs and paintings. Scattered around the state, few people would have visited all five properties, and compared to the Port Arthur exhibition, where the sheer scale of the site commanded the massive number of artworks*,* the *Trust* interventions were more subtle and intimate.

The willingness of the Port Arthur authority and the National Trust to participate in the artistic projects, which included a number of quite critical works, reflects the changing role of historic house museums. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill argues that museums now have to accept that visitors are no longer passive learners. The new museum 'position[s] the visitor/learner as both active and politicised in the construction of their own relevant viewpoints. The post-museums must play the role of partner, colleague, learner (itself), and service provider in order to remain viable as an institution.'[14] Such artistic interventions might not be viable as permanent museum features; however, their ephemeral nature, alternative method of expression, and relative distance from the institution, can stimulate discussion amongst both visitors and the institution itself,

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[11] Ibid., 132

[12] National Trust of Australia (Tasmania), 'Trust Properties: Runnymede,' *National Trust of Australia (Tasmania),* last modified 2011. http://www.nationaltrusttas.org.au/properties-runnymede.htm

[13] The participating artists were Mary Scott (Home Hill); Pat Brassington (Runnymede); Martin Walsh (Penghana); Ruth Frost (Oak Lodge); Lucy Bleach, Michael McWilliams, Julie Gough and John Vella (Clarendon House).

[14] Hooper-Greenhill, *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, xi.

particularly on issues such as the role of the historic house trust, or the inclusiveness or validity of its cultural and historical approaches. Furthermore, James Putnam believes the growing number of artists invited to work with archives, reflects 'the museum's growing tendency to self-evaluation in the wake of an increasing emphasis on considerations of political correctness.'[15]

From an institutional point of view, there is a risk in opening the doors to artists, in that many of the works in non-art museums have critically evaluated perceived shortcomings in the museum's displays, educational role or politics. Additionally, while Ivan Karp argues that museums need to present multiple histories or interpretations, 'people are attracted by the authority of museums'[16] and this questioning has the potential to alienate museum visitors. We can see the potential for conflict in Goldberg's first Elizabeth Bay House project, where he found that the institution's initial acceptance 'paled once it became clear that [his] interest was not that of the 'eccentric artist' with a romantic 'take' on their collection, but that of an artist actively critiquing the 'story of the triumph of bourgeois values.'[17] In the case of Elizabeth Bay House, which still shows an 'educational' video from the 1980s in the basement,[18] and continues to emphasise a romantic and glossy history of the original (yet short-lived) Macleay family inhabitants at the expense of other histories, such criticism is probably warranted. Although this relationship between Goldberg and the trust will be further explored later in the chapter, it is important to note that the increase in visitor numbers during his exhibition paved the way for his curatorial projects at the house two years later. In other words, the definition of success in this case was quite different for both institution and artist.

The Tasmanian projects, however, involved a greater dialogue between the local communities, respective heritage institutions, artists, and the Tasmanian School of Art. Nevertheless, the artists were not free to produce whatever artworks they pleased. The works for Port Arthur had to be approved by both the curators, as well as the Port Arthur

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[15] Putnam, *Art and Artifact,* 31.
[16] Karp, *Exhibiting Cultures*, 7-8.
[17] Michael Goldberg, 'Site-specific Installation in Colonial Heritage Sites: a Re-reading of the Historic House and its Civic and Domestic Origins in Early Sydney' (master's thesis, University of NSW. 1996), 59.
[18] Based on my visit to Elizabeth Bay House, May, 2010.

director,[19] methods that Frankham believed 'ensured that the exhibition achieves artistic quality and integrity, rigorous research and appropriate sensitivity to the site's complex and often difficult history.'[20] The aims of the *Port Arthur Project* to 'research, develop and mount work that explored lesser-known or under-acknowledged aspects of Port Arthur's history, culture and environment,' were no doubt assisted by the institution's wish to be seen as more than 'just a convict moment.'[21] Yet, the fact that the artworks had to be approved by the host institution suggests that genuine institutional critique potentially could be censored.

The curator emphasised the need for the artworks to be accessible to the general public. This accessibility reflected Frankham's own philosophy on art, but also acknowledged that even though the audiences 'are intelligent and engaged'[22] they would not necessarily be familiar with contemporary art, and their main reason for being at Port Arthur, for instance, would be for the 'tourist experience: heritage and convicts and ruins.'[23]
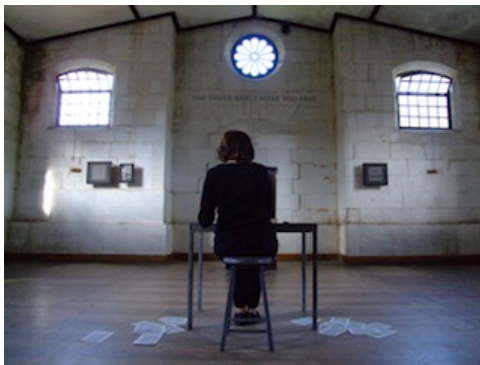
89. Brigita Ozolins, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (2007)

Therefore, the works had to sit comfortably within the site's existing interpretation strategies, the historic context, and overwhelming scale of the site. Despite this emphasis on accessibility, most of the works were not unnecessarily didactic; rather they addressed multiple audiences – from regular art gallery visitors to tourists who had made the trip to the historic site for the day.

One of the ways in which this accessibility was balanced with quite complex and unique interpretations, was the emphasis on research. Many of the participants had links with the Tasmanian School of Art, as either staff members or research students, or otherwise had a background in research-based art practice, and as I noted earlier, museum interventions are often related to academia in this sense. For instance, Brigita Ozolins'

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[19] Noel Frankham (Curator of the *Port Arthur Project* and *Trust*, Head of School, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania), in discussion with the author, June 4, 2010.
[20] Noel Frankham, 'Port Arthur Project: Re-interpreting Port Arthur Historic Site Through Contemporary Visual Art' (Art Forum, Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania, March 20, 2007).
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

installation and series of performances based on Tasmania's first novelist, Henry Savery, was the result of extensive research, which included an Arts Tasmania residency at the Port Arthur site, research in the Tasmanian State Library and archives, and several readings of his challenging novel *Quintus Servinton: A Tale founded upon Incidents of Real Occurrence*.[24]

90. Anne Ferran,
In the Ground, on the Air (2006)

Likewise, Anne Ferran's artwork was the result of a residency at the Female Factories in South Hobart and Ross, colonial-era sites where women were incarcerated, often for the 'crime' of pregnancy out of wedlock. While the high infant mortality rate was known, the details were less clear. Shockingly, Ferran's search of Hobart's death and burial archives over a number of years revealed that about 1,200 babies died over a period of about thirty years. The work shown at Port Arthur, *In the Ground, on the Air* (2006) mimics the statistical and objective nature of her research, as well as the lack of humanity in the treatment of both women and babies, who were usually separated at birth. The work comprised a number of woven blankets that represented the common causes of death, and the patterning of each related to the number of deaths attributed to the cause. The names of the children were also projected against the wall in order of birth, fading in accordance with their lifespan. Although her artwork was not specific to the Port Arthur site, the relationship between the penitentiary and the women's prison was highly significant, and many of the children born at the 'factory' would have been fathered by Port Arthur convicts or soldiers.[25] Although it addressed historical events, Ferran observed that these issues are still topical:

> the settlement of this country continues to haunt the present… these tragic events were never properly addressed and that means they haven't gone away. Video, because it dematerializes its subject matter, seems to be the ideal medium for this.[26]

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[24] Brigita Ozolins. email interview with the author, August 4, 2010.

[25] Noel Frankham and Julia Clark, eds. *Port Arthur Project: Re-interpreting Port Arthur Historic Site Through Contemporary Visual Art*, exhibition catalogue (Hobart: Tasmanian School of Art, University of Tasmania, 2007), 6.

[26] Jonathan Holmes, 'An Interview With Anne Ferran,' in *Anne Ferran*, edited by Craig Judd, exhibition catalogue (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 2008), 52.

Fiona Hall's work was similarly research intensive. *Breeding Ground* (2007), installed in the Trentham Cottage Garden, identified links between the plants used as trade in the convict era and the international conflicts of today. The work consisted of a variety of 'foreign' flowers and vegetables, in other words, the plants transported to Van Diemen's Land along with the convicts. Among the plants she placed a series of beehives painted with the respective camouflage patterns of the plants' country of origin. For instance, rosemary and sweet peas originated in Italy, melon in Sudan, and oats from Iraq.[27] Using a highly coded language, Hall explored the relationship between Australia's colonisation, inter-continental trade, military conflict, the long histories of these now common plants, and the human desire to conquer nature.

91. Fiona Hall,
Breeding Ground (2007)

The majority of the participating artists in the Port Arthur project engaged quite actively with *historical* figures – real or imagined – in the works they conceived. This historical emphasis is not surprising because Port Arthur is Tasmania's most notorious historical site (and tourist destination) and the convict era predominantly defines the site. The exhibition was criticised by Peter Timms for the emphasis on past injustices without drawing parallels with certain brutalities that occur today.[28] However, his complaints suggest a surface reading of the exhibition. For instance, Hall's installation linked current conflict with historical trade. Additionally, Ferran's observation that past injustices remain unresolved in Australian culture, suggests that we need to examine our past in order to properly develop as a nation.

However, Timms is partly correct in pointing out the emphasis on past issues and events, because relatively few artists directly addressed contemporary issues or the current local population. James Newitt engaged with Tasman Peninsular residents, videoing the community dances that he views as key in the creation and maintenance of place.[29] Lucia Usmiani, Lucy Bleach and Alyssa Simone made works that referenced the tourist

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[27] Frankham, *Port Arthur Project,* 8.
[28] Timms. *In Search of Hobart*, 137.
[29] Frankham, *Port Arthur Project,* 4.

experience, the role of the institution and/or preservation of heritage. Usmiani, for instance, sold items in the gift shop, Bleach created an artificial archaeological site, and Simone referenced the site's popular ghost tours. As I mentioned earlier, only one artist – Matt Warren – addressed the relatively recent violent shooting by Martin Bryant at the site.

The 1996 Port Arthur Massacre is a sensitive issue in Tasmania, and perhaps one that could only be addressed by a local who understands the continuing level of shock and horror within the community.[30] On the choice of subject, Warren wrote:

> When responding to a place, it is important to me to have some kind of empathy or find some personal relation to it. My family may or may not have a convict history, it's fairly unknown to me. But … there was a very distinct reason why I chose the massacre as a subject. I had been haunted by a memory from the time it happened.[31]

Cantus 35 (2007) stemmed from his own memories of hearing the sounds of gunshots over the radio on the 28th April 1996, recorded by a dropped and therefore image-less video camera.[32] Sited in the Sentry Box on the picturesque waterfront, Warren's work

92. Matt Warren, *Cantus 35* (2007)

used a gentle composition of harmonic sounds to try and "'exorcise' this memory and … instant negative response to the place and … somehow give respect to those who lost their lives as a result of the massacre.'[33] Warren's use of sound and the isolation of each visitor as they stepped into the tiny Sentry Box were integral to the notions of respect and peace embedded in *Cantus 35*. By not drawing attention to individual victims or statistics and creating an abstracted, but meaningful soundtrack (the thirty-five tones used in the piece represented those who had died in the massacre), the work drew 'little

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[30] The media beat up about the Rodney Pople's winning painting in the 2012 Glover prize, the subject of which was Bryant in the Port Arthur landscape, demonstrates the subject's potential to offend. A more detailed account of the Pople controversy can be found at my personal art blog: Lucy Hawthorne, 'The Glover Prize, The Mercury and a massive beat up', hobART (blog), 13/3/2012 http://hobartart.blogspot.com.au/2012/03/glover-prize-mercury-and-massive-beat.html
[31] Matt Warren, email discussion with the author, August 7, 2010.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid.

opposition.'[34]   Strangely, there is limited reference to the massacre at the site, the institution preferring to focus on the cruelties inflicted on prisoners in the nineteenth century, suggesting that perhaps time makes violent acts easier to discuss. Warren's artwork therefore subtly acknowledges the most recent chapter in Port Arthur's brutal history.

93. Lucia Usmiani, *I had a Wonderful Time* (2007)

In her work *I Had a Wonderful Time* (2007), Usmiani produced an amusing series of foldable cards, which could be purchased at the gift shop. Each themed card featured images of the utilitarian objects around the site: rubbish bins, transport buggies, markers or signs. Misleadingly described as 'light-hearted' in the exhibition catalogue, the work functions as more than simply a reminder of 'incidental details'[35] by also highlighting the culture of gift shops and souvenir purchases as an integral part of the contemporary tourist experience. The artwork also highlights the distractions that sit amongst the crumbling buildings, cold cells and courtyards. As a 'dark tourism' site, there is a disconnection between the past atrocities committed in these buildings, the happy picnickers who eat lunch on the lawns, and the branded snowdomes, glitter pens and bars of fudge available in the gift shop. *I Had a Wonderful Time* stood out because of its insight into the way in which dark tourism sites concurrently function as education, entertainment, and spectacle. The title celebrates the institution's role as both entertainment and holiday experience, while at the same time celebrating the more banal features of the site. Like the clichéd flip books of Port Arthur images available in the shop, featuring sun-pierced buildings, the picturesque waterfront, and dramatically lit night photographs, Usmiani's images are devoid of humans. The notion that black tourism can inspire a visitor's own morality by showing the immorality of other past individuals tends to be lost at Port Arthur, where there is an overwhelming emphasis on the tourist experience.

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Frankham, *Port Arthur Project,* 14.

The site's regular ghost tours, also an extension of the notion of black tourism as entertainment, inspired Simone's *Archetype* (2007). However, her work seemed to be more of a celebration of the paranormal photographs taken by recent Port Arthur visitors, rather than a critical interrogation of the institution's popular enterprise. A moving image of a butterfly was projected on an internal wall of one of the notorious isolation cells. Although the sub-bass soundtrack could be heard outside the cell, the image could only be viewed through a peephole in the door. The creature was a surprising but an ultimately less terrifying image than expected.

Highlighting the way in which the label of heritage is applied to tangible structures over time, Bleach's fake archaeological dig in the middle of the central lawns uncovered a constructed car parking space, complete with road markings and a drain cover, suggesting that future generations might one day be excited by today's banal utilities.[36] Similarly, Tracy Cockburn used images of personal items that once belonged to the site's residents such as engraved coins, letters or hand-carved tokens, re-presenting them amongst what were viewed as more significant items in the site's museum.[37] The lack of obvious titling in the museum confused the distinction between the officially 'significant' items on display and more personal, commonplace objects (albeit in photographic form),

thereby promoting an alternative historical narrative. The value-adding nature of the museum vitrine, whereby the very selection of an object for display implies worth, is exploited in Cockburn's work. Furthermore, by juxtaposing the official museum objects with items of those deemed less important in the historical canon, the relationship between the two groups is re-constructed.

95. Tracy Cockburn, *Forget Me Not* (2007)

Leigh Hobba's *New Chimes* (2007) also drew attention to the institution's presentation of history. The 'perfect' digitised version of the Port Arthur church bells, played as part of the 'authentic' tourist experience, was replaced with an unaltered, more 'honest'

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[36] Frankham said that Bleach's work drew the most opposition from the Port Arthur management because involved the digging up of the site's prized lawn. Frankham, in discussion with the author, June 4, 2010.
[37] Frankham, *Port Arthur Project,* 6.

recording of the remaining original church bells, despite their faults due to long-term neglect.[38]

The artworks by Warren, Usmiani, Bleach, Cockburn and Hobba all interrogated the way in which certain objects, memories and values are presented at the historic institution, and more importantly, which are left out. Most other artists in the Port Arthur and Trust projects highlighted the plights or importance of marginalised or underplayed individuals and groups. For instance, Vicki West and Lola Greeno considered the history of Indigenous Australians in their collaborative installation, *Premaydena* (2007). Ten woven tent-like structures made from tea tree and dodder vine honoured the Indigenous Oyster Bay people who were displaced when the penitentiary was established, particularly the *Pydairrerme* people after whom the artwork is named.[39] Bec Tudor described the work as 'a powerful representation of identity interwoven with place and environment,'[40] expressing her disbelief that Port Arthur does not have a permanent memorial in recognition of the site's pre-colonial history.

96. Vicki West and Lola Greeno, *Premaydena* (2007)

Artists such as Ferran, Ruth Frost and Fiona Lee scrutinised the role of women at Port Arthur and/or the general colony. To have so many artworks expressing similar messages, that is, revealing forgotten histories, there is a risk that the messages are undermined by the repetition. However, the distinct formal approaches, production, research, and response to site, meant that in most cases, the sense of unnecessary repetition was avoided. For instance, Frost's series of photographs that blended contemporary interiors and found family images alluded to the presence of family in the site's parsonage – a significantly different approach to Ferran's video installation in the watchman's quarters. Different in form and intent again was Lee's *Insiders* (2007), for

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[38] Ibid., 4.
[39] Ibid., 7.
[40] Bec Tudor, 'Port Arthur Project: Sites Unseen,' *Realtime*, no 78, 2007.
http://www.realtimearts.net/article/78/8492

which she covered the burnt structure of Government House with rose printed fabric, essentially 'feminising' the devastated building. *Insiders* focussed on the role of women in the establishment of the colony, an interest that stems from Lee's female convict ancestors.[41]

A number of artists took a similar approach in imagining the lives of little known or imaginary individuals. By imagining histories or characters, these artists avoid the trap of creating 'truths' under the guise of concrete and absolute history. Crucially, this ability to present poetic or speculative histories is something that sets the work of artists apart from that of the curator or historian, a distinction that will be discussed further in the next chapter. The history of the people in historic sites is not concrete, and through artistic research many artists and curators have uncovered new and illuminating histories, as illustrated by Ferran's Female Factory residency.

An example of an artwork that used this speculative history strategy was Helen Psotova's *Fortune of Lost Hearts: an Insight into Convict Culture* (2007), sited in one of the Separate Prison cells at Port Arthur. Like Simone's work, *Fortune of Lost Hearts* forced visitors to view the work through the peephole in the cell door, emphasising the themes of loneliness and captivity. Her work explored an essential part of human existence, yet one that is rarely told in the site's official history, of the love between two men. Her work was based on an actual letter sent from Norfolk Island, yet she imagines that it was sent to another man held in solitary confinement in one of the site's unsettlingly dark, cold and damp cells. The work never pretends to be fact, yet it addresses a gap that is often under-acknowledged or ignored in official colonial histories.

The participating artists in *Trust* engaged similar themes and strategies to those showcased at Port Arthur, which is unsurprising considering the similar brief, and the fact that the exhibitions had the curator and some artists in common. For instance, Frost explored a similar theme of family in her Oak Lodge photographs; however, the work was less overt than the Port Arthur series, suggesting presence through light, rather than figuration. Like Greeno and West, Julie Gough's artwork at Clarendon House, *Settling In* (2009), highlighted the displacement of Indigenous Tasmanians. Mary Scott explored

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[41] Frankham, *Port Arthur Project*, 10.

the tensions between private and public life for female politician, Enid Lyons. Like Lee, Frost and Ferran's Port Arthur works, Scott's work sought to highlight the lack of female representation in the official histories presented at Australia's historic sites.

97. Mary Scott, *At Least Three Jugs* (2009)

98. Mary Scott, *Porcelain* (2009)

Home Hill was home to Joseph and Enid Lyons, often described as Australia's 'first public political couple,'[42] with Joseph being the Prime Minister of Australia in the 1930s and Enid, a federal politician and significant women's rights activist. Scott's intervention comprised a series of paintings, as well as a number of installations around the house, including a suitcase crammed with tightly rolled clothes upon a neatly made bed, as well as an embroidered tablecloth for the kitchen, produced with the help of a local community sewing group. The artist was interested in the messages conveyed in the books written on and by Enid Lyons, which were 'eager to paint a picture of herself as an ideal housewife and mother.'[43] Yet, her absence from home due to workload and political campaign trails suggest a different story. Home Hill, as a museum, is one of the few houses included in *Trust* that has the owners' original furnishings (to the period which is officially remembered), and is carefully orchestrated, just as Enid's books were, to paint a very different picture of the Lyons' life to that which was actually lived. Scott's works, therefore, sought to reveal the disconnection between Enid Lyon's public life, her private life, as well as the life officially remembered in the house museum.

The historic house museum has traditionally excluded female representation, limiting the female experience to only a couple of rooms, typically child or housework related, such

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[42] Frankham, *Port Arthur Project*, 1.
[43] Delia Nicholls, *Trust* exhibition text. 2009.

as Clarendon House's nursery, which is stocked with hanging clothes and cots (but never nappies). At Home Hill, which was home to twelve of Joseph and Enid Lyons' children, there is even less evidence of their presence, let alone the room to house them all. As Linda Young points out, 'if women's presence is evident anywhere in the record of historic material culture and heritage places, then surely it ought to be in house museums.'[44] However, while professionally run social history museums tend to have re-examined history to include the female experience, Young argues that historic houses tend to favour presentations of history 'more antiquarian than historical, more focused on antique furnishings or fantasies of ancient life as either elegantly aristocratic or cosily cute, or on commemorating a Great Person, than on the interpretation of contemporary life.'[45] Young paints the historic house museum as being largely run by amateurs rather than academics, excusing their nostalgic and overwhelmingly romanticised history.

That Young can excuse the actions of organisations such as the Historic Houses Trust, under the guise of amateurs, demonstrates another issue in historic house management: an unwillingness to directly challenge the representation of history in these sites, particularly as the Trust employs a significant number of academics and professional historians. Academic articles, such as Young's, tend to be read by relatively few, and arguably, on-site art interventions are seen by a far wider audience, including the institution's management.[46] Scott's installation thus raised timely questions about how best to represent the lives of women in particular in Historic Houses, and the limitations of conveying the complex issues surrounding Lyon's life as a woman in the early twentieth century, through interior furnishings alone. Significantly, Scott's critique was received positively by the trust that manages Home Hill, resulting in the offer to purchase the work.[47]

John Vella's Clarendon House intervention was more subtle than most, despite its grand scale. He installed a central column, indistinct from the existing columns, at the front of the Palladian-style house. The strictly symmetrical 1838 building, with its raised

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[44] Linda Young, 'A Woman's Place is in the House… Museum. Interpreting Women's Histories in House Museums,' *Open Museum Journal*, no. 5 (2002): 1.

[45] Ibid., 4.

[46] Although as will be discussed in chapter four in relation to Goldberg's projects in Elizabeth Bay House, many historians refuse to acknowledge the validity of such criticism.

[47] Scott was uncomfortable about this proposal, commenting that by becoming a permanent feature of the museum, the power of critique would be lost. Discussion with the author, June 25, 2009.

entrance, thick distinctive columns and heavy build, is sited on the Esk River near the town of Evandale on the Tasmanian midlands. Surrounded by grass paddocks, on approach, the massive building seems absurd in both scale and site. Vella's installation played on this discomfort. The placement of the column in the centre did not seem out of place on first glance, for it was consistent with the building's symmetrical form, despite the resulting odd number of columns. In fact, many visitors reported only realising the forgery on exit from the building, when on approaching the front door from the grand entrance hallway, they were faced not with a view of the gardens but a massive column instead. Stephanie Radok described the sense of confusion looking for the 'almost invisible' artwork to match the nearby text: 'it was right next to me yet could have been there always.'[48]

99, 100. John Vella, *Poleposition* (2009)

The museum – in this case the architecture of the building and colonial culture in general – as well as visitor assumptions, were all integral parts of Vella's site-specific artwork. Like the installations in the AGNSW's vitrine, the historic connotations of the column as a marker of rationality and masculinity, not to mention the phallic symbolism, were also active in Vella's artwork. Like most of the artworks discussed in this chapter, these aspects of the museum were at once the installation's subject and medium. In Vella's artwork, the museum – its physical structure and historical significance – is an intrinsic part of the language. Again, the fact that the structure of the house museum or site *is* the institution, rather than just a vessel, makes this kind of museum unique. The house cannot be enclosed within a vitrine. By its very nature, its past inhabitants retain a significant presence, and the tendency to dress the house with furnishings and artefacts of

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[48] Stephanie Radok, 'The Sound of Many Hands Clapping,' *Artlink* 29, no. 2 (2009): 11.

a particular era, means site-responsive artworks more often than not address social histories associated with the place. These artworks may incorporate speculative accounts of individuals, focus on particular objects or structures and the associated cultural values, or the way in which history has been presented by the institution. As will be demonstrated in the following sections, while these themes overlap with responses to other types of museums, the range of responses are still quite distinct and focussed towards the house or historic site museum.

The phrase, 'a sense of place,' has become a catchphrase in Tasmania to the point where it is frequently parodied. Not only is it one of the University of Tasmania's key research themes, but it is also a guiding principle of the Ten Days on the Island program. So in addition to a focus on accessibility, quality of research and genuine site-specificity, the curators emphasised the participation of local artists in both art exhibitions.

Lucy Lippard, in *The Lure of the Local* critically notes that 'for all the art that is *about* place, very little is *of* place – made by artists *within* their own places or *with* the people who live in the scrutinized place, connecting with the history and environment.'[49] The 'localness' of such artists need not be measured by how long they have lived in a place, but rather the level of 'connectedness' they have with the place, for 'places are formed by people and their cultures. Art that ignores that ignores its audience.'[50] Lippard is critical of the practice of 'importing' artists from elsewhere for place-oriented exhibitions, writing that exhibitions about place, such as Mary Jane Jacob's 1991 exhibition in Charleston, *Places with a Past*, are

> rooted less in local community than in myth filtered though the avant garde, [and] tend to be strong in form and weak in connectedness. The relationships between artist and community, artist and place, have usually been serially monogamous, and often disillusioning.[51]

Likewise, Kwon is critical of the nomadic artist who is engaged by international institutions as an 'exotic/expert visitor.'[52] As she notes, the success of artists nowadays is frequently measured by the number of international residencies completed to the point

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[49] Lippard, *The Lure of the Local,* 263.
[50] Ibid., 280.
[51] Ibid., 281
[52] Kwon, *One Place After Another*, 52.

where their CV could even be considered another 'site.'[53] The popularity and growth of international residencies means that tailoring creative proposals to a particular place is an assumed condition. An artist or curator will produce a body of work that explores unique aspects of the place in question, with the required presumption that the place is truly 'unique.' In doing so, Kwon argues, the artist is no longer a 'maker of aesthetic objects', but a 'facilitator, educator, coordinator, and bureaucrat.'[54] The authority of the artist essentially guarantees that if the aim of projects like *Places with a Past* is to explore and reveal the unique social and historical aspects of Charleston, then regardless of the reality, the place is branded as unique – a label that Kwon argues is more about strategic 'product differentiation' in a globalised world, than exploring key cultural issues.[55]

The Port Arthur and *Trust* exhibitions deliberately aimed to avoid 'parachuting in of artists,'[56] a strategy criticised by Lippard and Kwon. In the case of the *Port Arthur Project*, all but a few artists lived in Tasmania, and those who lived elsewhere had demonstrated longstanding engagement with the state's colonial history. All the *Trust* artists were Hobart-based. While the artists were not necessarily local to the Port Arthur region or, in the case of *Trust*, to the towns surrounding the historic homes, most had a level of personal interest and connection to the sites, although again, the definition of 'local' as living in the same state is perhaps questionable. In emphasising this theme, most artists made place-related art, exploring individual histories and community through the frame of local knowledge and experience.

However, if we consider Kwon's argument in relation to Port Arthur, it is easy to see how the project is simultaneously a cultural event as well as an exercise in branding. While Kwon is perhaps a little too negative about the exploitation of site-specific art, her observations do apply to the Tasmanian projects, both of which were commissioned for the highly publicised Ten Days on the Island festival, which as I mentioned, emphasises the state's uniqueness of place. In the mainstream media, funding for the festival is framed in terms of economic returns and increased tourist visitation. To establish a project that explores notions of place at the Port Arthur Historic Site (which is advertised
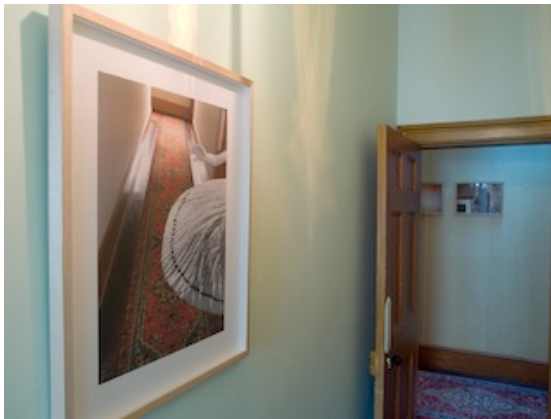
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[53] Ibid., 52.
[54] Ibid., 51.
[55] Ibid., 51-54.
[56] Frankham, 'Port Arthur Project.'

as Tasmania's third most popular tourist attraction),[57] therefore fulfils the stated cultural and financial aims of the festival. Furthermore, by emphasising that the artists are 'local' (regardless of the reality), they are granted an additional level of authority as 'specialists' in that place.

Of course, the very definition of 'local' is open to interpretation. Is it someone who lives in the area? Do they always have to have lived in the area, or is there a certain incubation period after which they are infected with this 'sense of place'? James Newitt's film of the Tasman Peninsula community dances was produced as an outsider looking in, even though he had spent a great deal of time with the residents. Then again, Warren's very personal response to the 1996 Port Arthur Massacre hinged on a wider notion of local, where the entire state of Tasmania grieved the loss of lives. It is doubtful that anyone outside the community could approach the issue with an appropriate level of sensitivity and understanding. Pat Brassington's *Trust* contribution at Runnymede, demonstrated the link between artist and place. Growing up near the historic house, she used childhood memories to develop a series of images that were at once feminine and haunting.

101. Pat Brassington, *Ambush in the Hall* (2009

Heritage houses and sites are often at risk of promoting the history of a particular group of people at the expense of others, 'to assert some truths and ignore others,'[58] and promote a particular view of history without conflicting views. A historic house's permanent and ordered display is also somewhat contradictory to the once dynamic and lived in dwelling. If conducted sensitively, site-specific art in heritage sites and museums has the ability to provide fresh insights, alternative or additional interpretations, and fill in gaps in knowledge or acknowledgement. These projects also

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[57] At the time of the Port Arthur Project, the historic site was listed second after Salamanca Markets, although it has been pushed to third place since the opening of MONA (which is also usually framed in terms of economic returns to the state).
[58] Karp, *Exhibiting Cultures*, 1.

provide rich opportunities for local artists to share their personal knowledge and suggest alternative ways of thinking about such institutions.

The acceptance of such criticism, and more importantly, the willingness of institutions to engage in such projects, in part stems from a level of political correctness. By hosting art exhibitions, such as the *Port Arthur Project* and *Trust*, the historic house or site demonstrates their willingness to self-evaluate and an awareness that such exhibitions bring in a wider audience. Yet, as discussed earlier, the projects also served to promote one of two key Tasmanian themes (or myths), that of heritage, particularly as it was part of Ten Days on the Island, which seeks to establish the state as a unique place. Like the other key Tasmanian theme – wilderness – the notion of a 'heritage state' is often discussed in terms of tourism dollars, and therefore these art projects, as Kwon observes, fulfil the fiscal needs of the state and institution.

While Kwon discusses the *Places with a Past* exhibition in relation to the move from artist as maker of aesthetic objects, to administrator, teacher and occasionally 'exotic visitor', she fails to properly describe the way in which an exhibition like *Places with a Past* fits into the schema. The exhibition is discussed in conjunction with her second model, institutional critique; however, her schemas, which I have previously described as quite narrow and specific, do not seem to take into account the continuing popularity of site- and place-specific artworks in non-art museums and public spaces. Despite the fact that the focus of *One Place After Another* is on public art, and in particular, defining a new genre of public artwork under her third site-specific art model, as well as acknowledging the ways in which site-specific art can challenge dominant cultural norms, she appears to discount the significance of exhibitions like *Places with a Past* in her targeted criticism of the project.

Then again, Kwon's book was published in 2002, and in Australia at least, the popularity of art projects sited in non-art museums only started to emerge in the late 1990s. It is evident in Australia, where our racist and sexist colonial past has been the overwhelming focus of artworks sited in historic sites, that art projects play a significant role in challenging the country's official history as told by these institutions. Unlike most other types of museums, the historic *site* is an exhibit in itself. For instance, Clarendon House

is not just a vessel for objects belonging to the original inhabitants of the house, or a history of the region told though tangible artefacts, the house *is* the museum. So when artists, such as Vella, target an aspect of Clarendon's architecture – in this case, the four massive Roman-style columns that flank the front door of the building – the relationship between artwork and existing building is quite distinct, for example, to the artworks discussed in the previous chapter that focussed on the neo-classical AGNSW vestibule.

Unlike artworks produced for an art museum, when projects are located in historic houses and sites, art is the outsider. In historic homes, in particular, their often archaic display methods are problematic in terms of the institution's representation of history, limited critical inquiry, and often romanticised and aestheticised attitudes towards restoration and heritage. Art's ability to critique, and importantly, present that critique in a way that is both accessible and distinct from the roles of curators and historians, means that temporary art projects can contribute meaningfully to the way in which heritage is represented in Australia. While the motives for such art projects are varied, and some problematic, we can view the drive to exhibit art in these sites as a further move away from the Modernist display philosophy.

3.6 Social and Cultural Museums: The Grainger Museum

While historic houses and sites could be classed as social and cultural museums, the emphasis on the physical site as museum, and tendency towards historical recreations of furnishings or scenes, means that the artistic responses are quite different to those in the social or cultural museums included in this section. The museums include some that are housed in historic buildings related to the museum's purpose, such as the Police and Justice Museum,[59] however in this case the museum's emphasis is more on historical documentation and collections rather than a 're-creation' of historic events or eras. Thus, while artistic responses to historic houses are usually based on poetic re-imaginings of people's lives, projects in cultural museums are more likely to focus on artefacts, archives, or the politics of display and knowledge. Of course, there are overlaps,

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[59] The collaborative artists Ross Gibson and Kate Richards used archived photographs in their series of exhibitions undertaken at the Police and Justice Museum in Sydney. Collectively known as *Life After Wartime*, the exhibitions such as *Darkness Loiters* (2001), *Crime Scene* (1999-2000), and *Bystander* (2008), used and recontextualised the archives at the Police and Justice Museum.

particularly when it comes to an institution's representation of history; and the status of art within both sets of institutions is the same – that of the outsider. However, the fact that the social/cultural museum generally considers the contents of the museum as separate from the building, and the corresponding lack of emphasis on past inhabitants or owners, is the key difference between the two.

Many of the art projects held in social/cultural museums tend to examine or mimic museological methods of presentation and classification, such as Narelle Jubelin's *Collector's Chest* (1994) at the Museum of Sydney. Australian artists such as Jubelin and Fiona Hall, and the American artists Louise Lawler, Fred Wilson and Mark Dion have established an art practice drawing inspiration from and interacting with museum displays. Not exclusive to social museums, this trait is seen occasionally in historic sites, but is also a popular theme in Natural History Museum art projects, which will be discussed in the next section.

The use of a museum's archives or collection, such as the earlier mentioned Andy Warhol exhibition at the Rhode Island School of Design, and Wilson's well-known *Mining the Museum* exhibition at the Maryland Historical Society (1992), is also popular.

102. Fred Wilson, *Viewing the Invisible: an Installation by Fred Wilson* (1998)

Wilson conducted a similar project at the renamed Ian Potter Museum of Art in 1998 called *Viewing the Invisible: an Installation by Fred Wilson*, following a three month residency at the University of Melbourne.

Under the curatorial theme 'the artist and the museum,' the Ian Potter Gallery[60] hosted three earlier exhibitions where artists were invited to make use of the University's archives.[61] While the Ian Potter Gallery is not a social history museum, the way in which artists were invited to work with the university's collection – in other words, the

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[60] Now known as the Ian Potter Museum of Art.
[61] The second and third exhibitions were *Elizabeth Gertsakis: Beyond Missolonghi* (1994) and *White Apron – Black Hands* (1994).

artists merely presented the artefacts in the exhibition space that was the Ian Potter – is relevant to a discussion of social/cultural museums. As an educational institution that has built up an eclectic collection of cultural artefacts over the last century and a half, these art projects demonstrated how the changing values of the research-intensive university, as well as Australian culture in general, are reflected in their archives.

In the first exhibition, *Aleks Danko: Zen Made in Australia* (1994), Charles Green questioned the validity of naming installations, such as Danko's strange combination of objects that included early twentieth-century furniture and a carved egg, as 'art'. Green wrote, 'is installation no more than a covert simulation of curating? This uncertainty disguises the museum's contamination.'[62] Like Warhol's exhibition, Danko's installation challenges the definition and role of the artist. However, this 'artist as curator' strategy is not uncommon in museum-based art projects, and essentially the key difference between artist and curator is their job title and corresponding intention. As has been stressed previously, the role of the curator and historian is distinguishable from the artist, in that the artist, particularly in non-art museums, is generally the outsider. As a result, the artist can organise and critique museum objects in ways that may be unavailable to permanent staff members. Danko's installation did not combine objects in a way that submitted to traditional methods of arranging, categorising and grouping artefacts. By identifying the intervention as art, Danko distinguishes his work from that of the traditional curator's, subverting cultural norms.

Wilson's project at the Ian Potter also drew upon the archives from a number of local institutions, just like he did for his well-known *Mining the Museum* (1992) at the Maryland Historical Society in Baltimore. As is revealed in Wilson's Australian project, as well as Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gomez-Pena's *Two Amerindians Visit Sydney* (1992) at the Australian Museum (which will be discussed in the next section), notions of exclusion and post-colonialism are not unique to Australia, nor are issues to do with ongoing racism. In fact, interesting links or even occasionally misinterpretations can be a consequence of overseas artists making work that address issues distinct or related to Australian culture.

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[62] Kent, 'Artists and Collections,' 12.

On his original *Mining the Museum* project, Wilson wrote:

> I looked at every object in the Historical Society collection, which is a vast one. They've been collecting since 1840, and it was a men's club in the early days, so they have some odd things in the collection. But those things aren't on view. And those are many of the things I have put on view, because what they put on view says a lot about the museum, but what they don't put on view says more.[63]

Reviews of the exhibition echoed Wilson's findings, with Judith Stein describing his actions as 'excavating the collections to extract the covert presence of racial minorities; planting emotionally explosive historical material to raise consciousness and effect institutional change; and, finding reflections of himself within the museum.'[64] Additionally, as a political activist of African-American and Indo-Caribbean descent, like Gordon Bennett's and Julie Gough's work, Wilson's art has a distinctly personal socio-political motive.

The promise of equally as bizarre and eclectic collections, perhaps led Wilson to draw objects and inspiration from the University of Melbourne Medical History Museum, The University of Melbourne Anatomy Museum, and the University of Melbourne Art Collection, for *Viewing the Invisible: An Installation by Fred Wilson*. The artist created multiple spaces, including a 'colonial' room, and a 'greeting gallery.' The colonial room contained a number of nineteenth-century Australian landscape paintings, which were then 'exposed' with infrared analysis, supposedly a 'metaphor for the "peeling back" of the pictorial surface to reveal prior histories of indigenous land occupation and dispossession following European colonisation.'[65] Wilson's positioning of the busts of Tasmanian Aborigines Truganini and Woureddy outside the windowed space, additionally alluded to practiced exclusion.[66]

103. Fred Wilson, *Viewing the Invisible: an Installation by Fred Wilson* (1998), 'Greeting Gallery.'

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[63] Fred Wilson, cited in ibid.

[64] Judith E. Stein, 'Sins of Omission: Fred Wilson's Mining the Museum,' *Art in America*, October, 1993, 112.

[65] Kent, 'Artists and Collections,' 13.

[66] Ibid.

In addition to the obvious critique of traditional museum collection and display, the installation referenced the patriarchal roots of the university through the juxtaposition of male portrait busts and scientific instruments. Consequently, Rachel Kent argues that Wilson's 'fictitious museum display [introduced] subtly disruptive elements that reflected upon dominant Australian historical narratives whilst revealing omissions and counter-histories.'[67] Though Wilson is known for his politically charged work in the USA, his methods of highlighting race relations and hierarchies using museum archives can evidently be applied to the Australian situation. The items in the university archives, such as the busts and landscape paintings, specifically relate to Australian society and culture, and so perhaps it is just a matter of rearranging and publicly exhibiting these normally hidden archives to reveal the complex national histories that they promote. After all, there is nothing objective or neutral about what items and history get archived and what is buried or thrown away.

104. Gordon Bennett,
Performance with Object for the Expectation of Guilt: violence and grief remix (1997).

The link between archives and power has been explored in a number of exhibitions, most notably *Archives and the Everyday* in 1997, which included a wide range of artists and key Canberra institutions. Gordon Bennett's contribution to the exhibition was particularly critical of the continued dominance of an official colonial-centric Australian history. Using live surveillance cameras, the artist set up what Merryn Gates called 'a conceptual line between Parliament House and the Tent Embassy.'[68] The purpose of the exhibition was to explore national identity through these institution's public archives. The curator, Trevor Smith, wrote in the catalogue, 'the national status of these institutions adds the question of 'national' identity or nationhood to the mounting physical and logistical problem of storage and retrieval;'[69] and suggests that national archives reveal the power relations of a nation, practices of exclusion, privilege and authority. Like his work at the AGNSW discussed in the previous chapter, Bennett's

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[67] Ibid.
[68] Merryn Gates, 'Is there an Artist in the Museum?' *Artlink* 19, no. 1 (1999): 17.
[69] cited in Ibid., 14.

contribution to *Archives and the Everyday*, which was produced during John Howard's reign as prime minister,[70] was uncompromisingly critical of Australian politics and the continued marginalisation of Aborigines. Bennett's art project used a different strategy to Danko and Wilson's, in that his work was less about drawing connections between archived objects and more about drawing connections between physical representations of power and dominance: parliament house versus the tent embassy, a solid permanent building versus an unauthorised grouping of tents of which the very name 'tent embassy' suggests a concurrent impermanence and permanence. These structures represent certain values held by the two quite different groups in Australian society, and the impermanence of the tent embassy could be seen as symbolic of an unofficial history untold in the historical archives and often neglected in dominant cultural institutions. Through his artwork, Bennett highlights the disconnection between what is officially remembered and what is not.

Another significant hook for site-specific response is the unrefurbished museum – one that has not necessarily been updated to comply with contemporary and politically correct codes of museum display. In some cases, artists are invited to exhibit work in order to revitalise tired museums, as was the case with the Grainger Museum prior to its 2003 refurbishment. The function of art in this case is to critique archaic display methods or collections as a way of acknowledging the institution's shortcomings and need of attention. James Putnam points out that displays that have 'escaped refurbishment' are particularly attractive to artists who have 'found a particular affinity with natural history, archaeology and ethnography collections.'[71] As Ivan Karp observes, 'we discover artifice when we look at older installations… the very nature of exhibiting, then, makes it a contested terrain.'[72] This artifice, like the deviations from the white cube gallery ideal discussed previously, is exactly the kind of condition that provokes a site-specific response.

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[70] Early in Howard's Primeministership (1996-2007), he was seen as condoning the racist policies of One Nation founder, Pauline Hanson, by his lack of condemnation and unwillingness to silence her views. Sean Murphy, 'Pauline Hanson Pulls the Plug as One Nation President,' *7.30 Report* (television program) (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 2002).
[71] Putnam *Art and Artifact*, 31.
[72] Karp, *Exhibiting Cultures,* 1.

The Grainger Museum, or as Percy Grainger preferred to term it 'Past-Hoard-House,'[73] is an eclectic autobiographical museum verging on *Wunderkammer*. It houses artworks, costumes, musical instruments (including Grainger's own 'experimental free music machines' or 'tone tools'), furniture, correspondence, his personal library, archives, and what Grainger described as his 'Lust Branch' collection.[74] Grainger's vision was of a museum that reflected his diverse and unusual style:

> Most Museums, most cultural endeavours, suffer from being subjected to too much taste, too much elimination, too much selection, too much specialisation! What we want (in museums and cultural records) is all-sidedness, side lights, cross-references.[75]

In 1998, Ros Bandt was invited to produce an installation in the museum's courtyard, which was followed by an exhibition inside the museum by Louise Weaver and Carolyn Eskdale in the same year.

The exhibitions were part of the Grainger Development Project, which aimed to revitalise the stagnant space.[76] At the time, Naomi Cass described the museum as being 'muted through inadequate resources, poor public focus and lack of clarity regarding its research and exhibition roles.'[77] The rooms where Eskdale and Weaver installed work, the 'London Room' and unofficially titled 'Ethnographic Gallery,' according to Cass, were 'tired spaces: tired from lack of interest, lack of conservation and modern museum conditions, tired from – in one instance – 60 years of almost static display and at least fifteen for the other.'[78] Despite the museum's potential historic value, the displays were no longer communicating with the contemporary visitor.

Weaver incorporated her art objects into the existing museum displays. Like Cockburn's work in the Port Arthur museum, Weaver's objects were left untitled, confusing the distinction between the official Grainger museum collection and Weaver's crafted objects. The lack of obvious titling goes against usual museum standards, where each object is accompanied by a didactic text and attribution. It is often not until such devices

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[73] Cass, Naomi 'Parallax Error' *Artlink*, vol 19, no 1, 1999 p. 52.
[74] University of Melbourne 2010 'The Grainger Museum Collection', accessed 21/9/2010, http://www.grainger.unimelb.edu.au/collection/
[75] Grainger (1941) cited in Naomi Cass, 'Parallax Error,' *Artlink* 19, no. 1 (1999): 52.
[76] In 2003, the Percy Grainger Museum closed for refurbishment, and reopened in October 2010.
[77] Cass, 'Parallax Error,' 52.
[78] Ibid., 52-3.

are removed that we realise their significant role in framing artworks, our experience, and our interpretation of objects. Cass suggested that this lack of direction creates 'a mild panic in viewers who are now faced with the increasingly overdetermined nature of museum exhibitions.'[79]

105. Louise Weaver,
Eye-Dream (1998).

In many ways, Weaver's objects looked quite at home in the vitrines in the ethnographic collection, sharing the space with beaded bags, feathered fans, carved Chinese boxes, stethoscopes and a plaster cast of Aphrodite. Grainger's artefacts were collected on concert tours, and the musician formed a particular interest in woven and beaded jewellery from areas such as Melanesia, Polynesia, North America and Africa.[80] Weaver's sculptures, produced by crocheting over found objects, such as sticks and lightbulbs, mirrored the finely crafted objects in Grainger's collections. Additionally, the existing dominant colour in each vitrine was matched by Weaver's sculptures, artificially linking the groups of objects. By picking up and emphasising an unintentionally dominant colour in each vitrine that was previously unnoticeable, Weaver also introduced another way of classifying and presenting museum objects. Just as Danko and Wilson established an alternative method of categorising and exhibiting objects divergent from museological norms, Weaver drew curious links between objects that were otherwise classified loosely by the musician's travels and their cultural (or even exotic) origins.

The museum vitrine communicates very distinct messages independent of the objects placed within it. Like the gold frames discussed the previous chapter, the

106. Louise Weaver, *52 Soueux (Aphrodite)* (1998).

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[79] Ibid., 53.

[80] Grainger Museum, 'The Grainger Museum Collection: Ethnographic Collection,' *University of Melbourne*, http://www.grainger.unimelb.edu.au/collection/#ethno

vitrine marks objects as things of worth. In the case of the Grainger Museum's ethnographic collection, the vitrine also groups quite disparate objects together as 'exotic.' Rather than blatantly highlight the lack of political correctness in the museum's displays, Weaver's uniformly coloured forms amongst the more disparate Grainger ones, subtly suggests that a reconsideration and recontextualisation of these collection is necessary. Significantly, Weaver refrained from passing outright judgement or implied superiority. Her work was critical, but unlike many similar ethnographic museum projects, she was not aggressive in approach.

107. Carolyn Eskdale,
Untitled Room 10.98 (1998)

Eskdale's less subtle intervention into the London Room consisted of geometric structures supporting semi-translucent screens, which blocked most of the existing objects in the room from view and also prevented viewers from entering the highly theatrical arrangement. The London Room display was similar to many historic house recreations, with its orchestrated dining room space with cabinets of crockery and a large dining table set with an incongruous arrangement of aging plastic fruit and cucumber sandwiches.[81] Cass argued that the act of concealing part of these distracting details, 'provokes viewers to take a more instrumental role in order to see,'[82] and it functioned in a similar way to Eskdale's *AGNSW Entrance, 6.04* installed in the vestibule six years later.

It is as if Eskdale, faced with a confusing space crammed with objects – some of them historically significant, such as the furniture, and others verging on the dioramic, such as the plastic food – decided to counter it using strategies of the contemporary art gallery. Just as the walls of the white cube function as 'neutral' areas between hangings, concentrating attention on a sparse selection of paintings, Eskdale's screens allow

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[81] Cass, 'Parallax Error,' 53.
[82] Ibid.

viewers to only see certain details in the space, allowing for more focussed contemplation.

Rather than attack Grainger's unconventional and often controversial collection from either a postcolonial viewpoint or on issues of his unconventional sexuality and politics, Eskdale and Weaver worked in dialogue with the 'formal, familial and museological'[83] aspects of the museum. To pick up on the more controversial aspects of the musician and museum founder's life would have been a relatively simple way to interact with the museum and its collection; however, their subtle method of interaction was what made the exhibition so interesting.

The Grainger Museum closed for a significant refurbishment in 2003 – an acknowledgment that the displays and building needed greater reconsideration than temporary artworks. However, also at risk was Grainger's personality and philosophy evident in the pre-refurbished museum. While he was a product of his time (reflected in the museum display), he was also a unique and talented individual with a distinct attitude towards musicianship and a respect for other cultures. When he established the purpose-built museum in the 1930s, Grainger acknowledged that its contents were 'a product of one man's taste and criticism – my own – and are limited accordingly.'[84] His then unusually inclusive and egalitarian attitude towards other societies also explains his eclectic collection. He observed the neglect of what he considered 'a vast mass of significant and beautiful folk music, primitive music, and Asian and African art-musics,'[85] stressing that 'musical culture in all parts of the world suffers from the lack of cosmopolitan and universalist outlook on music.'[86] Most importantly, Grainger saw the museum's location in Australia as geographically significant in its proximity to countries, such as Indonesia, with 'some of the world's most exquisitie [sic] music.'[87]

Grainger's dream was progressive and ambitious: 'it would be a wonderful thing if Australia should be the first country to live to the axiom: "Music is a universal

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[83] Ibid., 54.
[84] Percy Grainger, 'Aims of the Grainger Museum,' *University of Melbourne.*
http://www.grainger.unimelb.edu.au/museum/aims.html
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid.
[87] Ibid.

language".'[88]   Unlike the historic sites considered earlier in this chapter, the museum displays a distinct multiculturalism at odds with the White Australia Policy that was popular at the time of opening. So while the refurbished museum, with its updated displays and interpretation, may connect more readily with contemporary audiences and comply with standards of scholarship expected of its affiliated university, the sense of history embedded in the old museum, as well as the spirit with which the museum was established, is lost.

The relationship between academia and art is particularly relevant to a discussion of site-specific art in museums because a surprisingly large number of museum interventions involve university staff members, or in the case of the above examples, the host itself is an academic institution. There are a number of reasons for this correlation. Firstly, the emphasis on criticality is a key element of art practice as academic research, and thus involvement in a project as curator or artist fulfils university employment requirements. Secondly, as a host academic institution, an invitation to artists who have a special purchase on this criticality is a key strategy in demonstrating the museum's willingness to self-evaluate. Therefore, in acknowledging that the Grainger museum was lacking in curatorial rigour and contemporary scholarship, the art projects were an easy and institutionally legitimate way of publically recognising these shortcomings.

Not just confined to university-affiliated museums, we see a similar tendency to self-evaluate in many contemporary art galleries. This trend of 'institutionalised institutional critique,' where museums not only invite artists to produce site-specific artworks, but actively orchestrate the critique, will be discussed further in the next chapter.

Another unintended and contradictory effect of refurbishing the more archaic museums is that for those artists with an affinity for more traditional museological methods of display, the renovation of the Grainger Museum may represent a lost opportunity for creative site-specific response. Mark Dion refers to unrefurbished museums as 'time machines,' which have evolved into 'museums of museums.'[89] He argues that 'stepping through their portals vividly evokes the obsessions, convictions, and projections of the

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[88] Ibid.
[89] Mark Dion, 'Mark Dion,' in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, ed. Kynaston McShine, exhibition catalogue (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 98.

past.'[90] As stressed previously, certain sites encourage site-specific response more than others. Just like the AGNSW's vestibule, the raw Cockatoo Island, and 'recreated' historic homes, the anachronistic aesthetics of older museums are 'hot spots' for site-specific artworks. As Dion muses, 'no words are more heartrending than "closed for renovation".'[91]

3.3 Natural History Museums: The Australian Museum

When Coco Fusco & Guillermo Gómez-Peña performed their 'couple in the cage' at the Australian Museum in Sydney, their artwork was interpreted quite differently to other versions in Madrid's Plaza de Colón, Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History, and London's Covent Gardens, amongst others. While all the performances had unintended interpretations, the *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit Sydney* (1992) version was misinterpreted in light of local Aboriginal issues. Charles Green notes that the 'awareness of comparatively recent trade in deceased Aboriginal bones intersected with an affront to, using Gómez-Peña's term, contemporary "cultimulturalism".'[92] The project was enacted as part of the postcolonial themed 1992 Biennale of Sydney: *The Boundary Rider*. Along with the inaugural Asia-Pacific Triennial the following year, the choice of the popular biennale theme represented Australia's growing interest in their geographical location and the development of multicultural policies. As Green observes, Australia was 'a postcolonial society in transition,'[93] and the 'boundary rider' theme reflected the marginality of a country that considers itself part of the west but is bordered by Asia.

The countries chosen as exhibition locations – England, America, Australia, Spain – were all postcolonial nations, and while not all the performances were based in natural history museums, the artwork was particularly relevant to the Australian Museum, which is internationally respected for its research in natural history and Indigenous culture. It is important to recognise that while the work was not specific to the single museum, this relevance, and unexpected outcomes and misinterpretations unique to the Sydney

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Green, *Peripheral Vision*, 122.
[93] Green, *Peripheral Vision*, 120.

performance means that there is no doubt to its site-specificity. Like the Parr and Piccinini exhibitions, the re-presentation of this work in multiple sites, with each site having a deliberate, different and significant dialogue with the artwork, further illustrates this under-acknowledged kind of site-specificity.

108. Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña,
one of their 'the couple in a cage' performances (1992-3)

Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco's interest in cultural and ethnic diversification stems from their experience as migrants from Mexico and Cuba, respectively, in the USA.[94] Their stereotypical representation of the 'other,' refers to the West's concurrent fascination with 'exotic' cultures while discriminating against the same communities. Also making the Australia-specific connection, the biennale curator, Anthony Bond noted in the catalogue that such prejudice applies not only to migrants but also Australia's Indigenous community, whose culture is also paradoxically exoticised.[95] His curatorial statement emphasised the functional side of art, arguing that the biennale asks the question 'what can art do?' rather than 'what is art?'[96] Evidently, one important purpose of *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit Sydney* was to trigger or at least contribute to the debate on Australian attitudes towards Aborigines.

The artists, who lived for three days and nights in a golden cage in the natural history museum, were dressed in a bizarre combination of grass skirts, printed fabrics, feathered masks and sunglasses.[97] They presented themselves as newly discovered 'Amerindians' from a fictional island called 'Guatinau' in the Gulf of Mexico, illustrated by a fake Encyclopaedia Britannica map and didactic text. While caged, the Amerindians would perform 'traditional tasks', which included watching television, working on a laptop or sewing voodoo dolls. By donation, Gómez-Peña would tell 'authentic Amerindian

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[94] Anthony Bond, ed. *The Boundary Rider: 9th Biennale of Sydney,* exhibition catalogue (Sydney: The Biennale. 1992), 112.
[95] Ibid.
[96] Ibid., 16.
[97] Bond, *The Boundary Rider*, 112.

stories' in his uninterpretable fictional language or pose for photos. Additionally, in the Whitney Museum version, for $5, visitors could view 'authentic Guatinaui male genitals.'[98] This voyeuristic offer was appropriately missing from the family-friendly Australian Museum version. Two 'zoo guards,' as Fusco describes them, were the main interpretation source for visitors, in addition to their feeding and toileting roles. For the latter, the artists would be escorted on a leash,[99] which in itself has connotations of sex and power.

Diana Taylor is critical of the 'testlike' quality of the performance and subsequent video that essentially exploited the audience, writing, 'no matter what, we fail.'[100] Some viewers believed that the performers were newly discovered savages. Others recognised it as an artwork, although sometimes not realising the performers were also the artists, Coco Fusco noted, they 'appeared to take great pleasure in engaging in the fiction by paying money to see us enact completely nonsensical or humiliating acts.'[101] When asked how the 'ideal spectator' would interact with the artists, Gómez-Peña replied 'open the cage and let us out,'[102] an act that Taylor notes would not be possible because of the conventions of performance.[103] Unlike most museum exhibits where the visitor is a passive observer or consumer, the audience became the work, and their participation, regardless of their reaction and attitudes towards the 'savages,' could be considered a form of consent, legitimising racist policies. Not noted, but equally as significant for its museum location, the unwritten 'don't touch' rule would also prohibit any such interaction, even though the practice of keeping live humans in a museum is just as unconventional.

The inclusion of *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit Sydney* in the 1992 biennale was significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, and most obviously, the work was exhibited in a natural history museum, not an art museum. Using sites not usually reserved for exhibiting art is relatively commonplace now, however, it was quite a new strategy in the early 1990s, particularly for large exhibitions like the biennale. Secondly, it not only

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[98] Coco Fusco, cited in Diana Taylor, 'A Savage Performance: Guillermo Gómez-Peña and Coco Fusco's "Couple in the Cage",' *TDR* 42, no. 2 (1998): 163.
[99] Ibid.
[100] Ibid., 168.
[101] Coco Fusco cited in ibid., 169.
[102] Gómez-Peña cited in ibid.
[103] Ibid.

recognised the role that natural history museums have historically played in promoting 'the exotic,' but was staged at a time when Australian attitudes towards its postcolonial past were changing and awareness of issues such as the practiced exclusion of Indigenous Australians were being discussed in more mainstream society. So while the artwork was not notably altered between the London and Sydney performances, aside from the respective names (... *Visit Sydney*, ...*Visit London*), the outcome of each performance was quite specific to its site.

The popularity of critical art exhibitions in natural history museums grew during the mid-1990s. James Putnam's 1994 exhibition, *Time Machine*, based in the Egyptology Hall of the British Museum, was particularly influential, and Putnam would later argue that artists have the liberty to 'take initiatives with groupings and juxtapositions that no museum curator would normally be allowed to consider.'[104] Inspired by Putnam's British Museum exhibition, Michael Goldberg's curatorial project, *The Butterfly Effect*, at the Australian Museum in 2005, exemplifies this theme of independence, as well as his own philosophy on art – that it can reveal truths, or more precisely, that it can 'reveal the dominant paradigms that construct our ideas about truth.'[105] A key function of site-specific artworks in the non-art museum therefore is to reveal the way in which some facts, objects, and stories are valued and others forgotten or repressed.

The Butterfly Effect grew out of Goldberg's fascination with the miscellany of styles of display and architecture at Australia's oldest and largest natural history museum. The resulting brief to participating artists[106] directed them to 'reflect on themes of natural history, biological and geo sciences and the environment.'[107] However, like *Two Undiscovered Amerindians Visit Sydney* and Goldberg's botanic gardens project, which will be discussed in the following section, the focus of the resulting artworks was very much on the relationship between humans and nature as mediated by the museum. Realistically, the natural history museum can be read as the relationship between humans

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[104] Putnam, *Art and Artifact,* 136.
[105] Michael Goldberg, 'The Natural History Museum, Visual Art, and the Suspension of Disbelief,' *Constellations: Art, Science and Society International Conference*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, 2005. http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/academic.php 2005 p. 2.
[106] The participating artists were Brook Andrew, Tom Arthur, Michele Barker, Leon Cmielewski, Jackie Dunn, Michael Goldberg, Joan Grounds, David Haines, Joyce Hinterding, Nigel Helyer, Anna Munster, Josephine Starrs, and Louise Weaver.
[107] Goldberg, 'The Natural History Museum,' 7.

and nature, or 'the other.' The Australian Museum's dual emphasis on natural sciences and ethnography (with an emphasis on Melanesia) is representative of its complicated and sometimes controversial past.

Louise Weaver's contribution was similar in strategy to her Grainger Museum project. Among the Australian Museum's collection of taxidermied owls, she placed a crocheted version, the orange thread fitting snugly over a taxidermy mould armature. In the brightly coloured parrot cabinet, not to be outdone by nature, she placed a multicoloured sequined parrot of her own. The striped, pastel coloured bird with a puff of pink hair sat on a similarly decorated branch, further distinguishing it from the regular museum

109. Louise Weaver,
Moonlight Becomes You (Tawny Owl) (2005)

display birds, who balanced on relatively minimal clear acrylic sticks in front of didactic texts. Unlike her objects at the Grainger Museum that were not obviously distinguishable from the musician's collection of artefacts in either labelling or form, her Australian Museum interventions were clearly labelled as artworks.

Weaver's art suited *The Butterfly Effect* theme because she has long investigated the contradictory relationship between humans and the rest of the animal world. She crafts animal forms using professional taxidermy moulds or taxidermied creatures, covering these armatures with crocheted cotton, beading and occasionally designer clothes. Her work in the parrot cabinet, where bird and branch were treated with the same crocheted surface, was typical of a number of her bird artworks that highlight the disconnection between taxidermied trophy birds and methods of display. Most of these 'trophies' are presented perched upright on branches in a paradoxical attempt to look 'natural.' While the museum's parrot display shuns the branch for a plastic post, each bird faces a different direction, some heads cocked towards the viewer, others looking down at the ground; all are designed to look alive. In contrast, Weaver's temporary addition had its back to the viewer. Her bird stared at a gaudy oversized flower attached to an adjacent

glittering branch, and the messy cobweb and hanging bauble added an extra level of absurdity to the already unlikely arrangement.

Weaver's crocheted monochrome owl was conspicuous in its lack of ornament. The mould, usually used to recreate life-like birds, had its functionality stripped away, and the resulting cartoon-like form looked stiff and wooden next to the owls that shared its cabinet. The feathered birds perched on artificial moss-covered rocks, but like her parrot, Weaver's crocheted owl sat on a plinth indistinguishable in surface treatment. In other words, the plinth was as much a part of the display as the creature itself.

110. Louise Weaver, *Moonlight Becomes You (I'm a Bandit for Your Love)* (2005)

Weaver's third art animal appeared trapped behind two doors that read 'no exit.' A four-legged creature with fluffy tail, fishnet jacket and bandit-like facemask was perched on a plastic rock. A branch, leaning against the wall of the square room completed the deliberately poor attempt at a diorama. Also made from a taxidermy mould, the creature's paws were poised uncomfortably, lacking the life like appearance that fur would otherwise bring.

The museum diorama, which dates back to the nineteenth century, was originally designed to bring a sense of realism to natural science displays, positioning animals and plants in their 'natural' environment. Now considered twee and outdated by many scholars and curators, many dioramas are being dismantled in favour of multimedia displays,[108] although famous dioramas, such as Carl Akeley's series at the

111. The jaguar diorama in the Hall of North American Mammals, American Museum of Natural History

American Museum of Natural History, and the Australian Museum's own Lord Howe Island diorama, are celebrated in their own right. Writing on artist Hiroshi Sugimoto's

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[108] For instance, the TMAG's diorama, which was the site of Patricia Piccinini's *Bottom Feeder,* has been dismantled and disposed of in the recent redevelopment.

photographs of dioramas, including those from the AMNH, Thomas Kellein observed that these constructions 'preserve quasihistoric documents of our own past, and of our ancestors and popular favorites, like unreal documents of our own contemplative obsessions.'[109] The eccentricity of this form of display, and the obvious contradiction in the artificial representation of the natural, the false perspective, and creative license, makes it an attractive site for artistic response.

112. Lord Howe Island diorama,
Australian Museum

113. Michele Barker and Anna Munster,
The Two of Us (2005)

Unsurprisingly, the museum's popular Lord Howe Island diorama was also the site of an artwork, the artists Michele Barker and Anna Munster observing, 'dioramas such as these are like extinct specimens from museums' histories.'[110] The original display was built in the 1920s,[111] and at the time was partially sealed off with small viewing holes, creating the effect of 'a lost or imaginary world,'[112] according to the artists. Their installation, *The Two of Us* (2005), responded to a recent scandal at the museum, where the then director, Michael Archer, publicly announced that the institution would attempt to clone the extinct Tasmanian Tiger. While an online poll showed the public's overwhelming support of the project, scientists, conservationists and the media were not so impressed, labelling it a PR stunt and futile exhibitionism.[113] Stuart Taggart suggested that the 'rebranding [of] arcane genetic research into a kind of neo-sacred journey to restore lost Arcadia,' was a strategic and ultimately successful move to attract private funding and

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[109] Thomas Kellein, 'Hiroshi Sugimoto,' in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, ed. Kynaston McShine (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 102.

[110] Michele Barker and Anna Munster cited in Michael Goldberg, *The Butterfly Effect*, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: The Australian Museum, 2005), 10.

[111] As of 2012, the Lord Howe Island diorama is currently undergoing necessary restoration.

[112] Michele Barker and Anna Munster cited in Goldberg, *The Butterfly Effect*, 10.

[113] Goldberg, 'The Natural History Museum,' 14.

media attention.[114] In 2005, three years after the announcement, the new director Frank Howarth, announced an end to the project. The artwork was thus a topical response to the public interest and the 'fascinating and disturbing issues'[115] that stemmed from the controversial scientific project.

In the diorama, Barker and Munster placed a television on which archival footage of the last known Tasmanian Tiger was played. The evident two-dimensionality of the moving image, not to mention the physical television itself, unsettled the constructed seaside scene's 'realism'. By placing the creature into a foreign environment, far from its past Tasmanian environment, the artwork also highlighted the problematic nature of cloning, where technology rather than nature rules. Unlike Patricia Piccinini's work in the TMAG diorama, which strove for realism and assimilation even though the creature was ultimately a dystopian figment of the artist's imagination, Barker and Munster's addition to the diorama disrupted the institution's scripted landscape.

The artworks by Jackie Dunn, Tom Arthur, and Brook Andrew similarly focussed on the relationship between humans and nature. Dunn's humorous interventions in the museum's geology display involved the positioning of miniature human figures on and around the precious rocks. Sunbathers sat on the edge of an Agate slice, and on another, a tiny female golfer could be seen teeing off. In a more ominous example, soldiers guarded a sparkling block of Yellow Phantom Calcite as miners and miniature bulldozers worked below. By re-introducing the human element of prospecting and mining into the darkened and isolating museum display, she identifies the process of classifying and collecting nature as a cultural act, writing that our 'sense of wonder [for the natural world] is matched only by our propensity for exploitation.'[116]

114. Jackie Dunn, *Untitled (NSW)* (2005)

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[114] Stuart Taggart, 'Will Tasmanian Tiger Clone Work?' *Wired*, October 6, 2002.
http://www.wired.com/science/discoveries/news/2002/06/52959?currentPage=all
[115] Michele Barker and Anna Munster cited in Goldberg, *The Butterfly Effect*, 10.
[116] Jackie Dunn cited in ibid., 18.

Arthur also combined two otherwise disparate groups of objects, positioning a row of bronze Buddhist figurines along the spine of a skeleton cast, morphing the dinosaur's profile into that of another type. On first glance, the similarly coloured statues cannot be separated from the skeleton, and it is not until you look closely that the truth of the spine's composition is revealed, further explaining the beautiful, albeit unusual, combination of dinosaur skeleton and background silk paintings. Arthur's other work was even more absurd in composition. From the human evolution display, he used a breastfeeding mother and similarly posed Orang-utan. The human was balanced on a designer chair, her feet awkwardly raised because the model was designed for another sized seat. Nearby, the primate sits comfortably cross-legged. Spread-eagled, a concentric ring of Quoll and Possum skins lie facing the human figure, the centre of attention. Although, like the skeleton, the installation was based on the Buddhist philosophy of existence – 'the law of change and impermanence,'[117] the artificial construction seems to suggest the opposite in its awkward arrangement of disparate display mechanisms.

115, 116. Tom Arthur, *Some Numbers Expressed as Words, Pages 1 & 2* (2005)

Andrew's neon artwork was installed on the museum's exterior, a critique of the colonial associations embedded in the neo-classical sandstone building. *NGAJUU NGAAY NGINDUUGIRR* (I See You) was a re-presented version of his art gallery-exhibited 1998 diptych that positioned the text adjacent to a pair of photographed eyes. Best viewed at night, the blue text on the building's Northern corner disrupted the symmetry and warm glow of the bottom-lit building. The statement 'I see you,' written in Wiradjuri language, was strategically positioned to face Hyde Park and its grand statue of Captain

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[117] Tom Arthur cited in Ibid., 8.

Cook. Like the Fusco and Gómez-Peña performance, Andrew's installation commented on race and the cultural 'other', identifying the natural history museum as a contested site in Australia's colonial history.

117. Brook Andrew, *NGAJUU NGAAY NGINDUUGIRR* (I See You) (2005)

Goldberg proposed the art intervention to the museum's director, Frank Howarth, who had previously worked with Goldberg in his former role as director of the Sydney's botanic gardens. The success of *Swelter* in enlivening the celebrated but conservative institution was evidently viewed as an overall positive experience, despite some protest from some Trust members and volunteers who could not see the project's relevance to the botanic research institution.[118]

Notably, this was not the first time Goldberg had faced a division in support from the non-art museums he favoured as sites for artistic intervention. The relationship between the curator/artist and his Elizabeth Bay House project, and issues regarding divergent expectations and dialogue, will be examined in detail in the next chapter. This past experience, however, led him to source funding for *The Butterfly Effect* outside the museum so as to minimise industry outcry over misused funds. The museum's contribution would be limited to in-kind support, such as access to the collections. Even then, both projects were labelled 'controversial', a response that Goldberg lamented as simplistic and 'the equivalent of damning by feint [sic] praise.'[119] Instead of the interesting debate he expected, the project was met not only with initial reluctance by some collection managers to assist artists, but later a petition from twenty staff members (including scientists, technical staff and department heads, and a research fellow) calling for Goldberg's own artwork, *Genesis*, to be removed from the archway that links the 'Dinosaur' and 'Human Evolution' rooms. The video artwork, the signatories argued, was 'wholly inappropriate for the Australian Museum's evolution galleries.'[120]

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[118] Goldberg 'The Natural History Museum,' 9.
[119] Goldberg 'The Natural History Museum,' 13.
[120] Ibid.

In the catalogue, outlining the role he saw the art project would play in the museum, Howarth wrote in basic terms, 'natural and cultural institutions such as the Australian Museum offer a window to the world; and *The Butterfly Effect* is yet another way of looking through that window. What do you see?'[121] His statement sums up the basic intentions of most art projects in non-art museums – that is, to provide an alternative way of examining objects and ideas. In relation to the museum's mission statement, 'to inspire the exploration of nature and cultures… in a beautiful and sustainable natural world with vibrant and diverse cultures,'[122] Goldberg argued that the language of visual art should be used as a way of interpreting the natural world, in addition to science. Unfortunately, as with his previous projects, Goldberg noted many visitors' reluctance to acknowledge the role of art in non-art institutions:

> What was obviously missing from the way *The Butterfly Effect* was experienced was the willing suspension of disbelief that prefaces a visit to other entertainment emporia such as the drama theatre, movie theatre and art gallery, where it could be expected that the 'meaning of life' was going to be fictionalised and speculated upon.[123]

One of the key questions that projects in natural history museums and botanic gardens raise is the way museums are divided into the often strict disciplinary lines of science, cultural history, or art, and any intrusion into that separation of disciplines is often met with suspicion. That the TMAG combines the museum and art gallery is unusual, but even then, the separation of the 'museum' and 'art gallery' sections is strictly observed. As such, the emphasis on science – the rational and the objective – in the natural history museum can often come at the expense of acknowledging the social or human aspects of the representation of the natural environment, and ultimately the social construction of nature. Where projects like *The Butterfly Effect* succeed is in the insertion of sometimes troublesome questions such as the political aspects of mining, the unintended consequences of biotechnology, or the historical basis on which grand collecting institutions, such as the Australian Museum, were established.

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[121] Frank Howarth's introduction to Goldberg, *The Butterfly Effect*, 4.
[122] Goldberg 'The Natural History Museum,' 11.
[123] Ibid.,12-13.

3.4 Botanic Gardens: The Sydney Royal Botanic Garden

Comparing the projects undertaken at Australian natural history museums and botanic gardens, an overwhelming similarity is the concentration on issues such as the relationship between humans and the natural environment, the construction of nature, trade, and classification. The social aspect of science seems of most interest to artists, and we can see this theme in another of Goldberg's curatorial projects at Sydney's Royal Botanic Garden, as well as works by artists such as Fiona Hall and Janet Laurence.

Peter Cripps' *Projects for Two Museums* (1993), exhibited across the Museum of Economic Botany, Adelaide Botanic Gardens, and the University of South Australia's art museum, is significant because it was one of the earliest high-profile interventions into a non-art museum in Australia. His installation explored the ideology of the botanic museum, methods of classification, terminology and display. Significantly, many visitors did not realise that an artwork had inhabited the garden museum, despite the fact that the complex series of mirrors and printed text installed by the artist on and under existing displays was designed to make visitors *observe*. Although Katherine Gregory describes Cripps' use of Foucauldian terminology as clichéd,[124] it is the artist's cross-museum approach and strategic use of the Botanic Museum site that is retrospectively of most interest.

118. Fiona Hall,
The Barbarians at the Gate (2010)

As it becomes more acceptable to use non-art museums as exhibition sites, botanic gardens are increasingly playing host to temporary site-specific artworks. Hall and Laurence's installations at the 2010 Sydney Biennale were not dissimilar to previous works installed elsewhere, as both artists consistently explore issues relating

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[124] Katherine Gregory, 'The Artist and the Museum: Contested Histories and Expanded Narratives in Australian Art and Museology 1975-2002' (PhD diss., University of Melbourne, 2004), 87-88.

to botany, taxonomy and collection. The botanic gardens therefore seems an ideal location for such themes, adding meaning to the works that would otherwise not exist if presented in a regular art gallery. Hall's *The Barbarians at the Gate* (2010) was thematically and aesthetically similar to her Port Arthur work, *Breeding Ground* (2007), although it was tailored to the Sydney site. She introduced a live colony of bees to the gardens, housing them in distinctive camouflage-print hives centred around a large tree, each hive distinguished by a different shaped roof. Seed was sown among the hives, and painted army figurines hung from the branches above. Using multiple signs, the installation referenced invasion, conquest, and more specifically to the botanic garden, the site's history as both contested ground and the colony's first farm. Her permanent sculpture, *A Folly for Mrs Macquarie* (2000), which will be discussed in detail in chapter five, similarly addressed the gardens' history, although its method of communication was more elegant and far less provocative than *The Barbarians at the Gate*'s obvious military aesthetic.

119. Janet Laurence *WAITING -A Medicinal Garden for Ailing Plants*, (2010)

Laurence's *WAITING -A Medicinal Garden for Ailing Plants* (2010), looked like a pseudo-scientific experiment. Hundreds of small plants were planted terrarium-style in scientific beakers, surrounded by mirrored surfaces and tangled medical tubing. The temporary tent enclosure further suggested the fragility and urgency of this botanical 'rescue,' which perhaps explains why the gardens' permanent greenhouses (of which there are many) were not used. She has exhibited similar 'living' artworks in galleries, where the systems of plants and glass become far more aestheticised within the white walls than her fragile installation at the botanic gardens. The work's concurrent and slightly contradictory scientific aesthetic, nature, botanic site, and art status, is again indicative of the significant dialogue between artwork and site.

120. Palm House, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney

As mentioned previously, Goldberg's *Swelter* consisted of a number of art installations in the botanic gardens' nineteenth-century hothouse, or Palm House, noted as the first public structure of its kind in Australia. Some of the participating artists would work with Goldberg again in *The Butterfly Effect*, including Jackie Dunn, who explored similar themes of human conquest over nature, and Tom Arthur, who created an equally absurd juxtaposition of scientific props and artefacts.[125] The project, like his *Artists in the House!* at Elizabeth Bay House, followed a single artwork by the artist/curator three years earlier as part of the 1997 Perspecta – *Between Art and Nature*. *Ground Zero* (1996) examined the establishment of the gardens and its farming history, and like the *Artists in the House!*, the continued engagement with the particular site suggests Goldberg felt there was much more to explore than was possible in a single artwork.

121, 122. Michael Goldberg, *Ground Zero* (1996)

Ground Zero included forms resembling the classic museum vitrine as a way of establishing the hothouse as temporary museum – a similar strategy to his 1995 Elizabeth Bay House installation. Vitrines leaned casually against a plywood wall, propped up on 'temporary' wooden slats aside a folded length of removalist felt, as if the exhibition had not yet been installed completely. On one of the vitrines was written 'AND WOCCANMAGULLY SHALL BE KNOWN AS FARM COVE' in a matter-of-fact

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[125] The other participating artists were: Anne Graham, Debra Phillips, Nigel Helyer, Joan Grounds and Sherre Delys.

sans serif font; another read 'AND WARRANG SHALL BE KNOWN AS SYDNEY COVE.' Aside from a small didactic text panel, each vitrine was empty. The texts were predominantly quotes from the early colonists, however, there was also a list of tools brought ashore with the first fleet, and more ominously, a list of firearms. The focus of his installation was on the firearm, which Goldberg describes as 'the most effective of frontier agricultural tools.'[126] Thematically, the exhibition was a significant shift from the hothouse's usual exhibitions of botanic-related crafts and flower paintings.

The inspiration behind *Ground Zero* and *Swelter* was the way in which the botanic gardens' 'myopic and nostalgic'[127] history was presented to visitors. The hothouse is part of the First Farm Display, which is maintained as a historic site, or as Goldberg calls it, 'a theme park.'[128] Viewing the site interpretation, he observed,

> the absence of any references to the political milieu, inextricably caught up in the machinations of the British Empire, which had established the foundations of the Gardens. Instead I discovered descriptions of how Settler endeavour had begun to adapt and transform the environment through the use of agricultural tools. Texts and images alongside the manicured vegetable-patches and mini-orchards also detailed the seeds and plants carefully transported by the First-Fleeters from foreign climes. The descriptions, in keeping with the Gardens' conventions – which ignored Aboriginal languages – featured the formal Linnaean nomenclature.[129]

This one-sided and edited 'official' history as presented by the gardens, led Goldberg to offer an alternative – a history of violence and conquest. The texts were direct quotes, establishing another 'truth.' The museum display methods – vitrines, didactic texts – also communicated distanced authority. One text quoted an instruction to Governor Phillip from King George III: 'it is therefore our will and pleasure that you do immediately upon your landing… proceed to the cultivation of the land' (25 April 1787). Another quoted a 1788 statement by Phillip, who observed 'the wild appearance of land entirely untouched by cultivation.' Other statements, such as that of William Bradley's, First Lieutenant of the HMS Sirius, made obvious the significance of the site as contested ground, a fact then unmentioned in the First Farm Display:

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[126] Michael Goldberg, 'Trouble in Paradise: *Swelter* – an Artists' Project for the Palm House, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney,' *Globe E Journal*, no. 11, 2000.
http://www.artdes.monash.edu.au/globe/issue11/mgtxt.html
[127] Ibid.
[128] Michael Goldberg, 'Swelter,' Michael Goldberg artist website, 1999.
http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=1999_Swelter
[129] Goldberg, 'Trouble in Paradise.'

> An officer and a party of men were sent from the Sirius to clear a way to a run of water on the southern side of the bay; the natives were well pleased with our people – until they began clearing the ground, at which they were displeased and wanted them to be gone.

Goldberg's aim was to present an alternative history to that which was promoted by the historic site, and ultimately call into account the obligations that a research institution has to its public to communicate a more respectfully truthful account of New South Wales' 'first farm.'

Also evident in Goldberg's installation was the politics of naming. Paul Carter in *Living in a New Country: History, Travelling and Language*, observed the role of naming in establishing ownership and a sense of place. He notes that this is particularly evident in colonial Australia; the unfamiliar was made familiar through the naming of places.[130] The statements printed on the glass vitrines, therefore, can be further considered forms of conquest and transfer of custodianship.

123. Debra Phillips, *Untitled* (1999)

The artworks produced in the later *Swelter* series, were not quite as directly critical as Goldberg's initial installation, expressing more general concepts relating to the greenhouse as a symbol of the exotic or the magical, and one installation even parodied the Australian habit of celebrating a summer Christmas with food and decorations better suited to a Northern Hemisphere climate. Probably the most interesting of the exhibitions was Debra Phillips' installation which included the marble feet of *Discobolus* and *Summer*, raided from the gardens' 'sculpture graveyard,' the place where vandalised, unfashionable, and eroded statues go to 'die.'[131] While there are some contemporary sculptures in the gardens, the majority are quite conservative statues, including monuments to key national figures or classical copies, of which the trust is very proud.

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[130] Paul Carter, *Living in a New Country: History, Travelling and Language* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992).

[131] Goldberg, 'Trouble in Paradise.'

The inclusion of the dismembered marble sculptures, normally placed out of public view represented a sort of anti-monument.

As noted in the previous section, the Swelter project was met with mixed feelings by the Friends of the Gardens committee and Trust, particularly as the Friends, as volunteers, were responsible for not only sitting the temporary gallery but also interpreting admittedly challenging works for the public, and it was seen to be drawing resources and attention away from the gardens' key purpose – that of botanical research and display. Essentially, the acknowledgement that the project attracted a new audience defined the success of *Swelter* for the Trust, which Goldberg notes as his key dilemma, writing:

> Was the project ultimately to be assessed in terms of its effectiveness as a marketing tool? The Trust's rationale was convenient, if somewhat idealistic, and certainly at odds with the intentions of the project which were to question the rhetoric of the historic site as presented for public consumption.[132]

That the First Farm signs have now changed, however, is surely a testament to the impact, whether direct or not, of Goldberg's artistic intervention. The display, now called 'Cadi Jam Ora- First Encounters,' includes references to the traditional owners of the land and the consequences of European invasion. Significantly, the display has been planted out with indigenous plants among the usual cabbages and carrots, and the names of some are printed in Cadigal language, in addition to the existing common and Linnaean systems.[133] It is rare that the institutional response to an artwork has such a targeted, genuine and proactive response. The aims and measure of success for artist and institution are always going to diverge at some point, and these assessments are not mutually exclusive. After all, if they were, projects like these would not exist.

Conclusion:

As mentioned in the first chapter, the limits of Kwon's site-specific schema are most obvious when examining the trends in non-art museum based art projects over the last decade and a half. Kwon established her paradigms by defining each site in terms of function and physicality. She located the first two models predominantly within the art museum, and the third one mostly in public space. There are exceptions of course;

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[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.

Kwon's discussion on *Places with a Past* was positioned within her critique of the second model, and her analysis of Mark Dion and Wilson's art projects were (at least partly) sited in the museum. The examples examined in this thesis are sited in both the art and non-art museum, and while Kwon's stresses a key distinguishing feature of the mobile third model as being a decoupling of art and art museum, the growing popularity and relative frequency of site-specific art projects in non-art museums since the mid-1990s, means that the models described by Kwon, particularly the second (institutional critique), need to be re-examined, taking into account the diverse range of methods of enquiry and critique used by artists. The majority of the projects described in this chapter sit somewhere between Kwon's second and third models; they aim to critique the institution, but it is not an *art* museum they are critiquing. Instead, if we look at these artworks in terms of their relationship with the site, their thematic focus (such as correcting historical records, tourism or display methods), strategy (such as installations that assimilate into the site, artworks that disrupt the normal viewing experience, or more traditional media, like painting or photography), and intention (such as the desire to permanently change the institution's display methods, fulfil academic research requirements, and/or provide visitors with an alternative, albeit temporary, interpretation of history), we can account for a wider and more contemporary notion of site-specificity.

The popularity of this form of institutional critique is not emphasised in Kwon's book partly because it is a fairly new trend, and partly because the focus of her text is to identify a third new public art-orientated model, rather than to extend the accepted second. Kwon's examples of institutional critique are predominantly historicised and art museum-focussed, and while she acknowledges the pivotal *Mining the Museum* and *Places with a Past* exhibitions, describing them deftly in terms of the politics of place-making and the risk of making 'methodologies of critique rote and generic,'[134] neither exhibition sits comfortably in her site-specific schema, nor has she (understandably) predicted the exhibitions' influence.

Despite the fact that Kwon's assessment of the *Places with a Past* is overwhelmingly negative, the Charleston project has since become the model upon which many place-specific exhibitions have been based, including the *Port Arthur Project* and *Trust*. The

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[134] Kwon, *One Place After Another*, 47.

success or politics of these projects aside, the sheer popularity of these exhibitions amongst artists, curators and institutions means that the model of institutional critique needs to be revisited. Additionally, although Kwon focuses on the ulterior motives of *Places with a Past*, as this chapter has demonstrated, there are significant benefits to letting artists loose in non-art museums. Also, despite some visitor objection in many of the projects, including *The Butterfly Effect*, *Artists in the House!* and *Swelter*, the act of critically responding to a museum's collections, displays and assumptions is becoming a widely accepted and even *institutionalised* way of extending knowledge, audience and attention. As Goldberg's *Ground Zero* proves too, these interventions can trigger lasting institutional changes. Karp writes,

> Every museum exhibition, whatever its overt subject, inevitably draws on the cultural assumptions and resources of the people who make it. Decisions are made to emphasize one element and to downplay others, to assert some truths and to ignore others.[135]

If we accept that museums are inherently culturally and morally biased in some way, and that the role of art is to reveal the dominant paradigms that construct societal truths, then there is always going to be a place for art in museums, even the natural history museum. Whether both parties accept the challenge is another issue.

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[135] Karp, *Exhibiting Cultures,* 1.

Chapter Four

Institutional Dialogue

Museum
"Mouseion" – place where muses meet to discuss art (Greek)
"civilization's attic" – F.H. Taylor
Futurists – "Tear them down-" 1909

-Ad Reinhardt[1]

This chapter outlines three common modes of dialogue that generally occur between museum and artist in site-specific art projects. The first is the assimilative version, illustrated by Peter Emmett's actions as curator at the Hyde Park Barracks and Museum of Sydney. His emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration from the museums' conception has had lasting effects on the identity and philosophy of both institutions – effects that stretch beyond his employment.[2] The second mode of dialogue is the interventional, illustrated by Michael Goldberg's art and curatorial projects at Elizabeth Bay House, as well as the exhibitions referred to in the last chapter. He was highly critical of the restoration of the historic house museum and its presentation of history, and his method of critique was quite provocative.[3] The third model could be considered 'institutionalised institutional critique.' Building upon the arguments established in the last chapter, this section looks in particular at the actions of the NGVA when it first opened in 2002. In a public act of self-evaluation, the museum commissioned artists to make work critiquing the collection. By constructing a culture of critical thought from the museum's inception via the legitimising and supposedly 'neutral' figure of the artist, the NGVA was essentially constructing a political and post-colonial identity – an act that was seen by many critics as lacking in genuine institutional critique. The three very different modes of dialogue demonstrate the various functions that site-specific artworks play in museums, from interpretive roles to critical interventions.

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[1] Section of 'Museum,' [unpublished and undated notes] by Ad Reinhardt, cited in McShine *The Museum as Muse*, 212.

[2] Emmett was senior curator at the Hyde Park Barracks 1990-1991, and the MoS 1992-2000.

[3] As I will discuss later in the chapter, the relationship between Goldberg and the Elizabeth Bay House management was complicated. His initial artwork was viewed quite differently by the staff, and despite some opposition, the increased visitation to the house museum during the exhibition meant that Goldberg received permission to conduct a second art project at the house.

The marginality of art practice means that artists can contest cultural norms in a way that historians, curators and museum directors cannot. Art can 'get away with' presenting speculative or poetic histories – an advantage that can be exploited in many different ways, as this chapter will demonstrate. More generally, the chapter will discuss the ways in which artists have responded to museums' collections, archives and methods of classification, and will build on the discussion about the representation of histories established in chapter three. Noticeably, most projects draw attention to the way in which certain groups have been marginalised in museum displays, collections or archives, the two most common being the Indigenous and female populations. Alternatively, a number of the artists have reinterpreted collections, archives or heritage in a way that illuminates or updates the objects in question.

I will argue that institutional critique has become so normalised that it risks losing its critical strength. Kwon describes this tendency in relation to Fred Wilson's Maryland project, arguing that repeated critique risks becoming 'rote and generic… [and an] extension of the museum's own self-promotional apparatus';[4] yet, it is important to recognise the potential benefits of museum interventions – something that is under-acknowledged in Kwon's text. Originally, this chapter was titled 'institutional critique'; I felt, however, that 'institutional dialogue' better describes the range of types of critique examined.

There are several reasons why 'institutional dialogue' is a more suitable term. Firstly, it distances the discussion from both Kwon's fairly narrow model of site-specificity, as well as the term's close associations with specific groups of artists and methods. While institutional critique has evolved since the initial methods established by Daniel Buren, Hans Haacke, Michael Asher and Marcel Broodthaers in the late 1960s and 1970s, the term is still very much associated with this historicised group, even though Andrea Fraser believes that she was the first to use it in print in her article 'In and Out of Place' (1985), and argues that the artists mentioned above never referred to their work as 'institutional critique.' The term 'emerged as shorthand for the critique of institutions,'[5] and it is the institution of art that has restricted the definition and thus pigeonholed the said artists.

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[4] Kwon, *One Place After Another,* 47.
[5] Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique,' 279.

Fraser gives the example of a flyer for a symposium on the topic, where the definition pits artist against institution:

> Institutional critique is art that exposes 'the structures and logic of museums and art galleries': 'critique' appears even less specific than 'institution,' vacillating between a rather timid 'exposing', 'reflecting', or 'revealing', on one hand, and visions of the revolutionary overthrow of the existing museological order on the other, with the institutional critic as a guerrilla fighter engaging in acts of subversion and sabotage, breaking through walls and floors and doors, provoking censorship, bringing down the powers that be. In either case, 'art' and 'artist' generally figure as antagonistically opposed to an 'institution' that incorporates, co-opts, commodifies, and otherwise misappropriates once-radical – and uninstitutionalized – practices.[6]

Yet, as Fraser points out, the art and writings of Buren and Haacke, for instance, never viewed the art/institution relationship in this way. Because the term is so historically and art theoretically loaded, in this chapter it seemed best to use an alternative phrase to establish the three divergent relationships between art and institution, thereby also extending the theoretical discourse beyond the constraints of Kwon's model.

Additionally, the term 'critique' has its own quite negative and oppositional connotations, and this may explain institutional critique's multiple meanings. During my research I discovered a number of art projects, such as those at the Hyde Park Barracks, that are permanent and/or collaborative in nature, and others that are celebratory of a museum's collection. The term 'dialogue', therefore seemed far more appropriate and flexible a word to describe the relationship between art and institution.

The three modes of dialogue between artist and institution described in this chapter, therefore attempt to account for the sheer variety of relationships, as well as the motivations behind the art projects and the strategies used by artists. As described in the previous chapter, the aims of art projects, as well as the measure of success, are often different for artist and museum. This chapter continues to explore this duality, and the role that art plays in challenging the museum visitor and/or management.

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[6] Ibid., 280.

Collaboration: Peter Emmett's curatorial strategy at the Hyde Park Barracks and Museum of Sydney

When the Hyde Park Barracks opened as a museum under the management of the Historic Houses Trust in 1990,[7] Peter Emmett's curatorial methods attracted both enthusiastic support for his innovation and heavy criticism for the obvious departure from traditional museum display.[8] Central to Emmett's museum was the use of art and aesthetics to present multiple, and in some cases, speculative histories. For instance, as a historical interpretation strategy, he commissioned artists Heather Dorrough and Paul Carter to create permanent installations in the barracks, with Dorrough creating a series of life-size convict silhouettes for the top floor, complemented by Carter's sound artwork. However, it was always imagined as a site that would encourage ephemeral exhibitions that respond to and reflect the history of the building. Later temporary shows, such as *Secure the Shadow* (1995) by Anne Ferran and Anne Brennan, and Nicole Ellis' *Arrested Sites* (1993), thus sat comfortably with the museum's original philosophy and mission. There was to be a culture of exchange and multiple voices, facilitated by art projects in the museum.

124. Hyde Park Barracks

Similar curatorial strategies were used in the construction of the MoS, which opened in 1995, where Emmett was also senior curator from the outset. Unlike the barracks where the building is an integral part of the museum – that is, the subject and the shell – the MoS, built on the site of the city's (now destroyed)[9] first government house, looked beyond its locational history. Emmett had the benefit of designing both museums from scratch, and collaborated with artists during construction in order to produce site-specific artworks that provided a creative, multi-layered visitor experience while challenging the didactic approach to history common to more traditional museums.

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[7] The barracks building was initially used as a museum by the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, now Powerhouse Museum. However, the fabric of the yet to be refurbished building was downplayed.
[8] Gregory, 'Art and Artifice.'
[9] The first government house existed from 1788 to 1846. The original foundations remain beneath the MoS, and the forecourt pavers map the building plan, the significance of which will be discussed further in chapter five.

The history of the Hyde Park Barracks, like many of Sydney's colonial buildings, reflects the transformation of attitudes towards heritage in Australia. Importantly, the changing function of the building over the last two centuries has not only played an important social role in the development of city, but also continues to provide artists with rich opportunities for artistic response.

The convict turned colonial architect, Francis Greenway, designed the landmark building, located in central Sydney. [10] The Barracks were originally built to house male convicts, who in the early years of the settlement lived and freely associated with soldiers and free settlers. They were allowed to earn money outside the hours that they laboured for the government to pay for their privately rented lodgings. Eventually, the crime and 'disorderly behaviour' in the local area led Governor Macquarie to establish stricter living arrangements for the convicts.[11]

When convict transportation ended in 1840, the remaining men were sent to Cockatoo Island,[12] and in its next incarnation, the barracks accommodated young, mostly Irish, female immigrants. The site today often hosts Irish Australian community events, reflecting its continuing social significance. The permanent artwork in the courtyard – *An Gorta Mor (The Great Hunger)* (1999), by Hossein and Angela Valamanesh – pays homage to the Great Irish Famine and the women who fled to Australia as a result.[13]
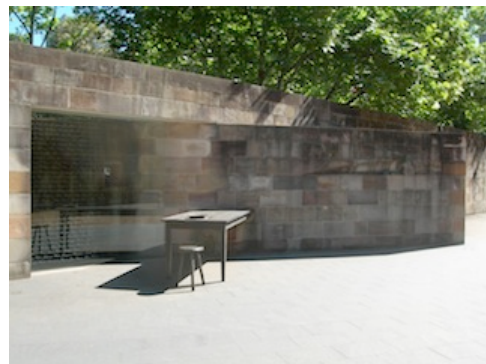
125. Hossein and Angela Valamanesh,
An Gorta Mor (The Great Hunger) (1999).

From the early 1850s, the barracks were used as an immigration depot, where newly arrived family members were accommodated until reunited with their convict husbands and/or fathers. Between 1862 and 1886, the third floor and eventually the second floor,

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[10] Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 'Hyde Park Barracks Guidebook,' *Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales*, 2003.
http://www.hht.net.au/discover/highlights/guidebooks/hyde_park_barracks_museum_guidebook2
[11] Ibid.
[12] Which in itself has become a popular venue for high profile art exhibitions and concerts over the last decade, including the 2008, 2010 and 2012 Sydney Biennales.
[13] Ibid.

functioned as a government asylum for ill and destitute women. From 1848, government departments occupied the building, and by 1979 it had been converted into offices for the Attorney General's department. The evolution from convict housing to museum, the trust believes, reflects the 'changing attitudes and functions of government, community opinion and historical and conservation practice.'[14] Even more remarkable is the fact that this building, which is now recognised as one of the most significant historical buildings in Sydney, was almost bulldozed in the mid twentieth century in the name of 'progress.'

A conservation program and archaeological excavations in the 1980s uncovered not only formal paperwork with plants, lists, rules, and letters, but also items dropped or hidden under floorboards. While rats are hardly thought of as useful creatures, the large collection of nests (or as the museum's guidebook calls it: 'ratacomb') uncovered during the excavations, stockpiled with numerous stolen possessions, provided historians with tangible evidence of individual histories.[15] These archived items have consequently been used by a number of artists, such as Ferran, as the basis of interpretive artworks.

For a curator, to construct a museum from scratch is quite different to inheriting an institution with its established displays, where funding restraints prevent major alterations, and where staff are opposed to radical change. With the Hyde Park Barracks, Emmett inherited a building that was enjoying immense interest due to the excavations and new discoveries, at a time when attitudes towards Australia's cultural heritage, as well as the role of the museum, were evolving.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Hooper-Greenhill identifies the trend away from didactic displays and passive learning as typical of the 'post museum.' The shift in attitude towards a more flexible notion of historical interpretation and delivery is also noted and encouraged in the writing of a number of other museum theorists. Ivan Karp, for instance, believes it is important for contemporary museums to '[experiment] with exhibition design that will allow museums to offer multiple perspectives or to reveal the tendentiousness of the approach taken.'[16] This experimentation is one of the features that

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[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Karp, *Exhibiting Cultures*, 6.

distinguishes the traditional museum 'as temple' from the new museum 'as forum.' The temple serves a 'timeless and universal function, the use of a structured sample of reality, not just as a reference but as an objective model against which to compare individual perceptions.'[17] By comparison, the forum welcomes 'confrontation, experimentation, and debate.'[18]

Peter Emmett's curatorial strategies at the Hyde Park Barracks and later, the MoS, sit within the 'forum' model, through his inclusion of art installations, emphasis on the building as a museum in itself, and presentation of multiple or speculative histories. Kate Gregory also highlights Emmett's use of 'art and artifice to trace the past using what was unknown,'[19] and argues that his use of 'aesthetics' has had a significant and continuing influence on museum design and historical interpretation in this country.

In the refurbishment process, both the interior and exterior of the building were restored to Greenway's original design, which included removing the interior walls that had been installed over the years, hiding the building's intended proportions.[20] The emphasis on the building as museum reflected the attitude of the then newly written *Ministry for the Arts Policy for the Development of Museums and Historic Sites in NSW* (October 1989). As a result, Emmett wanted to avoid cluttering the space with unnecessary displays and artefacts, opting for a minimalist aesthetic that drew attention to the building itself.[21]

One of the key strategies used by Emmett, Gregory notes, is a 'play on *absence*.'[22] In the original stairwell, a 'ghost stair' was installed instead of recreating the original structure. Steel rods allude to the stairs, and the stairwell was finished so as to reflect both past uses, and the building's current function as a museum. The walls on the bottom floor were painted white with polished wooden floorboards, reflecting its current use as a temporary exhibition area. The first floor's walls were exposed and thus function as a

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[17] A reference to Duncan Cameron's paper, 'The Museum: a temple or the forum' (1972). Ibid., 3.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Gregory, 'Art and Artifice,' 12.
[20] Ibid., 5.
[21] Unfortunately, the only remaining cell block and courtroom were turned into a restaurant, a move that James Broadbent argues, undermines 'the integrity of the artifact and its history.' He argues that a building's 'inherent qualities of age and associations' should be preserved over 'superficial appearance' – qualities not captured in the restaurant's '*so* continental, *so* sophisticated… Versailles tubs with kumquats and Gertrude Jekyll garden seats.' James Broadbent, 'Past Imperfect,' *Vogue Living*, August, 1986, 152.
[22] Gregory, 'Art and Artifice,' 5.

visual representation of the building's various histories. The top level with its lime-washed walls and unpolished timber floors was dressed to mimic its state in the original convict era. Unlike Elizabeth Bay House, which is refurbished in a deceptive re-imagining of one select era, Emmett's stairwell hints at a history much larger and more complex than what can be practically communicated to a visitor through didactic displays. The museum does not attempt faked 'authenticity' through total restoration; to Emmett, 'the museum, like history itself, demands the visitor's imagination to fill the gaps.'[23]
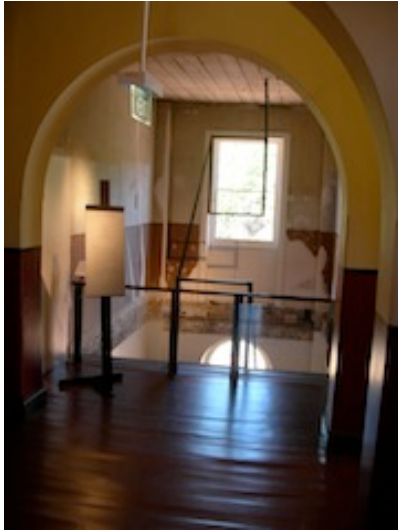
126. 'Ghost Stair,'
Hyde Park Barracks

Emmett thought of the barracks as a theatre set, and Gregory suggests that the 'principle actor' is in fact the visitor.[24] While the references to theatre and performers seem a little overdramatic, it implies that the overarching intention is to create a dynamic institution, and that while the building was always going to be the most important aspect of the museum, the interior was to be a space in which history is continually reinterpreted.

A key difference between the Hyde Park Barracks and the previously discussed art projects at Port Arthur, Elizabeth Bay House and the Australian Museum, is that Emmett involved artists in the *construction* of the museum, rather than as a temporary addition. Even the temporary artworks or exhibitions at the Barracks, such as those by Ferran and Brennan, were an integral part of the museum rather than a distanced intrusion – an act that suggests a far greater willingness to foster institutional dialogue than the exhibitions at another trust managed building, Elizabeth Bay House, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Two artists involved in the collaboration from the outset were Heather Dorrough and Paul Carter, both of whom installed works on the top floor, which has been recreated as convict sleeping quarters. The work of both artists aimed to create a human presence. Dorrough installed life-sized human silhouettes based on early colonial drawings by

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[23] Ibid., 7.
[24] Ibid., 6.

Augustus Earle, and Carter's sound work, *Named in the Margin* (1988), brought

Dorrough's characters to life, making them laugh, cough and converse. The work spilled

into the adjacent hammock-filled room, where the tone of the conversations darkened to

nightmares and phobias.[25] Both works, Gregory emphasises, 'set up a play between

presence and absence.'[26]

Like so many of the historic site-based
works examined in this thesis, these two
works play with speculative or imagined
histories. In the *Port Arthur Project*, Helen
Psotova's *Fortune of Lost Hearts: an
Insight into Convict Culture,* took as her
departure point a love letter from the site's
archives, but interpreted it as a
conversation between two men; an

127. Heather Dorrough, *Convict Shadows* (1991)

interpretation not based on fact, but rather an observation about the absence of discussion

about homosexual relationships in official colonial histories. Carter's work on the other

hand, was partly based on museum archive materials, such as diaries and letters,[27] but

again departed from historical 'fact' with the addition of fictional stories. Of course, the

visitor cannot know which conversations are fact or fiction, and so the work cannot

pretend to present an official historical record; however, the work does, as intended,

create a presence in the otherwise empty space.

Anne Brennan and Anne Ferran's exhibition *Secure the Shadow* (1995), also played with

historical interpretation at the Barracks, particularly focussing on the periods of female

occupancy. Most of Ferran's photographs related to female garments: skirts, shirts, and

bonnets. The catalogue notes a particular emphasis on traditional female activities,

illustrated by the attention to stitching in both artists' work – Ferran with her

photographic translucent clothes, and Brennan's handstitched photo-etched books – as

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[25] The Barracks was a popular destination for school excursions when it opened. I clearly remember as a primary school student, swinging on the hammocks and being utterly intrigued with the stories. It might have been the novelty factor of the hammocks, but the fact that this is the only school excursion I can remember, speaks for its lasting impact.

[26] Ibid., 7.

[27] Ibid., 7

well as references to reading, and the craft of bookbinding.[28] The link between sewing

and reading is noted in the exhibition catalogue, the artists describing sewing, for

women, 'as a substitute writing, an illiterate writing.'[29] It is suggested also that the

individual stitch, which shows 'the exact degree of tension applied to draw the needle

through … the biting off at the end'[30] provides us with a more intimate connection than a

handwritten artefact.

128. Anne Ferran, *Secure the Shadow 2* (1995)

Many of the women housed in the barracks, particularly the asylum, were thought of as useless. In the words of *The Sydney Mail* in 1985: 'either a woman is a woman, and proves it by fulfilling the functions she was sent into the world to fulfil, or she is what? – a nameless thing, a freak of nature.'[31] The asylum women were known for their thrift in mending clothes, recycling fabrics and using plain, cheap, and unattractive cloth, some of which was squirreled away by rats for their nests. Combing through the objects (or

'*stuff*[32]) in the archive, the artists describe the fragments of cloth with stitching as

gradually seeming 'more articulate than the others,'[33] hence the direction of their focus.

While the objects are now boxed away, notes from the archaeological dig suggested that

most of the sewing was conducted around the windows and fireplaces, based on the

concentration of pins in these better-lit areas.[34] Importantly, these traces, although

relatively small, dirty, and seemingly inconsequential objects, provide a far more

personal picture of the individuals who inhabited the building than the official

administrative photographs and lists also in the archive. The artists' work therefore

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[28] Evelyn Juers, 'Under the House,' in *Secure the Shadow*, edited by Anne Brennan and Anne Ferran, exhibition catalogue (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 1995), 7.
[29] Anne Brennan and Anne Ferran, *Secure the Shadow*, exhibition Catalogue. (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of NSW, 1995), 14.
[30] Ibid.
[31] *The Sydney Mail*, 2 March 1895, cited in Juers, 'Under the House,' 6.
[32] The artists write that the term '"object" is too coherent a term for most things in it.' Brennan, *Secure the Shadow*, 13
[33] Ibid., 14.
[34] Ibid., 3

draws attention to the past female inhabitants in the house based on the scant clues
uncovered in the building's redevelopment, through poetic rather than didactic
interpretation. Or as Evelyn Juers describes it, the artists have 'clutched at historical
straws to re-establish links.'[35]

The opportunity to work with the Barracks' archives is particularly significant because
few people are permitted access. As artists-in-residence, Ferran and Brennan were some
of the first people to research the collection – research that resulted in the *Secure the
Shadow* artworks.[36] Ferran has since conducted similar research in residencies in a
number of colonial history museums, such as the Female Factories in Ross and South
Hobart, Tasmania, and Rouse Hill House (1997), Sydney – the latter of which was at the
time closed to the public.[37] In each case, the artist was given access to archives usually
barred to the public, and her research resulted in artworks that interpreted and conveyed
Australia's colonial history, particularly the lives of woman and children. The work *In
the Ground, On the Air*, which was part of the *Port Arthur Project* discussed in the
previous chapter, recorded the names of the 1500 babies who died at the Female
Factories between 1829 and 1856. The high mortality rate was related to the lack of care
these babies received, and her surprise at the sheer number of 'squandered' lives, led
Ferran to produce works in response.[38] Yet, despite the fact that Ferran starts with a
museum's archives or site, she states 'it's less the history I'm interested in than the
historical record and how it comes down to us. Especially I'm drawn to the gaps, for
what else they reveal.'[39] Ferran's exhibition at the Barracks echoes this statement, in that
the archives were merely a starting point for the artistic response that aimed to highlight
an underinterpreted aspect of the site's history.

In *Secure the Shadow*, seemingly minor and insignificant items and marks are raised to
artwork status. For instance, Ferran photographed a dirty rats' nest, and a frame in
Brennan's work mimics a stain found on a list of names. In *Secure the Shadow 2* (1995),
the pile of dirty scraps, which are in fact the highly significant artefacts, seems

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[35] Juers, 'Under the House,' 7.
[36] Gregory, 'Art and Artifice,' 17.
[37] Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 'Anne Ferran,' *Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales*.
http://www.hht.net.au/discover/highlights/higlights/art_at_the_properties/photographs_and_photograms/an
ne_ferran2
[38] Sutton Gallery, 'Anne Ferran,' *Sutton Gallery*,
http://www.suttongallery.com.au/artists/artistprofile.php?id=23
[39] Ibid.

impenetrable, the type of rubble that happily accumulates under any floorboards. That these rats were these women's 'most diligent registrars,'[40] demonstrates the indifference with which these women were treated. The rats' nests are displayed in glass vitrines within the museum; however, Ferran's large close-up photographs highlight the details otherwise hidden in the darkened cases of the light-sensitive nests. *Textile Fragments* (1995), on the other hand, shows sparsely arranged strips of translucent fabric that look unsettlingly like some microscopic worm or disease, yet were most likely used as makeshift menstrual belts.[41]

It is only in *Soft Caps* (1995) that we see objects that are clean and whole. No photos were taken of the women at the barracks, and our knowledge of their lives is restricted to bureaucratic documentation and the rats' collections. However, similar asylums existed in Sydney at the time, and it was a series of documentary photographs taken at one of these institutions that inspired *Soft Caps*. The women in the photo were wearing cloth caps, the cast shadows so dark that their features were obscured. Ferran notes, 'they are portrait-like in the sense of suggesting an individual person's face, but what you actually see is a black void.'[42]

129. Anne Ferran *Soft Caps* (1995)

Although coincidental, Ferran's caps echo Emmett's initial display of women's nineteenth-century bonnets, suspended from the ceiling. The bonnets were dramatically lit behind partially reflective glass, and thus the viewer's reflection is layered over the empty headwear.[43] Too often in museums, clothing is displayed flat in a vitrine, or occasionally on a mannequin, but Emmett's minimal method of display meant that the

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[40] Geoffrey Batchen, 'Evocations: the art of Anne Ferran,' in *Anne Ferran*, edited by Craig Judd, exhibition catalogue (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 2008), 13.
[41] Brennan, *Secure the Shadow*, 9.
[42] Holmes, 'An Interview with Anne Ferran,' 55.
[43] Gregory, 'Art and Artifice,' 11.

headwear floated mid-air – again, the absence (of a head) encouraging the imagination instead. Ferran's photographs have a similar effect, however, while the absence is initially more evident due to the sharp white against a black background, on closer inspection some of the bonnets have stray hairs visible against the interior indicating a presence, however unidentifiable. This dual presence and absence – the external cap visible, while the identifying features of the person within are not discernable – is representative of the way in which these women are remembered. We have records of their presence, but nothing about their individual lives. Ferran's images encourage us to imagine, to speculate, who these women might have been.

In another play on absence, Brennan's artist books appear half-empty, words forming borders around the page, at times overlapping to the point of illegibility. In these books, Brennan referenced a combination of texts sourced from the 'Report of the Government Asylum Inquiry Board, 1887,' as well as the 'Register of Inmates, Government Asylum or the Infirm and Destitute' – the matron's daybook from the era in which women immigrants were housed at the barracks. Significantly, she also incorporated her own 'voice.'[44] Entries in the register included value judgements like 'a good woman, but an incorrigible drunkard,' or 'had no children. Lived mostly about the Manning River. Had all her property destroyed by floods, and was admitted to the Hyde Park Barracks 24 years ago.' The artists described these entries as 'tantalising', but 'detached, impersonal.'[45] There is an impossible contrast between the unattributable found objects, and the objective but distant identities on the registers. Like Carter and Psotova, Brennan combines historical primary sources with her own fictional narratives to bridge this gap, an act that is effective and condoned in artworks, but impossible in regular museum displays.

Gregory writes that a common criticism of Emmett's museum was that the 'creative approach to historical interpretation was unreliable because… it resulted in a sort of fuzzy history,'[46] and that the 'artistic methods sidelined the political implications of historical interpretation.'[47] The works by Carter and Brennan in particular, with their mix of historical fact and fiction, do confuse the 'truth'; yet outside the works of art, the

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[44] Brennan, *Secure the Shadow*, 16.
[45] Ibid., 10.
[46] Gregory, 'Art and Artifice,' 3.
[47] Ibid.

institution does not fictionalise history. In fact, the emphasis of many of the displays is on the raw archaeological findings, such as the rats' nests, and of course, the building itself. It is important to maintain academic standards in museums, and ensure that exhibitions contain historical fact, but by introducing artworks, which are by their nature allowed to be 'fuzzy', alternative interpretations or histories can be explored and told. These artworks complement or enhance existing interpretations and suggest that history is not a single voice but many.

Carter notes a similar objection to Emmett's alternative methods, specifically in relation to the MoS development, on which the pair also collaborated. Critics complained that 'the foregrounding of new technologies of representation "de-materialised" the past.'[48] Yet Carter highlights the irony of the complaint, arguing that the museum 'successfully materialised (and displayed) the very technologies of remembering that, in conventional displays, are treated as immaterial.'[49] In other words, the artistic strategies used in the MoS revealed conventional museum display methods, rather than hiding them or pretending they are invisible, in a similar way, for instance, to Buren's attempt to highlight the white walls of the contemporary art gallery.

Compared to the barracks, the MoS had less emphasis on the building as museum; consequently, it lacked a specific pre-existing focus on subjects and collections associated with historic site museums like the barracks. In *Material Thinking*, Carter devotes two chapters to his experience collaborating with Emmett to produce site-specific sound artworks for the MoS, commenting on the museum's unusual beginnings:

> Unlike most new institutions of its kind, it did not inherit the kind of historical collection that, in the case of most new museums, provides the material and *raison d'être* of the permanent exhibition. In this sense, it was a monument to emptiness. At the very least, its vacant rooms, stairways and corridors posed the question of remembering: in the absence of an alibi inventory of colonial paintings, ceramics rich in white-settler associations and a scattering of Aboriginal implements, the curators could have no choice but to confront their own designs of the past. Whatever they installed in the museum would be a local invention, designed to make appear what had disappeared.[50]

Emmett deliberately chose other local artists, architects, filmmakers, writers and historians, for the same reason that Frankham specifically chose artists with a

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[48] Paul Carter, *Material Thinking* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2004), 72.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

relationship to Tasmania for the *Port Arthur Project*. As discussed in the previous chapter, the benefits of using local artists over 'imported' ones is the practitioner's connectedness to place. Lippard notes, 'places are formed by people and their cultures,'[51] arguing that local artists tend to be more rooted in place, and are in a better position to make art that is of place and within place, than those unfamiliar with, in this case, the inner Sydney area.

Additionally, the collaboration that occurred in the MoS resulted in multiple voices rather than a single authority, reflecting a more contemporary approach to museum display. In 1977, Ian Finlay warned against letting a single person govern a museum, arguing instead for a director who not only has 'an element of the creative artist,' but also encourages similar creativity in all museum staff.[52] He also believed that display staff should constantly be looking for ideas and opportunities outside the area of museums and galleries;[53] in the case of Emmett's museums, the equivalent being the interdisciplinary collaborative design process.

These collaborations were intended to produce a more diverse and rich cultural history, but Emmett's use of artists was particularly strategic, because he believed 'artists are allowed to get away with poetics.'[54] The acknowledgement that art is allowed to 'get away' with an interpretation of history that borders on speculation, somewhat neutralises, or at least provides a counter to potential criticism about the museum's representation of history. Following his work at the barracks, Carter was asked to produce another series of sound artworks, *Lost Subjects* (1995) and *The Calling to Come* (1995), as well as a text-based installation, *Mythologies, Almanacs, Portents* (1995) – a chronology inscribed in institutional stainless steel on the museum's exterior, which on closer inspection revealed itself as a hoax. Fiona Hall produced a temporary sculpture, *Occupied Territory* (1995), for the public access side of the shop window; Narelle Jubelin created the *Collector's Chest* (1994); and Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley devised the celebrated *Edge of the Trees* (1995) outside the museum entrance, a work that will be discussed in depth in chapter five. Each of these artworks addressed specific issues related to the central Sydney site and its history. *Edge of the Trees*, for instance, referred to the first
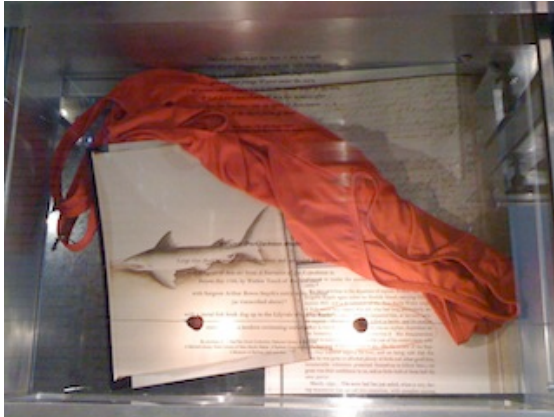
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[51] Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 280.
[52] Ian Finlay, *Priceless Heritage: The Future of Museums* (London: Faber & Faber, 1977), 62.
[53] Ibid., 64.
[54] Gregory, 'Art and Artifice,' 13.

point of contact between Aborigines and the British invaders in 1788, *Occupied Territory* referenced the site's contested history, and *Collector's Chest* mimicked museological methods of display

130. Narelle Jubelin, *Collector's Chest* (1994)

Jubelin, like many of the artists discussed in this chapter, used archives to create *Collector's Chest*. However, instead of producing work based on artefacts that were then returned to storage, these objects became the work, placed in specially made drawers that could be pulled out and explored by the visitor. The chests were like curated archaeological

Wunderkammers that rejected traditional taxonomic methods of display, and importantly, were interpreted by an artist, not a historian or archaeologist. As Putnam notes, artistic mimicry of the museum's 'meticulous organizing principles and unique mode of display' demonstrates the 'ideological exchange taking place where artists exert and equally powerful influence on museums.'[55] We can see this exchange in the MoS's commissioning of *Collector's Chest*, in the recognition of the way that art can be used as yet another method of interpreting and representing history.

Jubelin's layered compositions drew links between often disparate objects, establishing new narratives. For instance, in one drawer, the warped leather soles of children's shoes were placed on top of the page of a journal from the HMS *Sirius*, the names of those who drowned circled in red pen. Another combined information on local shark attacks and the artist's own used swimming costume, an act that Gregory argued, 'inserted the subjective and present moment into the historical'[56] and 'subverted linear progressive time.'[57] The intention was never to present a comprehensive, objective and didactic historical account; rather, it provided an alternative interpretation that aimed to connect with visitors on a different level, telling a story of Sydney that differs from the official line. By juxtaposing locally sourced but unlikely archives, *Collector's Chests*, like many

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[55] Putnam, *Art and Artifact,* 7.
[56] Gregory, 'Art and Artifice,' 16.
[57] Ibid., 17.

of the other artworks in Emmett's museums, encouraged visitors to use their imagination by filling in the gaps.

From the outset, Emmett established in the barracks and MoS a philosophy of interdisciplinary collaboration, and a decidedly postmodern way of presenting history – an ideology that remains in both institutions today, even though Emmett has moved on. Art is used strategically in order to present speculative or alternative histories where historians cannot. In both institutions, art is incorporated or assimilated into the museum, and is an integral part of the way in which knowledge is imparted and collections managed. Emmett's emphasis on collaboration, encouraging artists to make work that supplements more traditional museological methods of historical interpretation, makes this mode of dialogue between artist and museum distinct from the interventional model. While the curator was quite instructive in the artist briefs, the critiques of historical records and museological methods of display were part of a consistent institutional identity and strategy, and thus also distinguishable from the third mode of dialogue: institutional critique.

Intervention: Michael Goldberg and Elizabeth Bay House

The grand colonial Elizabeth Bay House, though also managed by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, illustrates a vastly different museological approach to heritage sites to that of Emmett's Hyde Park Barracks and MoS. In 1986, articles by Max Kelly and James Broadbent, respectively, were published in consecutive *Vogue Living* magazines.[58] Their arguments demonstrate two conflicting views on heritage restoration. In 'Restore or Rot', Kelly, historian and then National Trust president, argued that heritage buildings should be returned to 'their former glory.'[59] It was written in response to James Broadbent's earlier article 'Past Imperfect,' in which the former trust curator argued that 'years of tedious nationalism'[60] leading up the 1988 Bicentennial celebrations had led to a 'faked' and inauthentic heritage. Heritage, Broadbent wrote, is

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[58] Kelly, Max. 'Restore or Rot?' September 1986, 168;
Broadbent, 'Past Imperfect,' 152.
[59] Kelly, 'Restore or Rot,' 168.
[60] Broadbent, 'Past Imperfect,' 152.

found in 'the wrinkled, the dilapidated, the incomplete, the real.'[61] Emmett's Barracks restoration emphasised changed function, and illustrates the Broadbent approach, while the curatorial approach to the Elizabeth Bay House restoration sits firmly in Kelly's 'former glory' camp.

In the previous chapter, I briefly mentioned Goldberg's series of art projects at Elizabeth Bay House. In this instance, the relationship between artist and institution was less comfortable than the collaborative or assimilatory approach seen in Emmett's museums. Goldberg's projects act very much as interventions. Unlike *Secure the Shadow*, which was instigated by the institution's curator, Goldberg's projects were his own initiative; and as he reflects on the first project in his dissertation, the relationship between Goldberg and institution soured once it became clear that his project was highly critical of the museum's curatorial practices. *A Humble Life* (1995) was Goldberg's first project in the extravagant colonial villa. The artwork was submitted as part of a master's at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, along with two similar projects in designated heritage buildings: *Real Estate* (1996) in Sydney's Tusculum,[62] and *Lull* (1995) in Gorman House, Canberra.[63] His aim was to 'examine how colonialism and its cultural mythologies have manifested themselves' in heritage sites through site-specific installations that combine 'the language and conventions of the historical museum with those of the visual arts.'[64] Consequently, the work is very much framed by the critical requirements of academic art.

Like *Secure the Shadow*, Goldberg's *A Humble Life* (1995) focussed on a particular period in the building's colonial history. He highlighted the relationship between the Macleay family and their servants – most of whom would have been convicts sent from England for petty crimes. In keeping with customs in the colony, the convicts were not paid for their labour.[65] One of the few areas of the house neglected in the historical re-imagining of the Macleay period is the cellar. The cellar stored food and beverages, and the servants would have spent much of their time in what Goldberg describes as 'the

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[61] Ibid.
[62] Tusculum (1831-1836), designed by John Berge, was built for Scottish Merchant, Alexander Brodie Spark.
[63] Gorman House was constructed in 1924 as a government hostel for civil servants.
[64] Goldberg, abstract to 'Site-specific Installation in Colonial Heritage Sites.'
[65] Michael Goldberg, 'A Humble Life,' Michael Goldberg artist website.
http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/projects.php?p=1995_A_Humble_Life

"underbelly" of the house.'[66] Goldberg's decision to site his art installation in the cold, dank, and dark space was evidently an attempt to remember the people that the institution's historians appeared to 'forget.'

131. Michael Goldberg, *A Humble Life* (1995)

The installation resembled a museum storage space, a 'behind-the-scenes' environment that further emphasised the marginalisation of certain groups in history, and to a lesser extent, reflected the cellar's history as a storage space. Sitting on a pallet covered with grey removalist felt was a china cabinet marked with 'ATTENTION: MUSEUM EXHIBITS CAN CONCEAL COMPLEX HISTORIES' – a less than subtle message. The cabinet housed a collection of Royal Doulton figurines, 'arranged hierarchically' on the shelves, each tagged with their name and serial number.[67] David McNeill argues that these china sets 'miniaturise, infantilise and legitimise a world of abused servants, convict "slave" labour and racism,'[68] noting their lasting popularity in 'Anglophile settler cultures.'[69] McNeill suggests the inclusion of the reproduced '1837 Macleay Convict Register' nearby further emphasises this notion of authorised exclusion.[70]

132. Michael Goldberg, *A Humble Life* (1995), detail

The convict register, which listed information such as name, age, name of ship, year of arrival, conviction, charge, and sentence, also personalised the Macleay servants. The guidebook named and characterised the Macleay family members and consequent owners of the house, but the servants were known just by their job title. On the floor next to the register, Goldberg placed two light boxes, with colour

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[66] Ibid.
[67] Goldberg, 'Site-specific Installation in Colonial Heritage Sites,' 23.
[68] David McNeill, 'Heritage and Hauntology: the Installation Art of Michael Goldberg,' *Postwest*, no. 17 (2000): 55.
[69] Ibid.
[70] Ibid.

images of the master bedroom and servants room as they were then displayed in the museum: reproductions of reproductions. The photographs also capture the uneasy emptiness of these spaces. Susan Hunt, an ex-curator at the house, remarked on this paradoxical situation:

> The role of the historic house museum is a particularly complex one, fraught with contradiction. On the one hand, it is a dynamic entity; a domestic building that has been lived in, adapted and changed according to its various occupants and owners. On the other hand, it is a museum, a carefully presented and documented collection of artefacts, the long-term survival of which is ensured by a static and secure display.[71]

The period officially remembered in the Elizabeth Bay House refurbishment only really existed for six years because the Colonial Secretary and naturalist went bankrupt and was forced to sell the house and furniture to pay his debts. The museum's furnishings give an illusion of official authenticity, when in actual fact the interior is merely a reconstruction of a select romanticised past. Referring to Alexander Macleay's well-known insect collection, Dinah Dysart observed: 'once home to obsessive collectors and classifiers, [the house] has itself been well and truly collected and classified.'[72]

The designation of a house as 'heritage' is political in itself. It tells us that the site, its inhabitants, its history are part of our national identity. As McNeill argues, Goldberg's artworks

> underlined the kind of self-aggrandising delusion that allowed our early settlers to present to themselves as heroic what was in reality a rather grubby history of theft and exploitation. Further, his work suggests rather inescapably that the process of transforming this history into 'heritage' cannot do other than reproduce these delusions uncritically. The greater the dedication to the authentic renovation of a bygone site, the less panoramic the gaze.[73]

Goldberg and McNeill raise the issue of 'truth' in history. As discussed in relation to the art projects in the Hyde Park Barracks, it *is* possible for an institution to present multiple histories, speculative histories, and dual narratives. It is also important to remember that one of the ways in which Emmett communicated these histories is through the commissioning of site-specific artworks. Interestingly, in the conclusion of his exegesis,

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[71] Susan Hunt, *Eleven years on: the Refurbishment of Elizabeth Bay House* (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 1988), 7.
[72] Dinah Dysart, 'In-House Interventions,' *Art and Australia* 36, no. 3 (1999): 354.
[73] The comment specifically referred to the Tusculum project, but is equally as applicable to the Elizabeth Bay House installation. McNeill 'Heritage and Hauntology,' 55.

Goldberg notes that his project was initially 'embraced by the "institution" in an attempt to demonstrate a curatorial acceptance of diverse views.'[74] While the Trust's 'tolerance paled'[75] once Goldberg's critical stance became evident, it is important to acknowledge the (at least) initial openness to varying viewpoints.

Another element in Goldberg's installation was the assembled but unpainted MDF 'Georgian' kit dolls house, which also sat on a grey felt-covered pallet. An incomplete museum-style vitrine enclosed the house, and the words 'AS MEMORY FADES CULTURE TAKES OVER…' written on the glass, could be read with difficulty against the empty house.

133. Michael Goldberg, *A Humble Life* (1995), detail.

With the grand pillars and square features, the dolls house closely resembled Elizabeth Bay House's Greek revival architecture. Even though the model house was empty, parallels between the hobby of dolls house 'dressing' (which is not necessarily just the domain of children), and the life-sized 'dressing' of the museum, were evident. The obscured text alluded again to this notion of truth in reproduction, and the politicisation of Australian heritage.

The incomplete vitrine, an ingrained museum display device, which connotes worth and importance, was also referenced in this section of the installation. Museum theorist Michael Baxandall argues:

> To select and put forward any item for display, as something worth looking at, as interesting, is a statement not only about the object but about the culture it comes from. To put three objects in a vitrine involves additional implications of relation. There is no exhibition without construction and therefore – in an extended sense – appropriation.[76]

By placing the unfinished house in an incomplete display case, Goldberg encouraged an interpretation of the cellar as storage space, where the broken and incomplete are stored. The kit house, unpainted, poked fun at the 'authenticity' of Elizabeth Bay House's

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[74] Goldberg, 'Site-specific Installation in Colonial Heritage Sites,' 58.
[75] Ibid., 58-9.
[76] Baxandall, 'Exhibiting Intention,' 34.

restoration, and the partially complete vitrine prompted questions about constructed worth.

Written on the back of the small room's wooden door were the 'three golden rules of domestic service'[77] – an extract from *Simple Rules for the Guidance of Persons in Humble Life – More Particularly for Girls Going out to Service*:

> Do everything in its proper time
> Keep everything to its proper use
> Put everything in its proper place[78]

The book was written by Eliza Darling, Governor Darling's wife, who set up numerous charities for poor women and girls. The Female School of Industry's aim, for instance, was to train impoverished girls to become servants. Eliza Macleay and her daughters were active supporters of these charities, and the quote carved into

the fabric of the house, reflects the political and religious conservatism practiced by both families.[79]

134. Michael Goldberg, *A Humble Life* (1995), detail

Goldberg saw the Historic Houses Trust as failing in its curatorial objectives, arguing that the museum's restoration and presentation of history was 'a reinforcement of the 'status quo,' the evocation of a 'happy, secure era, thereby encouraging nostalgia,' and 'the embodiment of a simple attitude towards history without conflicting views.'[80] By mimicking traditional display methods, while concurrently presenting a number of complex ideas as individual elements, Goldberg aimed to 'challenge assumptions about the nature of the museum experience, and to encourage a renegotiation of its authority.'[81] Significantly, despite the exhibition's temporary presence, the artist's account of the

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[77] Goldberg, 'Site-specific Installation in Colonial Heritage Sites,' 26.
[78] Eliza Darling *Simple Rules for the Guidance of Persons in Humble Life – More Particularly for Girls Going out to Service* c. 1837. Cited in Goldberg, 'Site-specific Installation in Colonial Heritage Sites,' 26.
[79] The close relationship between the two families is also illustrated by the controversial grant of land at Elizabeth Bay in 1826, despite the land being originally reserved as public space – a move that was seen as nepotistic. Governor Darling was replaced by General Richard Bourke as Governor General in 1831, and Alexander Macleay was eventually forced to resign from Colonial Secretary due to political differences. Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 'Elizabeth Bay House Guidebook,' *Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales*. http://www.hht.net.au/discover/highlights/guidebooks/elizabeth_bay_house_guidebook
[80] Goldberg, 'Site-specific Installation in Colonial Heritage Sites,' 14.
[81] Ibid., 27.

trust's response represents a renegotiation of institutional authority by undermining the authority that museums inherently possess.

Despite the negative reaction from some members of the trust management towards his first project, the increased in visitor numbers over the exhibition's duration and encouragement from the more progressive curators resulted in permission for a second project.[82] The series of exhibitions – *Artists in the House!* – followed *A Humble Life* two years later. Goldberg invited fourteen artists to produce site-specific works for Elizabeth Bay House, with a number of them readdressing Goldberg's concerns regarding the re-presentation of a selective and exclusive history.[83] Bonita Ely, as mentioned in the previous chapter, referred to the house's less romantic 1960s state when it was divided into apartments, by literally mapping out the divisions based on the architectural plans found in the trust's archives.[84]

For *A Home in the Swinging Sixties* (1997), Ely placed a laminate dining table set for tea in the main dining room, accompanied by a sound recording of Aboriginal women discussing local issues in Redfern.[85] The work referenced the nepotistic land grant that resulted in Alexander Macleay building on land Governor Macquarie

135. Bonita Ely, *A Home in the Swinging Sixties* (1997)

originally reserved for the local Indigenous population.[86] It also referred to the 1967 referendum, which resulted in Indigenous Australians being given the vote for the first time, and paved the way for later changes such as land rights and the preservation of cultural heritage. Ely's work, like Goldberg's, highlighted an unpleasant aspect of the house's history not widely publicised by the Historic Houses Trust.

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[82] Michael Goldberg, email message to author August 30, 2012.
[83] The participating artists over the series of exhibitions were Tom Arthur, Jacqueline Clayton, Aleks Danko, Jackie Dunn, Bonita Ely, Chris Fortescue, Nigel Helyer, Anne Graham, Debra Phillips, Julie Rrap, Martin Sims, Ken Unsworth, and Anne Zahalka.
[84] Goldberg, *The Butterfly Effect*, 4.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Dysart, 'In-House Interventions,' 356.

Objects socially or politically significant to that era were placed in other rooms of the house: a portrait of Mao, a reference to Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch*, shower caps on hooks, and sound recordings of sewing machines, typewriters and traffic.[87] In addition to the information provided to participating artists by the then Elizabeth Bay House curator, Scott Carlin, Ely interviewed a 1960s resident, Pauline Gleeson, who later wrote in the Visitors' Book: 'Bonita Ely helped me to remember the times I spent living amongst such a diverse mix of people, particularly in such interesting times.'[88]

Dinah Dysart argues that while most works were obviously intrusive, Ely's work 'could be mistaken for current conservation activity,'[89] as could Jackie Dunn's cloth-shrouded furniture. However, even their works disrupted the normal visitor experience. The art project provoked mixed responses. One Newcastle resident wrote in the visitor book 'contemporary art belongs in contemporary museums not historic buildings. Maybe in 50 to 100 years it will be appreciated but not now in this context,' yet another visitor from New York praised the project, writing: 'the introduction of contemporary art invigorates the house and makes some interesting connections with the past –makes it a living place.'[90] Dysart also mentions the financial concerns of the 'heritage conservation hierarchy,' who believed the ephemeral project came at the expense of long-term maintenance.[91] However, like the *Port Arthur Project* and *Swelter*, Goldberg's exhibitions brought an increase in visitor numbers and new audience, which provided the trust an incentive to host further exhibitions.

More significantly, the project faced opposition from the museum's historiographer, who believed that 'artists' interpretations of the house would not be based on scholarship but on subjective responses,'[92] a view Goldberg found 'ironic' due to the house curator's enthusiasm and the general trend towards the more interpretive approach of the 'post-museum' or 'forum.'[93] The historiographer was partially correct in that many of the projects were, like all art (and perhaps it could be argued, history), subjective in nature; however, artistic interpretation and 'scholarship' are not mutually exclusive.

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[87] Ibid.
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid., 358
[90] Elizabeth Bay House visitor book comments cited in ibid. 350
[91] Ibid., 358.
[92] Goldberg, *The Butterfly Effect*, 4.
[93] The 'post-museum' as outlined by Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, and the 'forum' as defined by Duncan Cameron in 'The Museum: a Temple or the Forum' (1971).

Considering the aim of the project's precedent, *A Humble Life,* was to provide an alternative history following research on the Macleay convict servants, the historiographer's reaction is even more curious.

In *Slip/Cover* (1997), Dunn directly challenged the method used by historians to reproduce the furnished colonial home. Sewing in the drawing room, she gradually covered each object of furniture with calico slipcovers, branding each with a stencilled number, echoing the aesthetics of museological storage and classification.

136. Jackie Dunn, *Slip/Cover* (1997)

For 'authenticity,' trust historians sourced furniture from that period with the guidance of an inventory from 1845, which was drawn up when the heavily indebted Alexander Macleay was forced to sell the house and contents to his son.[94] By supplying her own inventory, Dunn reversed the historians' methodology. Dysart argued that the work was 'firmly grounded in research methods and museological practice yet it too recognised the role that the imagination plays in understanding the past and relating it to the present.'[95] Dunn's work highlighted the role that subjectivity plays in the presentation of history in historic house museums, providing an interesting counter to the historiographer's argument.

Anne Graham and Jacqueline Clayton's artworks referred to the female members of the Macleay family, and offered a critique of nineteenth-century gender roles. They also re-introduced the Macleay women into the house. As discussed in relation to Clarendon House and Home Hill, despite the traditional relationship between women and the domestic, the absence of female histories in house museums is notable, and Elizabeth Bay House is no different. The house is decorated with period antiques, grand writing desks, sculpted busts upon solid plinths, and reconstructed collections of insects and books. Yes, there are infants' baths (stored out of reach), tapestries, and other objects traditionally associated with women, but insofar as representing the lives of these women

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[94] Dysart, 'In-House Interventions,' 357.
[95] Ibid.

who are not openly celebrated in canonical Australian history books, or not as well known, the trust falls short.

137. Anne Graham,
The Macleay Women (1997)

The Macleay women, while supposedly plain looking, were famous for their red hair, celebrated in Graham's installation. Red hair and cast hands were draped over the dining table, and through the bars that protected the cellar. Graham wrote 'the women were like butterflies trapped in the conventions and expectations of the time'[96] – a reference to the family's passion for insect and botany collection, in particular butterflies and moths. The artwork interrupted the conventions of the house museum, where rooms are aesthetically arranged in a dolls house-like fantasy recreation, with paradoxically little human presence. Graham asked the viewer to suspend disbelief in a museum that promotes the opposite, for instead of the usual recreation of a dinner setting, she re-introduced parts of the human body, which were identifiable as a reference to the Macleay women merely by their hair colour.

For *Accomplishment and Virtue* (1997), Clayton created pincushions similar to the one that sits in Kennethina Macleay's bedroom. Clayton's cushions spelled out advice, reminiscent of Eliza Darling's 'Three Rules' that Goldberg carved on the cellar door. 'Be patient and endure,' one read, a message of suppression and passivity that women were expected to obey in nineteenth-century colonial society.[97] Unlike Graham's installation that interrupted the ubiquitous house museum display, Clayton's work was cleverly disguised as part of it.

As demonstrated by these works at Elizabeth Bay House, art has the ability to question curatorial strategies and alter interpretations of history or objects, even if only temporarily. Perhaps the ephemeral nature of these installations means that the information on the original land grant to the local Aborigines, for instance, only reaches a

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[96] Anne Graham cited in ibid., 354
[97] Ibid.

relatively small number of visitors, and the long-term impact of the project is limited.[98]
Then again, the temporary nature of the artworks allows artists to make more obvious
interventions into the space, and encourages heritage house curators to accept the risks
that come with experimental and critical art projects.

The risk is evidently something that the Elizabeth Bay House curators have been willing
to take, because relative to other Australian heritage sites, Elizabeth Bay House and the
Hyde Park Barracks have played host to a large number of site-specific projects. In
2006, for instance, the exhibition *Ten[d]ancy,* curated by Sally Breen & Tania
Doropoulos, occupied the house;[99] and the following year, Jayne Dyer, Susan Andrews
and Sue Pedley created the site-responsive installation *Spare Room* (2007). These recent
exhibitions addressed similar themes to the earlier projects, including convict labour,
Aboriginal history, and 'truth' in history. In *Ten[d]ancy*, Shaun Gladwell placed objects
from the museum's collection around the house, disregarding context or purpose, thereby
disturbing the usually didactic visitor experience. Jonathan Jones' *Gurrajin (Elizabeth
Bay)* installation consisted of fluorescent lights lying tessellated on a bedroom floor.
With its intense light and resulting shadows, the work was intended to remember the
traditional owners of the land. Evidently, the house museum provides a wide range of
hooks, whether they be aesthetic, ideological or historical for which artists can respond.

In the last chapter, I argued that while the measurement of success for non-art museum
and artist might diverge, this difference in opinion is not necessarily a bad thing.
Goldberg's art interventions at Elizabeth Bay House successfully critiqued the way in
which history was presented at the institution. While the house's interior decoration has
not changed, the trust has installed didactic texts in a room upstairs, which outline the
house's history as a squat, a block of units, and before the building's construction, an
Aboriginal reserve. Perhaps Goldberg's projects influenced these changes. As with the
changes to the First Farm display at the Botanic Gardens following *Swelter*, it is
impossible to know how directly influential these projects are. For Goldberg too, the
projects fulfilled the requirements of criticality necessary for academic art research in his

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[98] When I visited Elizabeth Bay House in 2009, the guide and reception staff had no knowledge of
Goldberg's projects, and while a number of projects such as *Ten[d]ancy* and *Spare Room* are on the
Historic House Trust of NSW website, *Artists in the House!* is absent. Similarly, the staff at the Hyde Park
Barracks in 2010 had never heard of Ferran and Brennan's project.
[99] The participating artists were Gary Carsley, Shaun Gladwell, Hannah Furmage, Jonathan Jones, Claire
Healy and Sean Cordeiro, Martin Blum, and Simone Fuchs.

position as master's candidate, and later, as a member of academic staff at the University of Sydney – an aspect of many art projects that goes unspoken or is underplayed in significance. For the museum, the increase in visitors and widened audience evidently justified the ongoing engagement with not only Goldberg, but also a number of artists and curators, and demonstrates the institution's willingness to at least be challenged, even if changes to the museum are not really evident. Goldberg's projects were deliberately provocative, interventionist and critical of the museum, yet the trust's continued engagement with artists cannot be dismissed, even though it represents a peculiar kind of dialogue where there is a willingness to listen, but not to act. There may be didactic texts upstairs, but the 1980s video remains downstairs.

Institutionalised Institutional Critique: The National Gallery of Victoria

> *The paintings used for my work in this exhibition have been selected by the authorities of the Museum. They could have been different. I have had nothing to do with this decision. I would have done the same work with any other rooms and/or works selected. For such a work, it is deeply important to understand that it is out of the question for me to interfere with the choice of the works of art. Therefore, it will be meaningless to make any comment on the content of these works or on their use in the present exhibition even if their meanings remain intact and visible.*

-Daniel Buren, 1998[100]

When Daniel Buren conceived his contribution to the *The Museum as Muse* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), he highlighted the ultimate role institutions play in the subject and character of works of art. His declaration, that he had no role in the choice of the artworks, (whether truthful or not) makes clear the relationship between artist and institution, where the artist holds an intermediary position. His work questioned the authority of the artist and the notion that both artist and institution are neutral entities. The gallery chose four paintings by Giorgio de Chirico, paintings that Buren observes 'give the Museum its specific identity. They are permanent in terms of

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[100] Daniel Buren, 'Daniel Buren,' in *The Museum as Muse: Artists Reflect*, ed. Kynaston McShine. Exhibition catalogue (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 149.

the collection and continual in terms of the object.'[101] 'We decided to build a new room [for them], an exact copy of gallery 8 [where they were housed],'[102] he wrote, the use of the term 'we' suggesting that the decision was as much the museum's as it was the artist's, again acknowledging that his critique of the institution was both condoned and absorbed by the target. I highlight this work because of Buren's astute awareness of the exchange between artist and museum. It is almost a critique of a critique.

In this section, I examine the role of institutional critique as museum policy, arguing that as museums become increasingly self-critical in a climate of political correctness, the artist is viewed as a legitimising factor – a tool used to drive museum-initiated critique. This trend is particularly evident in the role institutional critique played in establishing the identity of the NGVA when it opened in 2002, where artists such as Julie Gough and Liu Xiao Xian were commissioned to create artworks critically examining the NGV collection and notions of cultural exclusion and national identity.[103]

In the previous chapter, I established the idea of institutionalised institutional critique when discussing the role of academia in museum interventions. For academic artists and university-affiliated museums, the 'criticality' inherent in museum interventions fulfils research requirements. By academic artists, I refer not only to the academicisation of art training and therefore making, but also the fact that many of the works examined in this project were instigated by artists or curators employed or affiliated with universities in teaching or research roles.[104] However, most museums could be considered research institutions, and it is in the less conservative museums, particularly art museums, that artists are invited to highlight gaps or contradictions in the commissioning institution.

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[101] Ibid.
[102] Ibid.
[103] For the purpose of this thesis, I use the acronym NGV for the international museum, and NGVA for the Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia. Because they are both essentially the same institution in terms of permanent collections, the NGV's collection history still has implications for the newer NGVA.
[104] For instance, Michael Goldberg and Anne Ferran work at the Sydney College of the Arts, University of Sydney; Anne Brennan at the Australian National University; Paul Carter at Deakin University.

When the NGVA opened, the image the museum authorities wanted to convey was of a museum that both presented and questioned various aspects of the nation's history. One of their strategies was to invite artists to respond to key gaps in the NGV's collection. In Gough's case, her installation was a critical response to Emanuel Phillips Fox's *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay 1770* (1902) – a painting commissioned by the museum a century earlier. Liu's contemporary photograph was presented amongst the gallery's colonial collection. Their role as artists not only legitimised the critique as distinct from the commissioning body, but their cultural heritage as an Aboriginal woman and Chinese migrant, respectively, gave the critique extra weight.

138. Liu Xiao Xian, *My Other Lives, #7* (2000)

Liu's photograph was made to look like a nineteenth-century stereographic print of what is initially interpreted as a seated woman, dressed formally in dark colours with a matching umbrella and flowered hat. The stereographic camera was traditionally used to take two images from slightly different angles, and Liu's print was produced to look aged, with rough edges and watermarks. On closer inspection, or more accurately *if* the viewer cares enough to inspect the print, we can see that one of the faces is actually that of an Asian male. The work is one of a series called *My Other Lives*, in which the artist inserts himself into colonial era photographs in an attempt to convey the disjuncture between his Chinese heritage and life in Australia – a problem he calls 'in-

betweenness.'[105] The strategically located 'intervention' highlighted the absence of Chinese migrants in Australian art history.[106]

Anna Edmundson notes the significance of the work's location among the nationalist Heidelberg School paintings – a late nineteenth-century movement that coincided with the Australian government's White Australia policies.[107] The large number of Chinese migrants that followed the Victorian goldrush in the mid-1800s prompted the colonial leaders to restrict immigration on the basis of race. By inserting himself into Colonial portraits – in other words, his (or his ancestors') 'other lives' – Liu reintroduces the traditionally excluded Australian Chinese population into the nation's social and art history. The work's siting at the NGVA then gives this message further weight. From the gallery's perspective too, the photograph's placement in a room that captures the NGV's traditionally exclusionary collecting policies, demonstrates the institution's critical self-awareness.

139. Emanuel Phillips Fox,
*Landing of Captain Cook at
Botany Bay, 1770* (1902)

The NGVA's choice of Fox's iconic painting of Captain Cook for critical response was significant. The *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay 1770* was commissioned by the NGV to commemorate Federation. It presented a then popular but ultimately false historical tale, in which Captain Cook ceremoniously walks ashore, hand raised in an authoritative posture, with the British flag fluttering behind his head. The Indigenous Australians, relegated to one edge of the background, are depicted as clothing-less 'primitives' – minor details in the 'conquering' of what was until 1992 considered by the ruling powers, *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one). This kind of representation of Australian history was not uncommon in the early twentieth century, and it both reflected and shaped common beliefs and national identity for at least the next ninety years. Fox's painting therefore represented the role that the NGV played in nurturing these myths, and institutional critique was a way in which the

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[105] Claire Roberts, 'In-betweenness: the Art of Liu Xiao Xian,' *Art and Australia* 47, no. 2 (2010): 222.
[106] It is not just Chinese migrants that are underrepresented in Australian art galleries. Despite the large number of Greek migrants, for instance, we have little representation of Modern Greek art.
[107] Anna Edmundson, 'But Where Are You Really From? The 'Crisis' of Multiculturalism Examined Through the Work of Four Asian-Australian Artists,' *Humanities Research* 15, no. 2 (2009): 94 – 96.

gallery could concurrently display this important painting, recognise its historical significance, and correct it.

140. Julie Gough, *Chase* (2002)

Gough's installation consisted of Tasmanian tea tree sticks hung from the ceiling by ropes, with strips of red fabric tied to the wood. It was installed in front of Fox's painting in the Federation-themed room, and although it was not close enough to block the image, it was possible to view the painting through the twigs representing the 'edge of the trees' from which Aborigines first viewed Cook's landing.[108] In addition to Gough's new installation, an earlier wall-based work, *Imperial Leather* (1994), was hung adjacent to Fox's. Like *Chase, Imperial Leather* incorporated symbolic materials, such as rope (a noose), soap (ethnic cleansing/purity), and red fabric (blood/British uniforms). By producing an installation that incorporated the landscape through the use of the tea trees, thereby distancing itself from the traditional art method of painting, *Chase* did not compete with Fox's painting. Instead, it provided an alternative history of that same moment, and as suggested by the title, a bloody and active moment.
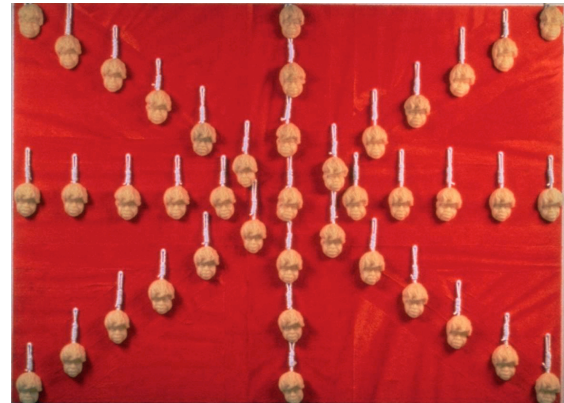
141. Julie Gough, *Imperial Leather* (1994)

In addition to suggesting Fox's artwork as the object of critique, the curators in consultation with the artist, removed the frame from the historical painting, which helped 'break down the divisions between the works and to extend the painting out to the space of Gough's installation.'[109] Christopher Marshall added that 'the decision to remove the frame from a major late Victorian work constitutes a kind of ritualized debunking that

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[108] This moment in history is also represented in the earlier mentioned *Edge of the Trees* installation at the MoS.

[109] Christopher Marshall, 'The Contemporary Museum as Art Gallery,' in *Reshaping Museum Space: Architecture, Design, Exhibitions*, ed. Suzanne MacLeod (Oxon: Routledge, 2005), 180.

would, of course, have been unthinkable in its own day.'[110] It is doubtful that this
'deframing' would have occurred without Gough's collaboration, because her role as an
artist, as a neutral figure, allowed the curators to take this powerfully symbolic move.

Some critics met the NGVA's commissioned 'interventions' with critical disdain.
Geoffrey Edwards called them the 'height of museological chic.'[111] Peter Timms
warned:

> leaving aside the question of what Cook has to do with Federation, the danger in
> pairings such as this is that the historical works might easily be reduced to little
> more than fall guys for contemporary artists [sic] postmodern jibes and put-downs,
> robbing them of their individuality and their dignity. The attitude of artists these
> days to the work of their predecessors is not always one of respect or
> understanding.[112]

Katherine Gregory rightly asks 'was Gough's intervention co-opted by the gallery as part
of an effect of 'newness' within the gallery?'[113] The intervention was certainly a
deliberate strategy by the new gallery; however, to suggest that Gough was unaware of
the nature of the collaboration ignores Gough's wider art practice, as well as her ongoing
academic and curatorial roles.[114] One of the artist's recurring themes is to fill gaps in
official history and challenge its authority, which in her own words, 'involves uncovering
and re-presenting historical stories as part of an ongoing project that questions and re-
evaluates the impact of the past on our present lives'[115] – a strategy evident in other
museum interventions, such as her video installation at Clarendon House, as part of
Trust.

One of the greatest problems with the NGVA's institutionalised critique, as I see it, is the
museum's post-colonial attitude where the institution looks *back* at colonial history,
focussing on interrogating artworks from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries,
arguably at the expense of a greater consideration of *current* museum practice, or even
more recent art history. Problematic too are the blurred roles of curator and artist, where

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[110] Ibid.

[111] Geoffrey Edwards cited in Gregory, 'The Artist and the Museum,' 299.

[112] Peter Timms, 'NGV Squared,' *The Age,* October 19, 2002.
http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2002/10/21/1034561435445.html?from=storyrhs

[113] Gregory, 'The Artist and the Museum,' 298.

[114] For example, Gough is currently part of a group of academics researching the British Museum's
Australian Indigenous collections on an Australian Research Council grant.

[115] Julie Gough, 'Artist Statement,' Julie Gough artist blog, http://juliegough.wordpress.com/artist-
statement/

the artist is positioned as a neutral and authoritative figure in what is really a collaboration between artist and institution. In Gough's case, the artist is credited as the intervention's author, even though the museum played a significant role in the construction of the critique. This stands in stark contrast to Gordon Bennett's proposal at the AGNSW, for instance, where the museum had little involvement in the work's conception.

Other theorists have addressed the popularisation of institutional critique, and Kwon in particular shrewdly outlines the problems that are emerging as a result. Her argument that the artist is at risk of becoming a commodity, 'an overspecialised aesthetic object maker,'[116] can certainly be seen in the NGV interventions. This is not to dismiss the power of these works or the artists' commitment to their practice; it is more a critique of the museum's self-promotional strategies, where artists are asked to '*provide…* rather than *produce…* aesthetic, often "critical-artistic," services.'[117] On this blurring of roles, Kwon argues

> Generally speaking, the artist used to be a maker of aesthetic objects; now he/she is a facilitator, educator, coordinator, and bureaucrat. Additionally, as artists have adopted managerial functions of art institutions (curatorial, educational, archival) as an integral part of their creative process, managers of art within art institutions (curators, educators, public program directors), who often take their cues from these artists, now see themselves as authorial figures in their own right.[118]

The risk of writing museum interventions into museum policy is that the practice can alienate visitors who are attracted to the inherent authority of the museum. While it is good for museums to continually question the role they play in the production of public knowledge by establishing a culture of constant critique, not only does the critique stand a chance of becoming clichéd and ineffective, but the public is left confused as to what the museum actually stands for. For instance, Timms quotes the then curator Frances Lindsay's opening announcement that the 'historical collections of Australian art will help to contextualise the contemporary works,'[119] noting that it 'gives a pretty clear indication of priorities.'[120] The serial nature of the NGVA's 'art intervention' policies is further illustrated by the fact that Gough's response to Fox's painting was followed by a

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[116] Kwon, *One Place After Another,* 47.
[117] Ibid., 50
[118] Ibid., 52
[119] Lindsay cited in Timms, 'NGV Squared.'
[120] Ibid.

similar critique by Gordon Bennett. The gallery subsequently purchased Gough, Liu and Bennett's works, thereby truly institutionalising the critique.[121]

When Buren produced his work at MoMA, he left key decisions to the museum in order to reveal their ultimate influence and involvement in art production and display. Yet he was not just referring to institutional critique but to all works of art, self-contained or not. The work is particularly relevant to a discussion of institutionalised critique in that the museum – the target of critical attention – is fundamentally involved in the action. Just as Fraser noted, artists like Buren are not *anti-* museum, rather they acknowledge underlying power relations in art and society. More specifically, the aim of Buren's MoMA intervention was to reveal one aspect of the artist – museum relationship.

While I refer to Bennett's AGNSW intervention as another model of critique, the role of the gallery and the 2008 Sydney Biennale curators in manipulating the final presentation of the work is worth considering. In the second chapter, I described the way in which the biennale's official press and catalogue photos of Bennett's model positioned it within the gallery's Grand Courts. However, the AGNSW then publically displayed it outside the cafeteria on the lower ground floor, perhaps in an attempt to neutralise the critique.[122] For the biennale commissioning body, the critical nature of the piece was perfectly suited to that year's political exhibition theme – *Revolutions: Forms that Turn* – with the guidebook describing the work as a 'challenging and revolutionary artistic dream.'[123] Essentially, it was still an art institution promoting Bennett's institutional critique, but it was the biennale as institution, not the museum, that was the dominant player. It is doubtful that Bennett would have expected the AGNSW to accept his proposal that would result in many of the key works that form the gallery's identity turned upside down, and the gallery's response was always going to be an integral part of his artwork –

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[121] On my latest visit to Melbourne in August 2012, I noted that the NGVA had installed contemporary Indigenous artist Julie Dowling's *Federation Series: 1901-2001* (2001) in its nineteenth century Australian art section.

[122] Interestingly, Sydney Morning Herald critic, John McDonald, expressed concerns about the nature of Bennett's critique that were similar to Timms' expressed problems with the NGVA interventions. McDonald wrote, 'my sympathies are all with the [AGNSW], for there is nothing revolutionary about rehanging 19th-century works in a manner that is disrespectful and caricatural to make a lame political statement. Using other people's work as part of one's own art is a practice that all public galleries should discourage.' John McDonald, 'More Spin than Revolution,' *Sydney Morning Herald,* June 28, 2008. http://www.smh.com.au/news/arts/end-result-is-just-a-rehash-of-wellworn-works/2008/06/27/1214472741812.html?page=fullpage#contentSwap2

[123] Ibid.

a part that was largely out of Bennett's control. Thus, like Buren's work, Bennett's proposal revealed the conflicting views and negotiation that exists not only between artist and museum, but also between individual art institutions.

As demonstrated by the examples in this section, the relationship between museum and artist is never clear. We see issues relating to authorship and the evolving role of the artist and curator, where at times, the distinction between the two is indefinite. The role of the artist as a legitimising, 'neutral' figure, can be compromised when museums orchestrate artistic interventions as a way of establishing a politically correct form of self-reflection. Unlike Emmett's collaborative projects where the artist's role was well-defined and was designed to extend historical interpretation, in the NGVA examples, the level of institutional involvement in the interventions was unclear. Yet, as Buren and Bennett's examples illustrate, there is always a certain level of undisclosed negotiation between institution and artist, and neither body is exactly neutral, which means that in a sense, all critique is institutionalised.

Conclusion

The artists whose work is discussed in this chapter all approach the institution as site in different ways. In the chapter introduction, I noted the distinction between 'institutional dialogue' and the harsher 'institutional critique.' 'Institutional dialogue' accommodates the discussion of a wide range of approaches, some of which were highly and uncompromisingly critical of the institution, such as Goldberg's Elizabeth Bay House project, *A Humble Life*. Other artworks were commissioned, the artists actively working with museum curators to address wider issues relating to gaps in knowledge or alternative interpretations of our cultural history, such as the art projects based at the Hyde Park Barracks. Curators, such as Emmett, recognise the unique ability of artworks to 'get away with' speculative histories and poetics, where traditional museum displays cannot. Then there are the commissioned art 'interventions' where museums play an active role in the critique, with artists acting as mediating figures.

The difference between Goldberg's approach and Ferran and Brennan's could be explained by the individual artist's personality and drive, and looking at the Goldberg's projects at other museums, such as the Australian Museum and Botanic Gardens, it

seems that his work generally is highly critical of most host institutions. It should be noted also that Goldberg approached the museums in question and received outside funding, as opposed to being commissioned by the institution. By receiving only in-kind support from the institution, Goldberg retained a distance from the trust management, allowing him to interrogate the irregularities and contradictions in their curatorial methods. It is this crucial financial separation that is missing from the examples discussed in relation to the institutionalisation of critique, where the artist's authorial autonomy is compromised. In her analysis of the institutionalisation of critique, Kwon describes the artist as a 'commodity,' and while Goldberg's second Elizabeth Bay House project was partly approved on the basis of the increase in visitor numbers (and thus admission fees), the relatively distant relationship between artist and institution and the artist's emphasis on financial independence resulted in a different level of critique to that of the NGVA-commissioned 'interventions.'

Additionally, the tendency for artists to be attracted to displays that are outdated or have yet to be refurbished (addressed in the previous chapter) can be extended to include institutions considered blind to more contemporary approaches to history. The Elizabeth Bay House management might have been the most hostile example in this chapter, but because of its outdated, exclusive and romanticised version of history, as well as the trust's conservative curatorial approach, this historic house museum was also the easiest to critique.

As I have stressed previously, all institutions have biases whether deliberate or not, and in the past certain historical 'truths' have been promoted that champion the history of dominant players at the expense of others. Site-specific art, however, has the ability to question institutional authority and strategies, uncover gaps or underplayed histories, preserve intangible heritage, and present alternatives to the official line. Even if the critique is orchestrated by the commissioning body, it is clear from all the examples in this chapter that site-specific art has a tendency to powerfully address key Australian concerns, including the preservation of Aboriginal culture or the underplayed role of women in official histories. The risk, however, is that the institutionalisation, or the repetitiveness of such critique results in generic, predictable, and even token art projects that trivialise such concerns at the expense of a truthful examination of current and permanent museum practice.

Chapter Five

Extending the Museum:
Politics, Identity and Place-making in Permanent Public Art

'Ode to Vault'
Yellow
Peril
Cheryl
Meryl
Vault
Fault
Foucault
Harold Holt
going past
going fast
on the tram
pearl jam
yellow peril on the grass
I think you have a lot of class
a yellow cut-out cube iron icon
Ron Robertson-Swann you turn me right on!

-Angela Brennan[1]

Vault is scary. When I see it – usually a glance from the tram
– I feel a flinch of discomfort. Imagine collecting your
shinbone on that. Was it always so scary? We might tell a
story about how it went feral after being dragged from its
home in the City Square and abandoned on the Yarra Bank.
How it became surly and vicious. This story fits with my
memory of Vault in the City Square as a lively, playful thing.
The irony is that its nickname ['Yellow Peril'], which was
strategically used as part of the project of moving Vault from
the City Square, only became deserved after its removal.

-Will Barrett[2]

In October 2011, the Museum of Contemporary Art issued a press release outlining the

2012 reopening of the gallery following its redevelopment.[3] The star of this release was

the announcement of a permanent artwork by Brook Andrew, an installation that

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[1] Angela Brennan, 'Ode to Vault,' *Artfan,* no. 5 (1996): 4.
[2] Will Barrett, 'Vault, Batman Park, Melbourne, Ron-Robertson-Swan,' *Artfan,* no. 5 (1996): 5.
[3] E-Flux, 'MCA Sydney,' *E-Flux* mailing list, October 10, 2011. www.e-flux.com/shows/view/10204.

responds to the remains of the colonial naval dock under the new wing. Andrew's work

will join the growing number of permanent artworks being commissioned in and around

museums that explore aspects of the respective sites' history or previous uses. The

permanent work follows a tradition of temporary

works being installed around and on the building,

such as Sam Durant's incendiary installation

mounted on the museum exterior at the 2008 Sydney

Biennale, highlighting ongoing prejudice against

Aboriginal Australians, as well as African American

and Native Americans in the United States.[4] These

two works incorporate the museum in quite different

142. Brook Andrew, *Warrang* (2012).

ways. The former is more a response to the history of the site, and as will be discussed in

this chapter, a popular theme for current permanent museum-commissioned art. The

143. Sam Durant,
This is Freedom?, *200 Years
of White Lies* and *End White
Supremacy* (2008)

latter used the museum as fabric, a grand art deco building

on prime land over which large handwritten messages

were displayed. Interestingly, while the permanent work

will no doubt be less overt in any political message, its

association with a somewhat progressive commissioning

institution means that it will escape the unfortunate

'dumbing down' of art that plagues much public art in

Australia. The politics and evolution of public art in this

country, and the relationship between museum-based

permanent public art and its commissioning body, are the

key ideas explored in this chapter.

    A number of the permanent works discussed in this

chapter have been introduced earlier in this thesis, such as Janet Laurence and Fiona

Foley's *Edge of the Trees* (1995) at the MoS, Hossein and Angela Valamanesh's *An

Gorta Mor* (1998-9) at the Hyde Park Barracks, and Fiona Hall's *A Folly for Mrs

Macquarie* (2000) at the nearby Botanic Gardens. These three public artworks draw on

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[4] The artwork was reported in the Sydney Morning Herald as one of multiple works to draw complaints
from the public. See Richard Jinman, 'Controversy Hangs Around Biennale Poster,' *Sydney Morning
Herald,* June 24, 2008. http://www.smh.com.au/news/arts/controversy-hangs-around-biennale-
poster/2008/06/23/1214073148667.html

various aspects of local history – the *Edge of Trees* concerns the local Aboriginal community's first interaction with the British colonialists, the barracks artwork relates to the building's history as a temporary home to many Irish immigrants, and Hall's installation remembers the activities of the early Governor's wife, Mrs Macquarie. Each of these artworks interprets an aspect of history that is otherwise untold in their respective public spaces. That said, being essentially part of the museum institution, these works are not truly in a public space, and therefore they do not have the same illusion of independence as a sculpture sited in a anonymous public square surrounded by anonymous Modernist corporate office buildings (I write illusion because no public space is without the influence of funding body and/or government). They mark the space in which they inhabit as museum, and are a part of and extension of the museum.

144. Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley, *Edge of the Trees* (1995)

This thesis so far has predominantly focussed on temporary site-specific artworks for a number of reasons. Firstly, there are relatively few permanent museum-based site-specific artworks, although this is slowly changing. As argued in the last chapter, it is far easier for both budgetary and political reasons, for an institution to take risks with a critical temporary artwork than a permanent one. Additionally, once permanent, an artwork becomes part of the institution and consequently risks losing the independence it once might have had. While site-specificity is an overwhelmingly popular theme in public art nowadays, the perceived immobility of site-specific art ('to remove the work is to destroy the work') continues to haunt the art form.[5]

If we look at the public art surrounding museums in Australia, the style of artwork tends to relate to the year in which the institution was established and/or was redeveloped. For instance, the Mildura Regional Gallery's permanent public collection has a particular focus on sculptures from the 1970s and 80s, a consequence of the popular Mildura Sculpture Triennials, from which a number of works were acquired over the period.

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[5] Most capital city public art policies have clauses that state the commissioning body's right to remove the work whenever they see fit.

Comparatively, the AGNSW is flanked by the two equestrian statues, a reflection of the conservative values in 1920s Australia, as well as a feeble imitation of British museums. More recent sculptures have been added as the museum has grown through redevelopment. The Henry Moore sculpture, for instance, represents the continued conservatism of later years, but also indicates to the passer by what they might find within the gallery walls. A Moore sculpture also seems to be a national, if not international, symbol of the 'self-respecting' art museum. Similarly, the iconic Brett Whiteley matchsticks near the rear of the gallery perhaps reflects the institution's continued emphasis on Modernist Australian painters.

The NGA, a more recent institution, has a greater emphasis on sculptures produced in the 1970s and 80s. The sculpture garden, designed in 1981 with a 'four seasons' theme, was designed to echo but also soften the geometric Modernist building as well as the Parliamentary triangle that dominates Canberra's carefully planned urban design.[6] Along with Fiona Hall's fern garden in the centre of the museum, the combination of nature and art as well as the garden's relationship to the gallery's architecture, is a significant feature of the national museum. Each 'season' is represented by a grouping of sculptures and native plants designed to evoke or reflect the period.[7] For instance, winter is embodied by the early figurative sculptures by Auguste Rodin and Emile-Antoine Bourdelle, accompanied by winter flowering acacias. The collection also includes the ubiquitous large abstract works by Bert Flugelman, Clement Meadmore and Alexander Calder, plus a number of more sympathetic works, which blend into the green landscape surrounding the museum. Tiyiko Nakaya's *Fog Sculpture* (1976) installed in the marsh pond, for instance, provides an atmosphere

145. Robert Stackhouse, *On the Beach Again* (1984); Fujiko Nakaya, *Fog Sculpture* (1976)

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[6] Harijs Piekains, 'Art in Landscape,' *National Gallery of Australia*, 2003. http://nga.gov.au/sculpturegarden/essay.htm
[7] However, the Autumn-themed area was never fully realised. National Gallery of Australia. 'Sculpture Garden.' *National Gallery of Australia.* http://nga.gov.au/sculpturegarden/

that complements Robert Stackhouse's partly submerged raft, *On the Beach Again* (1984). According to Michael Hedger, the combination of water vapour and *Burial Ceremony (Pukamani) Poles* (1979, 1984) by the Tiwi people, and *Slit Gongs* (1972, 1974) of Vanuatu, 'invoke[s] a supernatural air.'[8]

With the exception of a couple of the works, most sculptures placed in the NGA gardens are not site-specific, although their careful installation in dialogue with the landscaped gardens significantly affects our reading of the works. Those works that are more overtly site-specific, such as Stackhouse's raft,[9] refer to the physical aspects for the site, rather than historical or social links. Again, this approach to site-specificity somewhat reflects the trends at the time, or at least the wishes of the garden's curators. Like the sculptures outside the AGNSW, the garden is designed as an extension of the museum beyond its physical walls;[10] in fact, the intention was that the garden would 'become the symbol for the gallery rather than the building itself.'[11] Unfortunately, the garden collection has remained largely static since the 1980s because of financial constraints, which limits its original desire to represent the development of Australian and international sculpture.[12]

While the MCA commissioned Andrew's permanent artwork responding to the site's history, this kind of place-responsive artwork is currently more prevalent in social history museums. Again, this could be partly to do with the recent establishment or redevelopment of museums such as the MoS; however, it demonstrates the significant role that art now plays in interpreting history, or at least conveying the identity that the institution wants to project. For example, the installation of *The Edge of the Trees* coincided with the establishment of the MoS, and while outside the physical building in the entrance courtyard, the artwork is an integral part of the institution's identity and mission statement. With the *art* museum, surrounding public works of art are automatically related to the museum's contents, regardless of whether they relate to the site or not. The art is representative of the art museum by definition. For public works

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[8] Hedger, *Public Sculpture in Australia*, 117.
[9] While Stackhouse's work was designed specifically for the site, Nakaya's installation, although installed site-specifically, was first shown at the 1976 Sydney Biennale.
[10] Stretching all the way down to Lake Burley Griffin, the garden could also be seen as a lure to attract passing visitors.
[11] Piekains, 'Art in landscape.'
[12] The notable exception is James Turrell's *Within Without* (2010).

outside social history museums, the subject of the art becomes all the more important. There is an added motivation for site-specific or place-specific response.

In the second chapter, I argued that those museums with unique physical features attract site-specific response, and in the following chapters emphasised also that loaded sites - particularly places with contested histories - are ripe for art projects that respond to the site as a place. In Australia, many of our social history museums are sited in buildings that have a significant history, most of which are related to the museum's content. This is the case in Sydney, with the Police and Justice museum, the MoS on the site of the old Government House, the Hyde Park Barracks and many National Trust listed historic houses; in Tasmania, convict sites, such as Port Arthur and the Female Factories; and Melbourne has the old gaol, which is again, a significant part of our convict past. With their rich histories, it is no wonder then that these sites are popular for this new genre of site-specific art, and that more recent permanent art commissions also tend towards an exploration of this history.

5.1 Installing Carefully: 'Yellow Peril' and the Evolution of Public Art

While this chapter is particularly concerned with permanent site-specific public art associated with public museums, it is important to outline the evolution of public art, and the issues relating to the commissioning, placement and public reception of artworks in public spaces because these issues greatly influence commissioning bodies today. Unfortunately, public art and criticality are often (falsely) viewed as mutually exclusive, no doubt fuelled by the number of insipid artworks in the public sphere that act as mere decoration and have little 'social specificity,'[13] to use Lucy Lippard's term. This is not to say that all public art has to make a hardline political or social comment; by 'critical,' I refer to public art that does not ignore the public, the place and the community. Lippard defines public art as 'accessible art of any species that cares about, challenges, involves and consults the audience for or with whom it is made, respecting community and environment.'[14] The term 'accessibility' also has its own negative connotations within the art world, where accessibility is gained at the expense of criticality, that it results in

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[13] Lippard, *The Lure of the Local*, 266.
[14] Ibid., 264.

boring art, and public art therefore cannot be 'real art.' The problem with this belief is

that it assumes that the public are ignorant, that the public = a non-art gallery audience,

and therefore they either do not care or cannot appreciate art. Yet, most members of the

public have a high degree of visual literacy as a result of contemporary modes of

communication, from advertising to television and the internet. This belief also ignores

the significant percentage of the community that frequent cultural events, and therefore

are interested.[15] When we look at a number of permanent works associated with and

commissioned by museums (such as the MoS's *Edge of the Trees*), which demonstrate

criticality and have great importance and relevance to the public, it is clear this

dichotomy is a myth.

The evolution from public art that bears no relationship with the site to the current, more

popular, site-specific public art is described by Miwon Kwon in terms of three distinct

models. She refers specifically to policy change in America when explaining these

changes, but the trends are echoed in Australia as well. The first public art paradigm

described by Kwon, is the 'art-in-public-places' model that dominated the 1960s and 70s.

The works were generally enlarged modernist abstract sculptures, produced by

internationally renowned male artists, such as Alexander Calder and Henry Moore. Their

location in public places, such as parks, university campuses and plazas, she writes,

'legitimated them as "public" art.' [16] Henry Moore's attitude towards site reflects this

paradigm:

> I don't like doing commissions in the sense that I go and look at a site and then
> think of something. Once I have been asked to consider a certain place where one
> of my sculptures might possibly be placed, I try to choose something suitable from
> what I've done or from what I'm about to do. But I don't sit down and try to
> create something especially for it.[17]

Reflecting the Modernist attitude towards the museum, in Moore's mind, the public site

should not distract from the work: 'to display sculpture to its best advantage outdoors, it

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[15] The Australia Council for the Arts conducted recent research that showed three quarters of the Australian population aged fifteen and above attended arts events in 2009, and four out of ten actively participated in the arts. Although the definition of 'arts' was quite broad, and included the visual arts, music, theatre, dance, reading and writing, the research demonstrates that the Australian public should not be considered ignorant or disinterested when it comes to commissioning public artworks. Australia Council for the Arts, 'More than Bums on Seats: Australian participation in the Arts' (research report, 2010).
www.australiacouncil.gov.au/resources/reports_and_publications/subjects/audiences_and_cultural_particip
ation/arts_participation_research_more_than_bums_on_seats
[16] Kwon, *One Place After Another*, 60.
[17] Ibid., 63.

must be set so it relates to the sky rather than to trees, a house, people, or other aspects of its surroundings.'[18] As Kwon remarks, the site was merely 'a ground or pedestal upon which, or against which, the priority of the figure of the art work would be articulated.'[19]

To put Moore's comments into context, around the same period one of the earliest practitioners of site-specific art, Hans Haacke, was arguing:

> A 'sculpture' that physically reacts to its environment is no longer to be regarded as an object. The range of outside factors affecting it, as well as its own radius of action, reaches beyond the space it materially occupies. It thus merges with the environment in a relationship that is better understood as a 'system' of interdependent processes. These processes evolve without the viewer's empathy. He becomes a witness. A system is not imagined, it is real.[20]

While Haacke was not referring to art in public spaces, the usually site-specific public art produced today has more in common with Haacke's notion of 'sculpture' than Moore's.

Kwon argues that it was in response to the indifferent Modernist sculptures or 'plop art,' that site-specific public art was popularised, and thus the second paradigm was born: the 'art-as-public-spaces' approach, 'typified by design-orientated urban sculptures… which function as street furniture, architectural constructions, or landscaped environments.'[21] We still see this type of art regularly

146. Henry Moore, *Reclining figure: Angles* (1980) outside the AGNSW

commissioned in Australia. Street signs are remade in 'hand drawn' fonts, mosaic tiles replace pavements depicting local flora or fauna, and fluorescent tree trunk-like structures appear to prop up road overpasses.

It is important to note that while Kwon's public art models are somewhat echoed in Australia's public art policies, a number of projects, particularly those initiated by John Kaldor, have bucked these trends. The epic 1969 *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay* project is

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Haacke (1968), cited in Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (London: Studio Vista, 1973), 37.
[21] Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 60.

probably the most significant example, and was the largest public installation in the world at the time. However, many of the Kaldor initiatives were ahead of their time, and continue to push public art beyond the conventions of the day.[22]

The Modernist abstract art typical of the first model was often criticised for its lack of accessibility, which Kwon argues, was 'reciprocated by the public's indifference, even hostility, towards the foreignness of abstract art's visual language and toward its aloof and haughty physical presence.'[23] At best, it was a 'pleasant visual contrast' to the artwork's environment.[24] In Australia, the controversy surrounding the public artwork, *Vault* (1980) by Ron Robertson-Swann, exemplifies this type of reaction.

Nicknamed the 'yellow peril,'[25] the public's negative reaction to the heavy abstract sculpture meant that it was eventually removed from its central Melbourne square and dumped in Batman Park, before eventually ending up in its current location outside the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA). This is not the first time such an artwork has been 'rescued' following public and/or media stir and placed under the protection of a public art gallery. For instance, the sculpture *Mobius Sea* (1986), by Richard Goodwin, was removed from its Macquarie Street site and re-sited outside the Art Gallery of New South Wales, which now owns the work.[26]

147. Protesters at the "Save our sculpture" rally, August 1980

The controversy surrounding *Vault*, fuelled largely by the council and media, was such that an entire book has been written on the issue. Geoffrey Wallis, in *Peril in the Square: the Sculpture that Challenged a City*, notes that while Melbourne is now widely

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[22] Other Kaldor projects referred to in this thesis include Tatzu Nishi's *War and Peace and Inbetween* (2009), and Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Wrapped Vestibule* (1990).
[23] Kwon, *Once Place After Another*, 65.
[24] Ibid.
[25] The term 'yellow peril' also has racist associations. It was historically used in countries such as Australia and the United States of America, and referring to the skin colour of people from South East Asia, it was used to describe the fear of mass immigration.
[26] Hedger, *Public Sculpture in Australia,* 111.

known for its public art having recently branded itself as the 'City for the Arts,' it had little contemporary public art in the late 1970s.[27] Robertson-Swann won the commission after being placed on a shortlist of sculptors[28] who filled the architects' requirement of being 'representative of the 1970s.'[29] The artist devised the sculpture specifically for Melbourne's new civic square, and while it may have pleased the square's architects, who wanted a large colourful abstract sculpture,[30] even before the work was unveiled, art critics Janine Burke and Graeme Sturgeon both expressed concerns about the potential success of the project. Both agreed that the artist's work was not at fault, but rather questioned its ability to contribute meaningfully to the public space.[31] There needed to be a better dialogue between artist, architects, council and public, they argued.

Later, some critics, such as Alan McCulloch, would praise the sculpture for its relationship with the scale and geometry of the space, particularly against the ornate Town Hall background. Patrick Hutchings wrote that within the 'over-designed and bleak' square, the sculpture was the 'one bright thing – industrial paint YELLOW…a necessary colour-note.'[32] Like McCulloch, he noted the relationship to surrounding buildings, writing, 'its gables played visual games with elements in St Paul's Cathedral and the Town Hall. It was witty and civilised.'[33] Others, such as Leon Paroissen, argued that the sculpture exemplified the indifferent abstract public art of the time, writing 'in the 1970s and 80s there seemed to be this arrogant belief that the public didn't know what was good sculpture and artists would give it to them, and, in time, they would come to like it.'[34] Margaret Plant, then Professor of Visual Arts at Monash University, labelled it 'unsympathetic' and 'unprofessional,' noting that although it had 'a certain force and bravura… it was unlikely that a work like *Vault* would endear itself to the citizens of the city, and its artistic qualities were not sufficiently strong for tit to consolidate its reputation and respect over time.'[35] Unlike McCulloch and Hutchings, she felt that it

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[27] Geoffrey Wallace, *Peril in the Square: the Sculpture that Challenged a City* (Melbourne: Indra, 2004), 11.

[28] The list of artists also reveals a preference for abstract sculptors, all of whom were white males.

[29] Ibid., 15.

[30] Ibid., 12.

[31] Both cited in Geoffrey, *Peril in the Square*, 23.

[32] Geoffrey Rush, 'Vault, Batman Park, Melbourne, Ron-Robertson-Swan,' *Artfan,* no. 5 (1996): 5.

[33] Patrick Hutchings, 'Vault, Batman Park, Melbourne, Ron-Robertson-Swan,' *Artfan,* no. 5 (1996): 5.

[34] Leon Paroissen cited in Wallace, *Peril in the Square*, 71.

[35] Margaret Plant, 'Vault, Batman Park, Melbourne, Ron-Robertson-Swan,' *Artfan,* no. 5 (1996): 5.

was inappropriate for the site, being 'underscaled' and unsympathetic to the surrounding buildings.[36]

Unlike Serra's *Tilted Arc*, the intention of *Vault* was not to physically disrupt the movement of pedestrians through the civic square; however, *Vault*'s yellow colour is *visually* disruptive, and it is easy to understand why members of the public were unhappy with the sculpture at the time. Its angular and abstract form also had the effect of alienating viewers; for instance, Geoffrey Rush wrote following its removal, 'it is not an unslightly work but… I fail to see what makes it art any more than what you see at your average construction site,' arguing that an artwork's worth is determined by how it affects the viewer, and *Vault* left him 'unmoved.'[37] Much of Melbourne's contemporary CBD architecture is now outrageously colourful, clashing with adjacent sandstone buildings and grey or yellow brick 1970s designs, reflecting a change in attitude towards the cityscape. In fact, RMIT's Storey Hall, a chaotic and colourful structure jammed between two Victorian edifices, even has a replica *Vault* at the end of its foyer – concurrently a monument to the abused object and a statement on its influence.[38] The very removal of the sculpture then, not only influenced future public art policies, but has also inspired a new wave of architectural practice.

148. Ron Robertson-Swann *Vault* (1980), at its current site outside ACCA

At its current location, *Vault* has an interesting relationship with ACCA, a faux rusted building architecturally influenced by the site's industrial history. The angular lines of *Vault* seem to echo the sculptural building, the bright yellow contrasting with the industrial yet earthy red rust; there is a certain synergy between the two forms. While *Vault* is not site-specific, and continues to influence debate on public art in this country, the sculpture seems to work at its current site and is at least welcome in this cultural precinct.

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Rush, 'Vault, Batman Park, Melbourne, Ron-Robertson-Swan,' 5.
[38] Norman Day, 'Storey Hall,' *Architecture Australia*, January/February 1996.
http://architectureau.com/articles/story-hall/

The *Vault* controversy has some similarities with Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* case, mentioned in chapter one. One of the main differences, however, was that while Robertson-Swann's sculpture was designed to enhance the square for public enjoyment, Serra's work was deliberately antagonistic. Kwon argues that Serra 'proposed a counterdefinition'[39] to the prevalent public art of the time, that is, Kwon's second model: urban design aimed at social harmony and unity. *Tilted Arc* was not just site-specific in a physical or spatial sense; the work had elements of '"critical" or "political" site specificity.'[40] The site, Kwon argues, 'is imagined as a social and political construct as well as a physical one.'[41] The relationship between site and art was never intended to be comfortable, for it prevented pedestrian crossings, provided no seating or shade, and thus 'literalized the social divisions, exclusions, and fragmentation that manicured and aesthetically tamed public places generally disguise.'[42] The public reaction to Serra's work was, like that to *Vault*, one of outrage, bordering on hysteria with one 'security expert' claiming the work encouraged vandalism, and even the threat of terrorist bomb attacks.[43] Kwon also notes the false nostalgia for the pre-artwork square, and the ideological use of terms such as 'the people' (as opposed to the artist or government), 'public use' and 'community' to argue against the artwork.[44]

Commentators in both Melbourne in New York blamed the lack of community consultation, as well as the exclusionary, or even elitist, nature of both *Vault* and *Tilted Arc*. And of course, both works were eventually removed to the 'triumph' of the general public. While Robertson-Swann's work was not site-specific per se, the artist still claimed that the work was made for the site and that the commission should therefore stay at that site. For Serra, however, the emphasis on the site being an integral and inseparable part of his sculpture meant that, unlike *Vault*, the *Tilted Arc* was destroyed on removal. *Vault* and *Tilted Arc*, while different in intention, demonstrate the importance of public art that is critical, yet approachable: principles that are emphasised in current public art policies in Australia.

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[39] Kwon, *One Place After Another*, 72.
[40] Ibid., 73.
[41] Ibid., 74.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 78.
[44] Ibid., 79.

Kwon argues that the removal of *Tilted Arc* had consequences beyond the individual artwork, in that 'public artists and administrators were traumatized,'[45] and the state's public art policy shifted towards community-based art, such as the projects by John Ahearn in the Bronx. It is this assimilationary-style art that Kwon identifies as the 'art-in-the-public-interest' paradigm, which encompasses works that address social or political issues and/or activism, including community art.[46]

This community art model, or at least the popular notions of social inclusion and participation, is still favoured in public art policy. For instance, City of Sydney, Brisbane City Council, and Hobart City Council public art strategies include community engagement and communication as part of their key guiding principles.[47] Required also is a certain level of engagement with the site, although not necessarily site-specific, thereby avoiding the notorious 'plonk art,' associated with the 1960s, 70s and 80s. Brisbane Council uses the term 'context-specific,'[48] as distinguished from site-specific, to refer to works with topical concepts, whether they be environmental, social or political.[49] The reports recognise the key benefits of temporary art projects as well as permanent works, but interestingly note that permanent works can be removed at anytime – no doubt a response to past events. Art as a reflection of place, but also as a generator of place is also emphasised, as well as the financial and marketing benefits of having a city that is seen as rich in culture. Significantly, the importance of preserving history, particularly Aboriginal history and culture, is stressed, and reflects current attitudes towards Australian cultural heritage.

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[45] Ibid., 82.

[46] Ibid., 60.

[47] City of Sydney, 'City Art Public Art Strategy' (2011), 7.
http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/cityart/resources/PublicArtPolicyStrategyGuidelines.asp; Hobart City Council, 'Hobart City Council Public Art Strategy' (2005), 10.
http://www.hobartcity.com.au/Community/Arts_and_Culture/Public_Art; Adelaide City Council does not include community engagement as a key policy, but notes its importance in public art commissioning. 'Watch this Place – Public Art Policy' (2001), 9. http://www.adelaidecitycouncil.com/community/arts-culture/public-art/

[48] The council's 'context specific' art is similar to the concept of community art, which Kwon cynically describes as 'artist + community + social issue = new critical/public art.' Kwon, *One Place After Another*, 146.

[49] Brisbane City Council, 'Brisbane City Council Public Art Strategy' (2012), 5.
http://www.brisbane.qld.gov.au/facilities-recreation/arts-and-culture/art-in-public-places/index.htm

Kwon is cynical about the proliferation of place-oriented public art, arguing that place, or at least the production of place through site-specific art, is a way of manufacturing difference for 'quasi-promotional agendas.'[50] She writes:

> Certainly, site-specific art can lead to the unearthing of repressed histories, help provide greater visibility to marginalized groups and issues, and initiate the re(dis)covery of 'minor' places so far ignored by the dominant culture. But inasmuch as the current socioeconomic order thrives on the (artificial) production and (mass) consumption of difference (for difference sake), the siting of art in 'real' places can also be a means to *extract* the social and historical dimensions of these places in order to variously serve the thematic drive of an artist, satisfy institutional demographic profiles, or fulfil the fiscal needs of a city.[51]

To an extent, using art as a purely economic argument is offensive to art, although nowadays it is a popular way of presenting a more tangible argument for the commissioning for public art. From the overused term 'the Bilbao effect'[52] to describe the supposed cultural and financial revolution experienced by the Spanish city of Bilbao following the opening of the Frank Gehry designed Guggenheim, to the erection of a statue of John Glover in the small Tasmanian town of Evandale to mark its self-appointed status as memorial town to the colonial painter; the economic argument for art has replaced a more mature discussion on the role of art and culture in our society.

149. Brenda Croft,
Wuganmagulya (Farm Cove) (2000),
Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.

The public art policies of most capital cities are quite blatant about the role of public art in 'place-making' and the need to create a sense of place as a way of distinguishing their city from the others. Sydney invested a lot of money in public art leading up to the 2000 Olympic games, commissioning works at the main site, as well as around the city. The last work to be completed under the 'Sydney Sculpture Trail' banner was Hall's *Folly for Mrs Macquarie*, because the project was cut short following the games' completion, in other words, after the tourists had returned home. Melbourne's successful re-branding as Australia's 'city of the arts' following *Vault*'s removal, is an identity promoted by the state's tourism authority. Art is thus made 'useful' as a place-maker, a

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[50] Kwon, *One Place After Another*, 54.
[51] Ibid., 53.
[52] The term is frequently applied to MONA's impact on Hobart tourism. The term is problematic because it implies a lack of existing culture prior to the opening of these high-profile museums.

method of gentrification, and a way of attracting tourist dollars. Site-specific art, or at least art that draws attention to the uniqueness of the place, is even more useful in this sense.

The recent popularity of Cockatoo Island as an industrial chic 'art gallery' for often site-responsive works, further emphasises my point. It is the new favourite site for the heavily promoted Sydney Biennale, street art exhibitions, concerts, expensive ticketed cultural events, and now boasts its own film festival. It defines Sydney as a once penal colony and harbour city; it is simultaneously mysterious, beautiful and melancholy. Moreover, its industrial and prison history makes it ideal for artistic response. The hype of Cockatoo Island as Sydney's new definitive cultural site, which plays host to an ongoing program of site-responsive artworks, could be cynically viewed merely as 'product differentiation;'[53] yet surely these works that engage with the island's unique history are bringing to our attention some of the forgotten past events in Australia's colonial history. The fact that the Cockatoo Island arts events and Melbourne's street art are highly marketable and are used to attract tourists and promote a unique locational identity, does not necessarily detract from the meaningfulness of these projects. Nor do permanent public artworks, such as Hall's 'folly,' deserve to be undermined by viewing the finished work predominantly as a result of a city's beautification attempt, even if the commissioning of the sculpture walk deliberately coincided with the Sydney's Olympic bid.

5.2 An Extension of the Museum: Interpreting History in Public Places

We see an emphasis on preserving intangible heritage in many of the permanent works associated with museums. Additionally, works like *The Edge of Trees*, *An Gorta Mor*, and *A Folly for Mrs Macquarie*, which stand outside the institutions, reach a far broader (although not always attentive) audience than they would if confined to the museum interior. I emphasise these three works in particular because they are located in the vicinity of the early colonial settlement and on contested land, yet each respond to a quite distinct aspect of the area's history, and most importantly, histories specifically related to

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[53] Ibid., 55.

their host institutions. Analysis of these three works also builds upon the discussion of the respective sites in the previous two chapters.[54]

Hossein and Angela Valamanesh's *An Gorta Mor (The Great Hunger)* (1998-9), known also as the Australian Monument to the Great Irish Famine, was one of the many international monuments to the Irish Famine commissioned worldwide.[55] The Hyde Park Barracks site was chosen due to its history as a temporary home to the many single or orphaned women who arrived in this country during the mid-nineteenth-century famine. The young women were in high demand as prospective servants and wives, and their shipment to Australia also had the added benefit of relieving pressure on the British poorhouses.[56] The Barracks therefore is a significant site to the Irish Australian community and the work recognises and builds on this relationship.

150. Hossein and Angela Valamanesh,
An Gorta Mor (1999)

Beyond the history of the Barracks, *An Gorta Mor* is made using similar material 'language' to the buildings and monuments around it. The work is built into a sandstone wall that surrounds the barracks, a building material common to the many nearby colonial buildings and St Mary's Catholic Church. The high sandstone wall, built initially to keep convicts within the grounds, is an integral part of the work, as it required a section of the wall to be rotated on a central vertical axis. While the shifted stone no longer blocks visibility from the busy Prince Albert Road to the interior courtyard, a glass wall sandblasted with women's names fills the space left by the absent sandstone, retaining a physical barrier at least. It is impossible to see the entire work without circling the boundary wall, thus 'the viewer is obliged to rely on memory in order to complete the image and make it whole.'[57] Additionally, most of the

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[54] Other examples include *Lie of the Land* (1997) by Fiona Foley and Chris Knowles outside the Melbourne Museum; *Architectural Fragment* (1992) by Petrus Spronk outside the State Library of Victoria (not strictly a museum, but as a research institution the relationship is similar); and Chrisine O'Loughlin's *Cultural Rubble* (1993), embedded in the façade of the Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne.
[55] Joanna Gilmour and Michael Bogle, *Australian Monument to the Great Irish Famine,* exhibition catalogue (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2001), 7.
[56] Ibid., 5.
[57] The artists cited in Deborah Hart, 'Ways of Remembering: intimate monument to the Great Irish Famine,' *Art and Australia* 38, no. 2 (2000): 232.

objects that make up the installation are cast bronze, some coloured, and similar to the traditional bronze figures that dot the Sydney CBD and nearby Hyde Park, which tend to have a greenish patina.[58]

According to the artists, the rotated wall 'represents disruption and dislocation,'[59] in effect creating intimate spaces in the otherwise sparse courtyard. A bronze table is spliced in two by the wall. On the external side sits an empty bowl, and on the other, a place is set at the table with a stool, bowl and a slightly more encouraging but lonely spoon. The artists suggest that:

> this further symbolises the contrast between hunger and comfort which underpinned the role of the Barracks as shelter. The suggestion of continuity in the two ends of the table represents the continuous and evolving relationships between the site and the lives of those who immigrated.[60]

Along a shelf in the wall are bronze replicas of items found in the barracks' excavation, such as a sewing basket, thimble, bible and diary.[61] The other side hosts a spade and some knobbly potatoes, representing the life that the young girls had escaped.

The work, unlike many of the memorials around the city, Deborah Hart notes, 'remembers the everyday people who make up the community,' an 'intricate, intimate and interactive' installation rather than a 'monolithic sculpture.'[62] As mentioned before, however, it still uses the traditional language of the memorial: sandstone and cast bronze. Michael Hedger remarks on the extraordinary number of war memorials, particularly those commemorating World War I,[63] and while they are not unique to this country (nor are they technically art), the sheer number of them has made them an Australian icon.[64] The language of memorials is familiar then to Australians, yet the Valamaneshs' installation is contemporary in every other sense, particularly in its relationship to site, heritage, history and approach.

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[58] Originally, a Paul Carter soundscape accompanied the work, similar to the recordings on the top floor of the Barracks; however, the sound has never been audible during my multiple visits.
[59] Hossein and Angela Valamanesh cited in Gilmour, *Australian Monument to the Great Irish Famine,* 11.
[60] Ibid., 11.
[61] Hart, 'Ways of Remembering,' 232.
[62] Ibid., 231.
[63] At approximately one for every thirty soldiers who fought in the war, Australia has by far the most civic memorials.
[64] Hedger, *Public Sculpture in Australia*, 25.

The permanent works discussed in this chapter all have an educational element to them, and this relates also to the relationship to the museums with which they are associated – museums being predominantly educational institutions. The Irish monument, for instance, extends the history of the barracks site to the pavements to passing pedestrians. As a memorial, it remembers the many Irish migrants to this country, but also emphasises the significant social role that the young women had in the establishment of colonial Australia. The work is accessible, which has been stressed so far as an important feature in contemporary public art, helped no doubt by its figurative nature and use of recognisable symbols and metaphors. It involves and features the community, and the realistic scale of the work emphasises familiarity. It may also be a hook that encourages curious passers by to visit the barracks museum. Like Ferran and Brennan's *Secure the Shadow* discussed in the previous chapter, which drew upon the archives, fragments of past lives, the Valamanesh work is not didactic. The emphasis on absence, seen also in *Secure the Shadow*, as well as the museum's display methods, prevents the work from being overly instructive.

Fiona Hall's *Folly for Mrs Macquarie* (2000) can also be viewed as a monument. Her wrought iron 'folly' sited in the Sydney Royal Botanic Gardens, remembers Governor Macquarie's second wife, Elizabeth, although the artwork's title removes the personalisation of a first name, identifying her as merely the wife of the early governor. The work is

151. Fiona Hall, *A Folly for Mrs Macquarie* (2000)

situated on the opposite side of Farm Cove to the landmark Mrs Macquarie's Chair, and for those familiar with Sydney, the title 'Mrs' has a familiar ring to it. The artwork is located at the supposed site of Elizabeth Macquarie's original folly, a folly being an ornamental building with little or no practical function. Hall's folly allows visitors to sit inside the sandstone and wrought iron construction, which has a wide view of Sydney Harbour. The filigreed iron patterns that enclose the seating, although from afar looks like an innocently decorative structure, are more disconcerting close up. The iron is shaped into thick barbed wire, native animal bones arranged in patterns, Norfolk Island Pine fronds, and a dagger-wielding hand on the top that resembles a flag or spire. The

arm and dagger in fact relates to the Macquarie crest, which was commissioned during his tenure.[65]

Fiona Hall's work has long focussed on Australia's colonial history, botany, scientific classification and trade, elements seen in works such as *Breeding Ground* (2007), discussed in chapter three in relation to the Port Arthur Project, and her similar work at the botanical gardens during the 2010 Sydney Biennale. It also follows a permanent commission at the National Gallery of Australia, *Fern Garden* (1998), where she developed a sculptural garden into an interior square of the gallery. As mentioned earlier, *A Folly for Mrs Macquarie* is one of many installed in the 1990s as part of the Sydney Sculpture Walk, the results of which are dotted around the gardens. None of the other works in the trail, however, take such a critical stance as Hall towards the history of the site. Deborah Edwards adds that Hall's folly also 'bypasses the false romanticism or "new mysticism" of Nature which has accompanied a significant number of 'art-in-nature installations.'[66] Instead, Hall combines the shapes of recognisable objects and familiar architectural materials to recount a confused history where colonial settlers tried to replace a foreign nature with the familiar. Edwards notes the familiar pattern, where settlers would clear land for farming, then go back and try and naturalise the environment – the fashion of the day.[67] However, the land was planted to resemble a European nature.
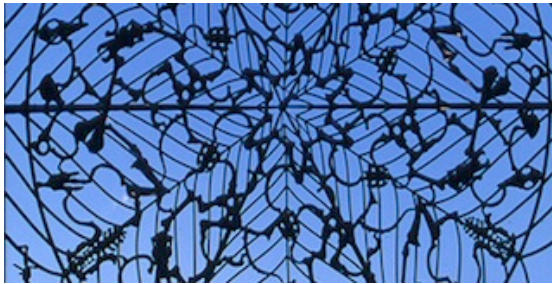
152. Fiona Hall, *A Folly for Mrs Macquarie* (2000), detail.

The Botanic Gardens site was initially a farm established by Governor Philip, but the soil was in bad condition, water scarce, and familiar crops refused to thrive in the new climate. Later, during his governorship, Macquarie converted the land into the Botanic Gardens.[68]

The various elements of Hall's ironwork represent this tension between the land and the European settlers: the barbed wire references the division and distribution of land, and the axe positioned blade down over the entrance alludes to the indiscriminate clearing of

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[65] Deborah Edwards, 'Transported: Fiona Hall's *A Folly for Mrs Macquarie*,' *Art and Australia* 39, no. 2 (2001): 267.
[66] Ibid., 264.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust, 'Our History,' *The Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust*. http://www.rbgsyd.nsw.gov.au/welcome_to_bgt/royal_botanic_garden/history

land for farming, including the botanic gardens site. Edwards describes the Norfolk Island Palm fronds as the ultimate disappointment. The plant was imported in bulk to enhance the local landscape and provide materials with which to build ships, yet the wood turned out to be unsuitable for the purpose, and 'snapped like a carrot.'[69] The animal bones, based on those Hall studied in the Australian Museum, are of creatures once found in the area, such as platypuses, bandicoots, koalas and wallabies, now absent in the densely built central city. Additionally, Edwards sees the circular sandstone base as referencing Fort Denison, which sits in the harbour within sight of the folly.[70] The sculpture's form is also akin to a nineteenth-century birdcage, and could serve as a metaphor for the restrictions placed on Lady Macquarie. Like birds trapped in a cage, to be female at that time would be miserably limiting.

The folly, as a largely superfluous structure, has an interesting history as an object of aspiration and pretention, and was a fashion that reached its popularity in the eighteenth century, particularly in England and France. Mrs Macquarie was reputed to have a 'taste for the romantic and antiquated,'[71] and while there is no confirmation that the folly was ever built beyond the drawn plans, Hall's deliberate use of this architectural form additionally emphasises these themes of exoticism and the transferral of British institutions, fashions and 'nature' beyond the iron work imagery. Hall describes the folly as:

> superimposing an exotic structure from a world that was once so familiar, yet now itself is strangely exotic, on to new and foreign surroundings so that these might be readjusted to become oddly familiar again.[72]

As with *An Gorta Mor*, Hall's sculpture incorporates materials not only associated with traditional public art, but also echoes the many colonial buildings and commemorative sculptures in the area. With a strong desire to improve the colony, Macquarie was responsible for building a significant number of neo-classical sandstone buildings in the city,[73] including the construction of the Hyde Park Barracks, and so Hall's choice of material is significant in the context of Macquarie's legacy. The artwork conveys a story otherwise untold at the gardens, adding to the multiple, although mostly hard to find,

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[69] Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore* (London: Pan Books, 1988), 101.
[70] Edwards, 'Transported: Fiona Hall's *A Folly for Mrs Macquarie*,' 267.
[71] Ibid., 266.
[72] Fiona Hall cited in ibid.
[73] Ibid.

didactic texts around the site. Like *An Gorta Mor*, Hall's work makes public a relatively tiny but significant historical event through artistic interpretation.

While most of the sculptures in the gardens are either traditional commemorative statues or have a decorative and less critical function, there are a few other contemporary works erected as part of the sculpture trail that relate to the area's past. Kimio Tsuchiya's installation *Memory is Creation Without End* (2000) resembles an ancient roman ruin, with decorative sandstone remnants sticking at angles from the grass. The sandstone blocks were all recovered from the many demolished original sandstone buildings around the city, and while weathered from age, many of the fragments are beautifully carved – a tribute to the stonemasons of the early colony. The work is surrounded by the busy Cahill expressway and lower Macquarie Street, a reminder of the notion of 'progress' under which the sandstone structures were destroyed. More significantly, beneath the grassy mound is the start of the Sydney Harbour Tunnel, which fills the gap left by the sandstone quarry from which these sandstone blocks were once sourced. Without being told, it is impossible to know that only a thin layer of earth separates the grassy knoll and a busy tunnel. Meanwhile, the installation is also surrounded with the palm trees, plane trees and other exotic plants that make up the botanic gardens and Sydney streetscape.

153. Kimio Tsuchiya,
Memory is Creation without End (2000)

The statement that accompanies Tsuchiya's artwork claims that the work represents 'the circular connection of past, present and future,' and the reconfiguration 'endows them with new life, meaning and memory.' Yet the work also seems to represent a nostalgic deliberation on the past. We have a rich history in terms of Aboriginal heritage, yet our built colonial heritage often seems to be valued more. The recent controversy over the Brighton Bypass north of Hobart, where the government appears to have little concern for the recently uncovered Aboriginal artefacts, contrasts significantly with the treatment of the state's colonial buildings, for instance. We also read articles in the paper that claim Australia is inferior to Europe because we do not have the same depth of history. A recent article by David

Whitely, for example, compares the Opera House (implied as the sole representative for Australian architecture) with Europe's range of architectural styles, and its 'saturation of different, overlapping histories… Greek temples lying near medieval battlefields, or Roman ruins excavated near museums about twentieth century persecution that break your heart.' He adds, 'Australia's playing catch up, having realistically only started with stone, bricks and mortar in 1788.'[74] Whitely essentially taps into the underlying anxiety, inferiority complex, or more commonly 'cultural cringe' that exists in Australia for the very reasons he claims. *Memory is Creation Without End* also responds to this complex relationship the country has with history, a dual history. On the one hand we have our Indigenous heritage, but then we also have an imported history that starts in England and is uprooted and transferred to a land on the other side of the world. So while Tsuchiya has created false ruins, a garden of relics, on closer examination we can see the fragments of stone that have dates: 'Y.W.C.A 1924', '… Her Excellency Lady Forster… 1925,' and the illusion is broken.

The work has links with Hall's work in its re-imagination and construction of history. Located at the site of the country's oldest research institution, an experiment in transplantation, the artworks reference the importation of values and culture, history, but also loss. Like the eighteenth-century follies of Europe that often mimicked ancient ruins when there were none, we see this mimicry, albeit with different intentions, in both.

The nostalgia suggested in Tsuchiya's work, also relates to the loss of our more recent heritage, the tangible evidence of which are the relics, or at least fragments, of stone. It is often claimed that cities such as Hobart, which did not enjoy the same economic fortune as Sydney in the mid-twentieth century, are fortunate in that the historic colonial buildings have not been destroyed. Prosperity saw many of the older buildings in Sydney destroyed in the name of progress, and replaced with office blocks. In fact, many of the historic buildings in the Rocks were only saved because of a builders strike as a way of protesting against their destruction. In the last chapter, I similarly noted that the Hyde Park Barracks almost suffered the same fate, but a timely change in attitudes towards Australia's architectural, cultural and social heritage meant that the building was preserved as a museum instead.

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[74] David Whitely, 'Sorry Australia, Europe Rules,' *Sydney Morning Herald,* October 27, 2011. http://www.smh.com.au/travel/sorry-australia-europe-rules-20111026-1mj5o.html

154. Museum of Sydney

A few blocks from the Botanical Gardens is the MoS, a low structure dwarfed by surrounding office blocks. As described in the previous chapter, the museum was built on the site of the first Government House (1788-1846). The courtyard at the museum's entrance, like the barracks and botanic gardens, is an open public space within the crowded CBD, and hosts Fiona Foley and Janet Laurence's *Edge of the Trees* – a work that relates to the cultural history of the site. The installation, a forest of 'trees' made from upright wood, sandstone and steel, is accompanied by a soundtrack of Koori voices naming areas of Sydney that are now 'buried' under the massive city. Place names in both English and Aboriginal languages are engraved on some of the pillars, as are the names of local botanic specimens in Aboriginal languages and Latin, suggesting shared values between the new arrivals and Aborigines despite the obvious cultural differences. The way in which these specimens are listed cleverly echoes the taxonomic methods of the museum. On one pillar is engraved the signatures of the First Fleeters, and others have the names of the Eora people from that time. The twenty-nine poles correspond to the number of Aboriginal clans in the area, and the wooden poles, similar to the materials in Tsuchiya's work, have been upcycled from demolished industrial buildings, which in turn were sourced from the trees in the area.[75]

155. Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley, *Edge of the Trees* (1995), detail.

The title refers to a 1985 essay by Rhys Jones, a local historian:

> The 'discoverers' struggling through the surf were met on the beaches by other people looking at them from the edge of the trees. Thus the same landscape perceived by the newcomers as alien, hostile, or having no coherent form, was to the indigenous people their home, a familiar place, the inspiration of dreams.[76]

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[75] Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 'Edge of Trees,' *Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales*. http://www.hht.net.au/discover/highlights/collection_items/edge_of_trees
[76] Ibid.

156. Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley, *Edge of the Trees* (1995), detail.

The work is based on this moment in 1788 when Australia changed, and the site as home to the first government house represents this change. The various materials – from the ancient (sandstone) to the modern (steel) – refer to the development that occurred following colonisation / invasion. The human hair, shell, bone, feathers, ash and honey enclosed within some of the pillars, are individually significant to Aboriginal culture, and further represent change and the relationship between the natural and built environment.

The soundtrack is low enough to encourage the visitor to engage closely with the pillars, to walk around them, and bend in to each in turn. Seventeen years on, the pillars containing shells are showing signs of decay, the weight of the contents creating a graduating denseness of grit. The steel pillars too have suffered from oxidisation over time, the rust bleeding into the gravel that forms the base. Naturally sourced red oxide is used by Aborigines for painting and decoration, and represents a further link between the industrial and natural.[77]

144. The stained ground below *Edge of the Tress*

While the Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley are credited as the artists who produced *Edge of the Trees*, the concept behind the installation was largely the work of Peter Emmett, who selected the quote and developed many of the key ideas. Emmett describes the MoS as 'one exhibition/performance composed of several related elements/exhibits performing within and in counterpoint to the architecture of form, material and space.' In other words, the installation *is* the museum. Emmett's brief for the shortlisted artists[78] stated:

> *Edge of the Trees* is the dominant metaphor of place that locates First Government House site as a charged site, historically, culturally, spatially and emotionally. It was a contested site then; it is a contested site still: for the favoured version of Australian nationalist history. There is, of course, no nationalist history but

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[77] Andrew Nimmo, 'Art in the Public Realm: Edge of the Trees,' *Art Monthly Australia*, no. 85 (1995): 17.
[78] The other artists shortlisted for the *Edge of the Trees* project were: Ken Unsworth, Narelle Jubelin, Rea, and Alison Clouston.

> several. While the site, the place, is located spatially, geographically, environmentally, even ecologically; spatial history insists that place is culturally determined; the journeys of people/cultures moving through its space groove the landscape, create borderlands and meet/converge, become entangled. Meetings between people create flashpoints of contact and exchange. These meetings, exchanges and flashpoints will recur throughout MOS.[79]

Emmett's emphasis on multiple, contestable histories, is similar to the philosophy behind his Hyde Park Barracks museum development. The *Edge of the Trees* sits in a courtyard that also has the original government house traced in coloured pavers, thereby presenting multiple historical interpretations of the site. Interestingly, the museum, which was initially to be called the first Government House museum, was fairly quickly changed to the 'Museum of Sydney on the site of the first Government House,'[80] although it is almost always shortened to the Museum of Sydney (or its acronym MoS), a progression that demonstrates the institution's changing emphasis. It was not to be yet another museum glorifying the early colonialists, rather, it would reflect the city's multiple, constantly shifting histories.

Before Emmett was employed as curator, the architect's design imagined a bronze statue of Governor Phillip atop a plinth in the entrance courtyard – an addition that seems out of step with public sculpture in the 1990s, particularly considering that an extraordinarily lavish statue and fountain of the colonial figure, erected in 1897, is located only blocks from the museum in the Botanical Gardens. Also proposed was a line of flagpoles near the entrance and what Emmett describes as 'a beautiful, classical building, consistent with the Enlightenment aspirations of the European

158. Achille Simonetti,
Governor Phillip fountain (1897), detail.

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[79] Excerpt from Peter Emmett's 'Concept Brief', published in Dinah Dysart, ed. *Edge of the Trees: A Sculptural Installation by Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley from the Concept by Peter Emmett*. Exhibition catalogue (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2000), 34.
[80] Carter, *Material Thinking*, 80.

colonisers.'[81]

As Governor Phillip wrote in 1788:

> There are few things more pleasing than the contemplation of order and useful
> arrangement, arising gradually out of tumult and confusion … by degrees larger
> spaces are opened, plans are formed, lines marked, and a prospect at least of future
> regularity is clearly discerned, and is made the more striking by the recollection of
> the former confusion.[82]

Consequently, part of Emmett's *Edge of Trees* brief was a command to subvert this
order.

The sandstone pillars mimic the original footings of the government house building, and
the corten steel pillars, the museum building. The wood, on the other hand, are more
organically placed, and representative of trees. Through this placement, Andrew Nimmo
concludes that 'the installation responds to the implied authority of the architecture in
counterpoint.'[83] However, it is also the result of the architects' insistence that the
installation stay in the corner of the courtyard. The artists originally proposed that the
pillars be dotted around the courtyard mapping Sydney's Aboriginal clans, and visitors
would have to walk through the 'trees' to reach the museum entrance. Yet the new
arrangement would interfere with the architects' planned mapping of the government
house, as well as the intended open courtyard.[84] Emmett twisted the significance of the
installation's forced rectangular footprint, writing that because it was conceived 'as the
dominant metaphor of place…we had to subvert the [architects'] imperial grid, to create
a counterpoint that speaks for other ways of knowing and remembering this place – the
organic, the Indigenous, the romantic, the mutable.'[85]

Regardless of the declared 'subversion', the installation appears as an almost peripheral
afterthought because of its placement at the side of the courtyard, squeezed into a
rectangle bordered by neighbouring terraces, a wall parallel to the road and the museum

[81] Peter Emmett, 'What is This Place?' in *Edge of the Trees: A Sculptural Installation by Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley from the Concept by Peter Emmett*, edited by Dysart, Dinah, exhibition catalogue. (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2000), 22.

[82] Governor Philip (1788), 'Laying out the Foundations of his Government House', cited in Dysart, *The Edge of the Trees*, 22.

[83] Andrew Nimmo, 'Art in a Public Place', in *Edge of the Trees: A Sculptural Installation by Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley from the Concept by Peter Emmett*, edited by Dysart, Dinah, exhibition catalogue. (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2000), 10.

[84] Ibid., 10.

[85] Emmett, 'What is this place?' 23.

building. Its footprint is as cubic as the glass entrance, the building and the city grid.
While the columns are quite tall, the work is still dwarfed by the breadth of the empty
courtyard and the museum's sandstone façade. Visitors are still able to walk within and
around the trees, lured by the sound recordings and the natural human desire to touch;
however, the visitor has to make the deliberate choice to enter the installation, a choice
counter to the natural diagonal flow from footpath to museum entrance.

While I am critical of the installation's placement, I admit the decision to trace the once
Government House on the ground is important to the site's meaning. The story of the
destruction of the first government house in 1846 and subsequent years spent as a derelict
space in the centre of a steadily growing city, is representative of this country's selective
memory when it comes to heritage and history. Paul Carter argues that the 'site did, or
should, enjoy a unique iconic authority in the formation of the Australian imaginary, not
as a place of founding but of unfounding.'[86] The polarised discussion that followed the
discovery of the buried footings, Carter also believes 'underlines… the homology
between colonial place-making practices and post-colonial commemorative strategies.
Both, it seems, betray the nostalgia that lurks at the core of progress.'[87] Fortunately, the
push from some to 're-imagine' the house as it once was, to build a replica government
house despite the lack of original house plans, was discarded.[88] Instead, a new structure
was designed, and even though it still clings to the classical sandstone and grid, the
subtle method of acknowledging the discarded building means that other histories of the
site, such as the moment commemorated in *Edge of the Trees*, can be remembered. To
recognise a history of Sydney respectful of all Australians, whether they be colonial
rulers, servants or convicts, Aborigines, or recent migrants, would be made a lot more
difficult if the museum building was a reincarnation of a building symbolic of the British
colonial authority and conquest.

While the tone of some of the essays in the *Edge of Trees* catalogue suggests that the
architects and Emmett disagreed on a number of the architectural strategies, the
collaboration between artists, curators, historians and architects was significant, as noted
in the previous chapter. Emmett's declaration that the museum is 'one

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[86] Carter, *Material Thinking*, 81.
[87] Carter, *Material Thinking*, 82.
[88] In other words, a similar notion of restoration to that evident at Elizabeth Bay House.

exhibition/performance,' which included its architecture and art as much as the objects within, and his emphasis on the museum as representative of place, is not dissimilar to his treatment of the Hyde Park Barracks, also referred to in the last chapter. For instance, his ghost stair outlining the stairwell that typified the barracks' original symmetrical architecture, uses a similar method of representing absence to the outline of Government House drawn in courtyard pavers.

Edge of Tress is quite delicate when compared to most public artworks. Anti-vandalism tactics means that most materials used in public art tend to be more restrictively durable, including materials such as the bronze, stone and wrought iron seen in *An Gorta Mor* and Hall's 'folly.' They cannot have sharp edges or climbable platforms to protect those who have little sense of self-preservation, and they need to be easy to maintain. This is all on top of the sculpture's necessary 'inoffensive' criteria. While the columns are unlikely to encourage climbing, the organic nature of the work means that *Edge of the Trees* is relatively needy when it comes to maintenance, a feature that is acknowledged in its 2000 catalogue. Interestingly, these conservation issues are discussed as if an almost positive thing:

> Sapwood had been retained and this would mean that natural changes would occur over time. The steel would rust and bleed into the sandy ground. The stone would weather. All these changes were intrinsic to the theme of the work but needed to be taken into account when planning a maintenance program.[89]

Since its installation, the cracking wood has been addressed, the charred writing re-drawn. But as the catalogue points out, the benefit of having a museum as commissioning and maintenance body is that this upkeep is accepted. Museums are as much about conservation as collecting and education, after all; and this is a key benefit of museum-based public art. These advantages are evident in a number of the other examples discussed in this chapter; for instance, a refuge was found for *Vault* in the grounds of ACCA, and it no longer suffers the same neglect it faced in its second Batman park site. Similarly, the consequence the AGNSW's ownership of Goodwin's artwork is that the sculpture can expect greater conservation than if it was sited elsewhere, because again, one of the key purposes of an art gallery is to preserve works of art. However, it is also important to recognise the distinction in the level of conservation demanded of a steel structure like *Vault*, and the more organic and delicate *Edge of Tress*.

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[89] Dysart, Dinah, *The Edge of the Trees,* 65.

Due to the fragility of *Edge of Trees,* in his review of the work, Nimmo describes the collaborators as having 'an almost naive trust. Public art is usually much more defensive than this. It is surprising to find such delicate and vulnerable things so exposed to danger but touching, too, that the artists expect their work to be respected.'[90] Perhaps, unconsciously, its position within the threshold of the museum demands greater respect than, say, an artwork in a public park. Or maybe it is because the work is not divisive, despite the delicate subject and its 'contested site.'

Unlike many of the timid and uncritical public sculptures in this country, *Edge of the Trees* has gained the respect of the local community. It was positively received in the mainstream press and art publications following its launch, has won architecture awards, and is frequently cited as an example of successful public art.[91] What really stands out in all the reviews and interpretive texts, however, is the assertion that the installation is an act of reconciliation. For instance, Nimmo writes that *Edge of the Trees*

> combines myth and history in a way that fuses the tragedies of the Eora peoples, the discarded from England and the land stripped bare, so that the year 1788 might be seen in its context not merely as a beginning, but as a significant event in a continuous history.[92]

Like Emmett, Nimmo stresses the shared history, and the consequential message of reconciliation. The artists have 'succeeded in their attempt to capture "the content of historical tragedy",' he argues, 'and in doing so, they offer "redemptive hope" that reconciliation is possible.'[93]

5.3 Art and Reconciliation: Education and Politics

The notion of the redemptive qualities of art, or at least art as reconciliation, is often argued when discussing Aboriginal art. That the *Edge of the Trees* is an act of reconciliation is a theme repeated throughout the catalogue, for instance. Some writers

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[90] Nimmo, 'Art in the public Realm,' 18.
[91] See articles such as Genocchio, Benjamin. 'Sculpture Worth a Second Glance', *Weekend Australian*, October 13-14, 2001, republished Benjamin Genocchio, *The Art of Persuasion: Australian Art Criticism 1950-2001* (Sydney: Craftsman House, 2002), 80-81.
[92] Nimmo, 'Art in the public Realm,' 18.
[93] Ibid.

cite the steady flow of school students for whom the *Edge of the Trees* forms equally part of the history and visual art curriculums;[94] for others, it is the involvement of two artists, one of whom is Aboriginal, as being symbolic of reconciliation. Most often, however, it is the artwork's focus on shared histories as well as exposing problematic Australian myths (official history). Yet, Foley writes that the work was about 'negotiated co-existence' rather than reconciliation, and that the artwork has only become symbolic of reconciliation as a result of museum publicity. To Foley, the work is a memorial to the Eora people. She argues that 'in the year 2000, five years after the work was completed, most non-Indigenous Australians do not want reconciliation with the indigenous people of this land.' After all, she notes, 'only a generation ago Aboriginal people, like my mother, didn't have the right to vote.'[95]

Foley's point, that it seems somewhat naïve to believe that an artwork can resolve the complex race relations in this country, is valid. However, the notion of Aboriginal art as social mediation is not new. For instance, the significance of art to the reconciliation process was the main theme of the Governor General's Australia Day Address in 1996, a speech that was developed in consultation with Terry Smith, and further discussed in Smith's paper 'The Governor General and the Post-colonial: The Australia Day Address 1996.' While Smith admits that he was unsure of the Governor's intentions ('was he… toying with some gentle subversion within?'[96]), he felt the importance of highlighting the role of Aboriginal art 'in promoting understanding of land rights, sovereignty and survival'[97] in such a highly publicised addressed outweighed his lack of support for the continued role of the monarchy, and by consequence the Governor General's position, in Australia.

The then Governor General, Bill Hayden, believed Australia was at the start of a 'deeper sense of understanding and sharing between us at all kinds of levels, politically, socially culturally. After so many years of pain and division, this can only be a good thing.'[98] Despite the disadvantage many Aboriginal Australians experience, the Governor General admitted, Aboriginal culture had 'a spirit that is driving the forces of reconciliation and

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[94] Dysart, *The Edge of the* Trees, 2.
[95] Foley, 'Last Words from the Artists,' 102.
[96] Terry Smith, 'The Governor General and the Post‑colonial: The Australia day Address 1996,' *Continuum* 11, no. 2 (1997): 73.
[97] Ibid.
[98] Hayden cited in ibid., 74.

doing so in the intuitive, redemptive way of art.' Art should be used to 'discover some enduring spiritual truths about his country and about our own identity.'[99] Interestingly too, Hayden concluded with a similar message offered by *Edge of the Trees*:

> We can't undo the past, but perhaps we can begin a new journey together to the human heart of this country and to do so using not only the maps that have been drawn by the European cartographers over the past two hundred years, but also the maps that have been drawn of the land and its essence by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for forty or fifty millennia.[100]

Smith observes that it sometimes seems like Australia is made up of two cultures, 'speaking into it from separate sides, creating bridges of reconciliation, building unities, along with potential divisions and disharmonies,'[101] and this is certainly suggested in many discussions on cultural relations. Comparatively, despite the MoS's installation being promoted as a symbol of reconciliation, the artwork's concept is based on one of shared, although different, experience on this land – quite a different emphasis to the 'building bridges' of communication approach. For example, the local flora is recorded on the pillars in both languages, and the names of local people, convicts and Aboriginal, are given equal treatment. Perhaps the most significant disparity was the fact that the literal mapping out of Aboriginal clans originally proposed by the artists, was turned down because it interfered with the tiled map of the first government house, as well as the sparse open space pre-planned by the architects. But maybe this is reading too much into the decision, particularly as the paved outline is almost invisible in its subtlety.

Nicolas Rothwell's response in the *Weekend Australian* 'Whose culture is it anyway?' acknowledged the ambitions of the address, but also drew attention to the disconnection between the romantic notion of Aboriginality as our national identity, which includes key Indigenous figures such as Cathy Freeman, Yothu Yindi, and Rover Thomas; and the 'faceless, nameless ones,' the majority who are more likely to end up in prison, be unemployed and die prematurely. The former image, Rothwell noted, is used for 'nation-building at home and nation-selling abroad' while the other is uncomfortably ignored.[102]

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[99] Hayden cited in ibid., 75.
[100] Hayden cited in ibid.
[101] Ibid., 77.
[102] Ibid., 76.

Activist and academic Marcia Langton
observes that appropriated Aboriginal religious
symbols have become part of the Australian
identity. The stereotypical Aboriginal
'Dreaming' symbols blanket urban Australian
landscape and architecture, from the walls of
shopping malls (which Langton remarks is
'intended to prevent graffiti'[103]), to the
forecourt of Parliament House in Canberra,
which sports a mosaic reproduction of a
Michael Nelson painting. Yet, Langton argues,

159. Parliament House forecourt based on
Michael Nelson's *Possum and Wallaby
Dreaming* (1985)

> The symbols of the fragile sense of belonging of the white settlers in Australia are
> various derivative post-colonial appropriations of a religious tradition which has
> been, and remains, despised and vilified by Anglo-Australian society for two
> centuries. The exegetes of this religious tradition, meanwhile, are often reduced in
> global public culture to a series of grotesquely ironic caricatures.[104]

Langton also notes the common notion of reconciliation through 'the acceptance of
Aboriginal art as a central feature of Australian culture'; however, she suggests this
centrality is more often used to market Australia and create a sense of national identity.
'The content of the art is irrelevant' she writes, 'the main drama is the stance of the
Western observer.'[105] In another article, Langton even compares the ideal of
reconciliation through art to the aims of religious art of pre-Reformation Europe, which
sought 'a form of reconciliation - divine redemption – though artistic propitiation.'[106]

In 2003, Richard Bell questioned the very existence of Aboriginal art (as commonly
used) in his painting *Scientia & Metaphysica (Bell's Theorem)*, along with the article,
'Bell's Theorem: Aboriginal art – it's a white thing!' He is critical of the lack of
dialogue between Indigenous artists and the wider art establishment, writing:

> White Australia uses Aboriginal imagery and native fauna and flora to promote
> tourism and other industries. These things belong to the Black Fella. However, an
> underlying assumption that arises out of this use of our imagery is that there has
> been a conciliation process through which an equitable partnership between Black

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[103] Marcia Langton, 'Dreaming Art,' in *Complex Entanglements: Art, Globalisation and Cultural
Difference*, ed. Nikos Papastergiadis (London: Rivers Oram Press, 2003), 44.
[104] Ibid.
[105] Ibid., 49.
[106] Marcia Langton, 'Homeland, Sacred Visions and the Settler State,' *Artlink* 20, no.1 (2000): 12.

> Australians and White Australians has been created. Patently, blatantly, gratingly,
> this is not true. Never, ever has the White Fella sat down and talked with us about
> all of the things they now call their own (they even call us *their* Aborigines - as if
> we are their chattels). It is true, however, that they have talked to and at us on
> many, many occasions. But only on relatively minor matters like Native Title.[107]

Like Rothwell and Langton, Bell refers to Aboriginal art as a commodity and an unjustifiably appropriated symbol of nationhood.

On the other hand, Professor Adrian Franklin claims that white Australia's familiarity with Aboriginal designs and culture through 'Aboriginalia' in the 1940s-70s, led to a paradoxical shift in the attitudes towards Aboriginal people. 'Aboriginalia' – souvenir objects with Aboriginal people, symbols and motifs – were not made by or designed for Aboriginal people, nor did they reflect contemporary Aboriginal life; rather, the romanticised 'Dreaming' popular on these objects, formed the confused cultural iconography of Australia. The objects tend to be kitsch and sometimes racist, and despite the fact that they were usually sold at tourist shops engraved with a placename, the motifs were often generic borrowings, unrelated to the corresponding art styles of the local Aboriginal clans. However, these objects held high status in Australian homes, acting as 'repositories of recognition', ensuring that Aboriginal Australians were not forgotten.[108]

From the arguments above, it is evident that the use of Aboriginal art is politically charged, particularly in public spaces where art is viewed as having a defining, place-making function. It is important not to be too cynical about the intentions of Australia's public art schemes, but Langton's observation that 'Aboriginality' is commonly understood to represent both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, shared values through difference and sense of place, is somewhat reflected in the public art policies mentioned earlier. The emphasis on the preservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage is so primary in these policies, yet so at odds with the actions of Australian society in general, that it is hard to gauge the authenticity of these aims.

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[107] Richard Bell, 'Bell's Theorem: Aboriginal art – it's a White Thing!' *The Koori History Project*, 2002.
http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/great/art/bell.html
[108] Adrian Franklin, 'Aboriginalia: Souvenir wares and the 'Aboriginalisation' of Australian Identity.'
Catalogue essay for the exhibition *Aboriginalia* (forthcoming).

We certainly continue to see Dreaming motifs occupying public spaces around the country. We see the familiar dots that have come to symbolise all Aboriginal art despite the fact that this method is traditionally linked to only some sections of the country (and a reason why Emmett, in wanting a place-specific artwork, stressed the inappropriateness of Arnhemland poles the Sydney/Eora site[109]). We see these dot 'paintings' outside Parliament House, we see large paintings installed outside the Centrelink office in Hobart, and rock art-inspired creatures embedded in paths along the Sydney Art Trail. We are familiar with these images, yet do they adequately preserve and promote Aboriginal cultural heritage? For instance, can we really say that we are preserving cultural heritage through public art projects in the Botanic Gardens when recent Federal Government policy has banned bilingual classrooms, which will arguably lead to the loss of traditional languages and thus cultural heritage?[110] Do these artworks address the disconnection between the key words in public art policies and the number of Indigenous Australians living in poverty relative to the non-Indigenous population? Then again, maybe we are expecting too much from the arts. While the Governor General's address was overly utopian in message, it was a highly publicised speech designed to trigger debate, and an attempt to provoke the government into taking action. It is evident, however, over fifteen years on, that these inequalities have not been resolved. In fact, even within some public art museums, such as the AGNSW, Aboriginal art continues to be marginalised in favour of an Australian history told predominantly through a colonial and Modernist painting canon. This preference is again reflected in the works chosen to represent the gallery on its exterior.

Perhaps we need more confronting public art that addresses continuing inequalities and conflict, as opposed to the familiar 'Dreamings.' Public art in Australia still seems to be mostly conservative, lacklustre, apolitical and inoffensive, but to install permanent incendiary political art poses other questions. For instance, do we want to be installing works that will potentially permanently, or for a lengthy period of time, address *current* inequalities? The so often irrelevant public art we see in Australia's public spaces, is an unhappy compromise by administrators fearful of triggering public outcry, and this is

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[109] Dysart, *The Edge of the Trees*, 36.

[110] For further reading on this continuing debate see Jane Simpson, Jo Caffery and Patrick McConvell, 'Gaps in Australia's Indigenous Language Policy: Dismantling bilingual education in the Northern Territory.' Research discussion paper, *Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies* 23 (2009).

why it is important that museums and similar public institutions commission critical public art. They have enough independence and authority to install works of art that address issues relevant to both the content of the museum, but also the wider community, even though most will never enter the museum itself.

Just as the MoS acknowledged the advantage it had as a commissioning body to build an artwork that was at once political, relevant to the museum, and also relatively demanding in terms of conservation; another artwork by Fiona Foley, *Black Poppies*, installed at the State Library of Queensland, similarly reflects the institution's purpose as a research and educational institution. The artwork refers to the opium used in nineteenth-century Australia to 'render Aboriginals compliant and willing workers for the white settlers.'[111] Like the MoS installation, *Black Poppies* does not use the familiar imagery of the 'Dreaming.' Instead, 777 cast aluminium poppies, which hang from the ceiling in an infinity shape, use symbols of a different kind. Also similar is the ambiguity of the installation. To the visitor unfamiliar with Foley's work, or not privy to the work's intended meaning, the pattern of poppies is an aesthetically pleasing sculptural installation. As a research institution, however, the work has additional significance in terms of communicating a marginalised historical fact.

160. Fiona Foley,
Witnessing to Silence (2004)

Interestingly, another public artwork by Foley installed outside the Brisbane Magistrates Court is similar in content, aesthetic and ambiguity. The difference between the two works was that Foley withheld the true meaning of *Witnessing to Silence* (2004) until after its installation. Predicting that the Public Art Agency would not accept an artwork referring to historical race relations in such a sensitive and prominent position, even though it would be a significant reminder of the unjust laws of the past (and in some cases the present), Foley told them the artwork was about Australian fire and flood disasters. It was only in 2005 that Foley revealed that

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[111] Louise Martin-Chew, 'Fiona Foley,' in *Fifteen Years of Urban Art Projects*, ed. Alison Kubler (Brisbane: QUT Art Museum, 2007), 20.

the place names depicted on the installations were sites of Aboriginal massacre, and the ash and water referenced the way in which the bodies were disposed.[112] That Foley felt she had to hide the true meaning of the work is not only indicative of the censorship imposed by public art committees but also Foley's perception of the level of conservatism and 'inward-looking parochial jingoism'[113] in Brisbane. While similar works by Foley have been installed in other public places without controversy, it is important to note that they are sited in public spaces managed by organisations with relative autonomy and an obligation to educate, such as the library or the MoS. That works like these can be successfully commissioned, demonstrates the capacity of such organisations to introduce critical artworks into the public arena, even if the works sit within the physical boundaries of the institution, which may include a museum forecourt or library foyer.

The interest in Aboriginal history and culture expressed by public art policies demonstrates the importance of public art as education. It is not explicitly stated in the official city policies mentioned earlier, the groups preferring terms like 'reflecting' or 'preserving'; and perhaps the terminology is used to avoid accusations of elitism so often used as weaponry against the arts. We see these accusations in the *Vault* and *Tilted Arc* cases, where critics evoke myths of a high art world forcing uninterpretable artworks down the public throat. However, many of the critically acclaimed public artworks in this country engage the public both intellectually and emotionally. *Edge of the Trees*, in particular, proves wrong the notion that criticality and public art are mutually exclusive. As John McDonald put it in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the work is 'legible enough to be appreciated by any thoughtful viewer.'[114] Criticality and accessibility *can* be combined.

Because of the museum's role as educator and custodian of knowledge, to have works that actively relate to the institutional aims is not only appropriate, but necessary. The relationship between art and institution in the non-art museum examples cited in this chapter, illustrate the way in which art can act as an extension of the museum, and tell

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[112] Louise Martin-Chew, 'Public Art in Society: Success or Failure?' in *The Art of Politics the Politics of Art: the Place of Indigenous Contemporary Art*, ed. Fiona Foley (Southport, QLD: Keeaira Press, 2006), 47-51.
[113] Fiona Foley, 'The Art of Politics/the Politics of Art,' *Photofile,* 77 (2006): 80.
[114] Ibid., 65.

stories of the city through visual art. These histories – of Irish migrants, the ideals of the British Settlers at Farm Cove, and the turning point in Australian history when Governor Phillip claimed the land as a British Colony – are interpreted and told in a way that is far more accessible than an academic essay that most members of the public will never read. The artworks, like history, are open to interpretation, hence the popularity of *Edge of the Trees* as a popular excursion destination for Sydney school groups. Unlike the ghost stair, for instance, that while interesting, will only be seen by relatively few, *An Gorta Mor* is seen by city workers, tourists, and lunchtime joggers; in fact, the steps on which the exterior section rests is a popular lunch spot. What started out as a memorial, an artistic interpretation of history, is now, like the barracks, an important part of Sydney's identity. While the subject matter is based on a historical event, the artwork now represents far more than just the past. Actively celebrated by the local Irish community, the work is just as relevant to the present as the history it depicts. The artwork has been absorbed into the city.

Similarly, in the MoS installation, the wood columns may well be as old as the moment in time that the artwork captures, but the steel references a more recent time. The work therefore does not just imagine one time or history or identity, but several. The various materials are reflected in the land around the site: in the adjacent skyscrapers and the heritage sandstone buildings, for the area of the city in which the MoS is based is typified by a slurry of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century buildings, grey Modernist or shiny glass towers, and the multiple expressways that glide under and over the grid of streets. It is the site of first contact, as told by Rhys Jones, and the museum records that moment. It locates the site as a place where all Australians are represented because the work acknowledges the experiences of both the white settlers and Aboriginal people. As the then Aboriginal curator at the museum, David Prosser noted, the work, as a 'public icon',

> was the first real attempt to collaborate and to make Aboriginal history a part of the whole Australian experience. This meant telling some truths about the position of Indigenous Australians in society then and, most importantly, now. For me, as an Aboriginal person, it represented our history – the untold history – which was finally about to be revealed as a history intrinsic to the whole Australian historical experience.[115]

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[115] David Prosser, 'Last Words from the Protagonists: The Curator of Aboriginal Studies David Prosser,' in *Edge of the Trees: A Sculptural Installation by Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley from the Concept by Peter*

Conclusion

While Kwon may be critical of the orchestrated place-making through site-specific public art, the works discussed in this chapter demonstrate that an artwork produced in response to place can play a key role in the critical interpretation of Australian history and identity. This is particularly important when produced in conjunction with museums, which have a significant role and responsibility in the research and interpretation of our nation's history, society and culture. The role of artistic interpretation in non-art museums, in particular, is growing in popularity, reflected in the increasing number of site-responsive and place-specific artworks commissioned by Australia's institutions. It is crucial that Australian policy makers recognise the benefits of meaningful art in shared places; it should not ignore its audience. Public art can be both critical and accessible, it can engage the public both intellectually and aesthetically, and it can contribute meaningfully to the identity of our cities not just by hoping the bright yellow object is eventually a place-maker, but also by reflecting the history and specific concerns of the community. As an extension of their respective museums, the artworks outlined in this chapter successfully interpret and challenge some of the most contested sites in this country, and have the ability to speak to a wide community audience.

Emmett, edited by Dysart, Dinah, exhibition catalogue. (Sydney: Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, 2000), 97.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have demonstrated the breadth of site-specific artworks in Australia's public museums, as well as the way in which such projects can question cultural norms, highlight gaps in knowledge, and address other current issues relating to national identity and politics. Site-specific art can also highlight aspects of the museum usually invisible to the visitor, including the connotations associated with architectural features, locational politics, and display methods.

Through a critical examination of recent trends in site-specific art practice, I have extended our understanding of existing models of site-specificity. The current popularity of converting ex-industrial sites into art museums, coupled with artists installing art site-specifically in dialogue with these semiotically challenging environments, reflects a move away from the Modernist notion of aesthetic autonomy. This trend is also evident in the popularity of certain 'hot' sites in art museums, as well as the growing number of art projects undertaken in non-art museums.

Curators and museum boards are recognising the potential benefits of introducing art into their institutions, sometimes in a collaborative and interpretive role, and occasionally as a way of establishing a culture of self-critique. I have shown that while the relationship between artist and museum varies greatly, and the respective measures of success are often divergent, we can view these different measures in a positive light.

In the second chapter, I examined a range of projects in relation to art museums, starting with the neo-classical AGNSW; then the Modern QAG; the combined natural history, ethnographic and art museum that is the TMAG; and the 'raw' spaces of the Bond Store and Cockatoo Island. The art examples largely related to the physical space of the museum, either spatially or semiotically, although some artworks also highlighted the politics of gallery layout, and others interacted with existing collections and displays. I argued that it is the more unusual or distinctive aspects of a museum that attract site-specific response, such as the AGNSW's vestibule, the QAG's water mall, the TMAG's archaic diorama, or the Bond Store and Cockatoo Island's industrial aesthetic. Despite

Kwon's assertion that site-specific artworks that fall into her first model (the phenomenological site) are somehow less critical and less advanced than her later models (particularly the discursive site), the spatially-focussed artworks examined in this chapter are far more complex than Kwon suggests. Additionally, while many of these works are critical of the institution, they do not comfortably fit into Kwon's narrowly defined second model, institutional critique. I suggest that these works could be better accounted for by looking at the artist's intention and the strategies used to respond to the site. Additionally, the recent trend of artists installing pre-existing and often self-contained work *site-specifically* in dialogue with a site, in order to alter or enhance existing meanings embedded in the artworks, is unaccounted for in Kwon's models. Thus I propose a further extension to her models in light of these recent trends.

In the third chapter, 'When the Walls Aren't White,' I demonstrated the range of artistic strategies used in non-art museum projects, and the tendency towards particular themes within each discipline. In these museums, art is the outsider and, unlike the situation in art museums, the focus of the institution lies elsewhere. While galleries continue to promote the neutral white interior, other factors, such as the homeliness of the house museum, the ethnographic displays of the cultural museum, and taxonomical archives of the natural history museum or botanic garden, provide relatively more opportunity for site-specific response. In the case of the historic house museum, the house *is* the museum as much as the contents, and artists will often speculate on the lives of past inhabitants, or critique the way in which curators have (often uncritically) decorated its interior. Other artists focus on the function of the historic house/site museum itself, and its relationship to tourism and local identity. In the social or cultural museum, it is often the collection or methods of display that are the target of site-specific response, particularly if they are unrefurbished and/or deemed politically incorrect. The natural history museum and botanic garden are similar in that artists often focus on cultural issues relating to science and nature, such as trade and classification, the social construction of nature, underacknowledged histories, or the political or colonial roots of these collecting institutions. Many artists have been also inspired by the aesthetics of museological taxonomy and display, creating artworks that mimic or respond to the way in which scientific or ethnographic objects are exhibited.

In the fourth chapter, 'Institutional Dialogue,' I outlined three modes of dialogue between art and institution in relation to museum-sited art projects: assimilation, intervention, and institutionalised critique. I examined the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration to museum interpretation and display, and argued that art can be used strategically to present speculative or multiple histories in ways that historians and curators simply cannot. Museum interventions have the ability to publically question official histories and gaps in knowledge, and can occasionally bring about permanent change. The interventions, even if critical of the host institution, can also increase visitor numbers. While this may not be the key aim of the artist, these dual outcomes should not necessarily be seen in a negative light. However, I also argued that institutional critique has become so normalised that it risks losing its critical strength. Increasingly, museums are using the legitimising and supposedly neutral figure of the artist to construct a culture of self-evaluation and critique – a move that undermines genuine institutional critique. I argued that by outlining these three distinct modes of dialogue between artist and museum we can better understand the function of site-specific art projects in such institutions.

The last chapter examined the increasing number of permanent artworks located on the edge of the museum and public space, and the way in which they function as a promotional indicator of its contents, identity and role as an educational institution, thereby serving as an extension of the museum. Many of the site-specific works examined seek to record intangible heritage and reflect local identity, but also act as a place-*maker*. The public art policies of Australia's capital cities are unashamedly commercial and the financial benefits of art investment are frequently mentioned. However, most also emphasise the importance of preserving Australian Indigenous culture, often driven by the politically charged notion of 'art as reconciliation.' I argue that despite this emphasis on the preservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage through public art, these values are so at odds with the actions of Australian society in general that it is hard to gauge the authenticity of these aims. I also demonstrate that although public artworks are often dull in their attempt to avoid controversy, the relative autonomy of the museum means that artworks commissioned for the surrounding public space can take risks and explore important local and historical issues without sacrificing accessibility.

As I mentioned in the introduction, the scope of this thesis excluded an investigation of virtual site-specificity, a concept that I would like to research in the future. I also noted the absence of ARIs in this thesis, reasoned by the lack of documentation on exhibitions in these spaces. In addition, ARIs often have a very different relationship between the artists and the usually volunteer artist-run boards, as opposed to the larger institutions that are the focus of my thesis. The other area I plan to explore further is the use of ex-industrial sites as exhibition spaces. As I write this conclusion, the Biennale of Sydney has released its closing media statement for the 2012 event, emphasising the continued success of Cockatoo Island.[1] As with the *arsenale* at the Biennale of Venice, it is clear that the former shipyards are popular with artists, curators and visitors. These spaces encourage site-specific art, providing an aesthetic and historical hook to which artists can respond. For visitors, part of the attraction of a location such as Cockatoo Island is the place itself, and for curators it is the ability to commission artworks specific to the exhibition theme and site. Additionally, sites like Cockatoo Island are promoted as a unique aspect of not only the biennale or large event in question (which are relatively common nowadays), but also the local brand, acting as a place-maker in an increasingly globalised world.

Lastly, in my introduction I noted that newly opened MONA was also excluded from my project. While it was originally on the basis that it was not a public museum, it is evident that like ARIs, the relationship between artist and institution is not comparable to its public counterparts. It is in fact the museum's owner, David Walsh, who is driving an ideological response to the art world and the dominant ways of presenting art, and I believe that the highly unusual curatorial strategies used in the museum warrants further study.[2]

At the start of this research project I questioned the notion of a distinct Australian art. However, it is clear that site-specific art has the capacity to address uniquely Australian

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[1] Biennale of Sydney, 'After 40 Years, the Biennale of Sydney is Stronger than Ever,' media release. Monday 24 September 2012.
http://www.biennaleofsydney.com.au/CampaignProcess.aspx?A=View&VID=2381154&KID=214459
[2] I should declare that I work at MONA as an invigilator, and while I am probably more aware of the museum's structure and the owner's intentions than the average visitor, I have no creative or influential role within the museum.

concerns. The art projects examined in this thesis tend to address issues such as Australia's colonial past, the lack of representation of women and Aborigines in official histories, the historical roots of these collecting institutions, and the role museums play in developing a national identity, constructing knowledge and concurrently reflecting and promoting dominant values. Due to art's marginality, it is an ideal platform from which to publicly challenge these cultural assumptions and norms, and it can do this in ways unavailable to curators, museum boards and historians. Site-specific art can be used strategically to develop new museological methods of interpretation and critique, to reinvigorate tired or archaic spaces, to demonstrate a level of self-critique, and increase visitation and awareness. Although museum interventions are at risk of losing a critical edge through repetition and a certain level of institutionalisation, when assessing these projects we need to take into account the wide range of artistic strategies and often divergent measures of success.

'The Museum as Art' has demonstrated how artists interact with Australia's public museums, integrating the physical, ideological or historical aspects of the museum into works of art. By recording these projects and analysing them in relation to existing site-specific schemas as well as my own extended models and strategies, it is clear that the role art plays in interpreting, challenging and re-presenting existing knowledge as mediated by the museum is more complex than is suggested by current published theory on the subject. The museum is a meaningful place and far from neutral. In the eyes of many artists, it is not just an exhibition space, but also a material and subject in itself.

Appendix I:

Image List

Chapter 1

1.   Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc*, (1981).
        Cor-ten steel; 366 x 3660 x 6.4 (steel thickness, not curvature) cm.
        Minimalissimo; page: http://minimalissimo.com/2010/11/tilted-arc/

2.   Robert Morris, *Untitled (L-Beams)* (1965).
        Painted plywood (3 Pieces); 244 x 244 x 61cm each.
        Covers & Citations; page: http://search.it.online.fr/covers/?m=1962

3.   Hans Haacke, *Condensation Cube* (1963-5).
        Acrylic, water; 76 x 76 x 76cm.
        Museum of Contemporary Art Barcelona (MACBA); page:
        http://www.macba.cat/en/condensation-cube

4.   Daniel Buren, *Within and Beyond the Frame* (1973), installation view.
        Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        John Weber Gallery, New York.
        Pia Ogea; page: http://www.piaogea.com/en/observatorio_paisaje_canarias.php

5.   Édouard Manet, *Bunch of Asparagus* (1880).
        Oil on canvas; 46 x 55 cm.
        Wikipedia; page:
        http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Edouard_Manet_Bunch_of_Asparagus.jpg

6.   Mark Dion *On Tropical Nature* (1991), detail.
        Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        Sala Mendoza, Caracas.
        Interdisciplinarities; page:
        http://interdisciplinarities.orangeseeds.net/content/notes-one-place-after-
        another?page=2

7.   David Hammons, *House of the Future* (1991).
        Reconstructed house, Charleston, USA; dimensions unavailable.
        Installed as part of *Places with a Past,* curated by Mary Jane Jacobs.
        The Digitel Charleston; page: http://charleston.thedigitel.com/arts-culture/21-
        years-charlestons-controversial-east-side-spole-39493-0603

8. Richard Serra, *Splash Piece: Casting* (1969-70), the casting process.
    Lead; installation, dimensions variable.
    Leo Castelli warehouse, New York.
    Artintelligence; page: http://artintelligence.net/review/?p=529

9. Richard Serra, *Splash Piece: Casting* (1969-70), the cast objects.
    Lead; installation, dimensions variable.
    Leo Castelli warehouse, New York.
    Artintelligence; page: http://artintelligence.net/review/?p=529

10. Richard Serra, *Splash Piece: Casting* (1969-70), the making of.
    Lead; installation, dimensions variable.
    Leo Castelli warehouse, New York.
    Artintelligence; page: http://artintelligence.net/review/?p=529

11. Margaret Roberts, *Untitled (rectangles)* (1991).
    Unbound oxides; drawing installation.
    Margaret Roberts; page:
    http://www.margaretroberts.org/studio%28rectangles%29.html

12. Gustave Courbet, *The Stonebreakers* (1849-50).
    Oil on canvas, 165 x 257cm.
    Arizona State University; page: http://www.public.asu.edu/~jacquies/stone-breakers.htm

13. Andy Goldsworthy, *Sandwork* (1994).
    27000kg of sand; installation, dimensions variable.
    Installed at the British Museum as part of *Time Machine*; curated by James Putnam.
    James Putnam; page: http://www.jamesputnam.org.uk/inv_exhibition_01.html

14. Hans Haacke *MOMA Poll* (1970).
    Two transparent acrylic ballot boxes equipped with photoelectric counter, text; each box 40 x 20 x 10cm.
    Participatory installation, MOMA, New York.
    Tumblr; page: http://www.tumblr.com/tagged/moma-poll

15. Ramingining Artists, *The Aboriginal Memorial* (1987-88).
    Natural earth pigments on wood; 327 high (irregular); installation, dimensions variable.
    Installation shot in the new specially built rotunda, NGA, Canberra.
    NGA; page: http://artsearch.nga.gov.au/Detail-LRG.cfm?IRN=77568

16. Michael Goldberg, *A Humble Life* (1995), detail.
    Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
    Michael Goldberg; page:
    http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/projects.php?p=1995_A_Humble_Life

17.   Front cover of *Art and Australia*, vol 7, no. 3, 1969, with an image of Christo and Jeanne Claude's *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, One Million Square Feet, Sydney Australia.*
        Art and Australia; page: http://www.artaustralia.com/issue.asp?issue_id=156

18.   Christo and Jeanne-Claude *Wrapped Coast, Little Bay, One Million Square Feet, Sydney Australia* (1969).
        Erosion control fabric, polypropylene rope; installation, dimensions variable.
        Kaldor Art Projects; page: http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/project-archive/christo-and-jeanne-claude-1969

19.   Gregor Schneider, *21 Beach Cells* (2007).
        Cage, umbrellas, inflatable mattresses, garbage bags. Each cell 4 x 4 m.
        Installed at Bondi Beach, Sydney.
        Kaldor Art Projects; page: http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/project-archive/gregor-schneider-2007

20.   John Davis *Tree Piece* (1973).
        Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        1973 Mildura Sculpture Triennial: *Sculpturscape.*
        Scanned from Gary Catalano, *An Intimate Australia: The Landscape and Recent Australian Art*. (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1985), 68.

21.   Domenico de Clario, *Untitled* (1973).
        String, rope, branches, logs and sundry objects attached to trees growing on site; 500 x 3300 x 2000cm.
        1973 Mildura Sculpture Triennial: *Sculpturscape.*
        Scanned from Mildura Arts Centre, *Sculpturscape '73: an Exhibition in Mildura, Australia.* Exhibition catalogue. (Mildura: Mildura Arts Centre, 1973), 2.

22.   Kevin Mortensen, *Objects in a Landscape* (1973).
        Rope, bitumen; four units: 213.5 x 91.5cm, 183 x 91.5cm, 122 x 122cm; 91.5 x 152.5cm.
        1973 Mildura Sculpture Triennial: *Sculpturscape.*
        Scanned from Mildura Arts Centre, *Sculpturscape '73: an Exhibition in Mildura, Australia,* 39.

23.   Domenico de Clario, *Elemental Landscapes* (1975).
        Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        Installed at the NGV.
        Online source no longer available.

24.   Michiel Dolk and Merilyn Fairskye, *Woolloomooloo mural project* (1982).
        Photographic documentation of the community art project.
        AGNSW; page: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/185.1986.3/

25.   Ron Robertson-Swann *Vault* (1980).
        Steel, paint; dimensions unavailable.
        Scanned from Wallace, *Peril in the Square*, 42.

26.   Ross Gibson and Kate Richards, *Bystander* (2006).
        From the *Life after Wartime* series.
        Still from the multimedia installation at the Police and Justice Museum.
        Historic Houses Trust of NSW; page:
        http://www.hht.net.au/discover/highlights/articles/bystander?SQ_DESIGN_NAM
        E=printer_friendly

27.   Mary Scott, *Every Minute of Every Day* (2009).
        Portmanteau, fabric gloves, child's suitcase, embroidery thread, carbon ink on
        paper; dimensions variable.
        Installed at Home Hill as part of *Trust*; curated by Noel Frankham.
        Image by Gerrard Dixon.

28.   Brook Andrew, *Warrang* (2012).
        Animated LED arrow, Australian hardwood with shou-sugi-ban finish,
        sandblasted concrete; installation, dimensions variable.
        Permanent installation outside the MCA, Sydney.
        Image by the author.

Chapter 2

29.   Dulux sponsorship plaque at the NGV.
        Image by the author.

30.   AGNSW exterior.
        Online source no longer available.

31.   AGNSW vestibule.
        AGNSW; page no longer available.

32.   AGNSW vestibule looking through to the 1972 addition designed by Andrew
        Andersons.
        photograph by Max Dupain.
        Recollections; page:
        http://recollections.nma.gov.au/issues/vol_4_no1/notes_and_comments/andrew_a
        ndersons_interviewed_by_leon_paroissien

33.   AGNSW interior with the entrance to the Grand Courts on the right.
        Australian Institute of Architects; page:
        http://www.architecture.com.au/awards_search?option=showaward&entryno=200
        42105

34.   Gilbert Boyes *The Offerings of Peace* (1923).
        Bronze; dimensions unavailable.
        AGNSW; page: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/3254/

35.   AGNSW Grand Courts.
        AGNSW; page: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/about-us/

36.   Gordon Bennett, *Untitled (Concept for the Art Gallery of New South Wales)*
        (2008).
        Installation view of 1:22:5 scale replicas of the Court 8 and Yiribana galleries,
        Art Gallery of New South Wales.
        The Biennale of Sydney's documentation image.
        2008 Biennale of Sydney; page
        http://biennale.sitesuite.cn/page/photo_gallery.html

37.   AGNSW Yiribana Gallery.
        AGNSW; page: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/venues/yiribana/

38.   AGNSW Grand Courts in 2009, showing the installation of some of the gallery's
        Aboriginal artworks in the nineteenth century collection room.
        Image by the author.

39.   Mike Parr, *Major/Minor* (2008).
        Performance, AGNSW 11-12 October.
        Scanned from Parr, *The Tilted Stage*, np.

40.   Perejaume, *Marc a l'encesa* (1990).
        Two framed type C colour photographs, one burnt frame; installation, dimensions
        variable (horizontal photograph 130.5 x 192 x 5cm; vertical photograph 186.3 x
        130 x 5cm; burnt frame 65.5 x 49.5 x 83cm).
        AGNSW; http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/315.1993.a-c/

41.   AGNSW vestibule ceiling.
        AGNSW; page no longer available.

42.   Installation shot of Linda Marrinon's figures in the AGNSW vestibule, 2012.
        Image by the author.

43.   Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Wrapped Vestibule* (1990).
        Fabric, rope; installation, dimensions variable.
        AGNSW vestibule.
        Kaldor Public Art Projects; page: http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/project-
        archive/christo-and-jeanne-claude-1990

44.   Carolyn Eskdale, *AGNSW Entrance, 6.04* (2004).
        Aluminium frame, perspex, sewn interfacing, wire, flocking, cable; installation,
        dimensions variable.
        AGNSW vestibule.
        Biennale of Sydney; page no longer available.

45.   Jennifer Turpin, *Water Works III* (1991).
        Water, nylon lines, copper pipes and tanks; installation in the AGNSW vestibule,
        dimensions variable.
        AGNSW vestibule.
        Turpin & Crawford Studio; http://turpincrawford.com/project/water-works

46.   Jennifer Turpin, *Water Works III* (1991).
        Water, nylon lines, copper pipes and tanks; installation, dimensions variable.
        AGNSW vestibule.
        Turpin & Crawford Studio; http://turpincrawford.com/project/water-works

47.   Tatzu Nishi, *War and Peace and In Between* (2009), detail (*Offerings of Peace*).
        Mixed media construction around existing equestrian statues; installation,
        dimensions variable.
        Image by the author.

48.   Tatzu Nishi, *War and Peace and In Between* (2009), detail (*Offerings of Peace*).
        Mixed media construction around existing equestrian statues; installation,
        dimensions variable.
        Image by the author.

49.   Tatzu Nishi, *War and Peace and In Between* (2009), exterior view of the
        Offerings of Peace construction.
        Mixed media construction around existing equestrian statues; installation,
        dimensions variable
        Image by the author.

50.   Tatzu Nishi, *War and Peace and In Between* (2009), detail (*Offerings of War*).
        Mixed media construction around existing equestrian statues; installation,
        dimensions variable.
        Image by the author.

51.   Michael Asher, *George Washington* (1979).
        Bronze statue of George Washington re-sited in the Chicago Art Institute's
        eighteenth century French gallery.
        Society for Contemporary Art, Art Institute Chicago;
        https://www.scaaic.org/index.php?q=node/576

52.   AGNSW, central modern space.
        AGNSW; page no longer available.

53.   Marina Abramović and Ulay, *The Brink* (1979).
        Performance, AGNSW courtyard.
        StudyBlue; http://www.studyblue.com/notes/note/n/12-performance/deck/886031

54.   Sol LeWitt, *All two part combinations of arcs from four corners, arcs from and
        four sides, straight, not-straight & broken lines in four directions* (1977).
        Black Crayon on gallery wall; installation, dimensions variable.
        Kaldor Public Art Projects; page: http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/project-
        archive/sol-lewitt-1977

55.   Sol LeWitt, *All two part combinations of arcs from four corners, arcs from and
        four sides, straight, not-straight & broken lines in four directions* (1977).
        Instructions for the installers.
        Kaldor Public Art Projects; page: http://kaldorartprojects.org.au/project-
        archive/sol-lewitt-1977

56.   Lawrence Weiner, *(This & That) Put (Here & There) Out of Sight of Polaris*
        (1990).
        Synthetic polymer paint; installation dimensions variable.
        AGNSW; page: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/564.1993/

57.   Marina Abramović and Ulay, *Gold Found by the Artists* (1981).
        Performance, AGNSW.
        AGNSW; page: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/211.1981.5.a-
        p/

58.   Antony Gormley, *Field for the Art Gallery of New South Wales* (1989).
        1100 unfired clay figures, each 22cm (approx.) high; 1200 x 1100cm (approx.)
        overall.
        AGNSW; page: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/314.1993/

59.   Antony Gormley, *A Room for the Great Australian Desert*. (1989)
        Image scanned from Bond, *A Field for the Art Gallery of New South Wales/ A
        Room for the Great Australian Desert*, n.p.

60.   Rachel Whiteread, *House* (1993).
        Concrete with metal armature; dimensions unavailable.
        Damon Hyldreth Sculpture; http://www.damonart.com/myth_uncanny.html

61.   Cai Guo Qiang, *Blue Dragon and Bridge Crossing* (1999).
        Bamboo, rope, rainmaking device, aluminium boat, laser sensors; 600 x 3000 x
        300cm.
        QAG water mall.
        QAGOMA; page: http://qagoma.qld.gov.au/exhibitions/apt/apt_3_%281999%29

62.   Cai Guo Qiang, *Blue Dragon and Bridge Crossing* (1999).
        QAG water mall.
        Bamboo, rope, rainmaking device, aluminium boat, laser sensors; 600 x 3000 x
        300cm.
        QAGOMA; page: http://qagoma.qld.gov.au/exhibitions/apt/apt_3_%281999%29

63.   Yayoi Kusama, *Narcissus Garden* (2002), detail.
        Mirror balls, approximately 2000, each 18cm in diameter; installation,
        dimensions variable.
        QAG water mall.
        Lightstalkers; page: http://www.lightstalkers.org/images/show/197014

64.   Ai Weiwei, *Boomerang* (2006).
        Glass lustres, plated steel, electrical cables, incandescent lamps; 700 x 860 x
        290cm.
        QAG water mall.
        Galerie Urs Meile; page: http://www.galerieursmeile.com/artists/artists/ai-
        weiwei/boomerang-2006-1/workdetail.html

65.		Ayaz Jokhio, *A Thousand and Windows Too…* (2009).
		MDF, wood, aluminium, paint; 600 x 600 x 600cm.
		QAG water mall.
		Image by the author.

66.		Wit Pimkanchanapong, *Cloud* (2009), detail.
		6000 A3 paper sheets, bulldog clips, plastic stoppers, wire; installation,
		dimensions variable.
		GOMA.
		Image by the author.

67.		Charwei Tsai, *Hand Washing Project 1* (2009), detail.
		Video projection in the ground floor bathroom sinks, GOMA.
		Image by the author.

68.		Irene Bryant, *Requiem* (1998), detail.
		Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable
		Scanned from Hansen, 'The TMAG Commissions 1998,' 20.

69.		Patricia Piccinini, *Bottom Feeder* (2009).
		Silicone, fibreglass, animal fur, steel; installation, dimensions variable.
		TMAG zoology diorama.
		TMAG; Patricia Piccinini Education Kit; available:
		http://www.tmag.tas.gov.au/learning_and_discovery/learning_resources/archive

70.		Patricia Piccinini, *The Embrace* (2005).
		Silicone, polyurethane, leather, plywood, human hair, clothing; installation,
		dimensions variable.
		TMAG colonial art gallery.
		TMAG; Patricia Piccinini Education Kit.

71.		Istanbul Modern.
		Image by the author.

72.		Matadero Madrid, interior courtyard.
		Image by the author.

73.		Matadero Madrid, entrance to the refurbished refrigerator room in the former
		slaughterhouse, 'Open X Works,' reserved for site-specific and installation
		artworks.
		Image by the author.

74.		Cockatoo Island.
		Image by the author.

75.		Cockatoo Island, Navy Building exterior.
		Image by the author.

76.   Cockatoo Island, Navy Building interior. One of the rooms left deliberately
        empty by Mike Parr.
        Image by Mike Parr.

77.   Bond Store, TMAG.
        Heritage Tasmania; page: http://www.heritage.tas.gov.au/od10_tmag.html

78.   Seagull carcass in the Navy Building, Cockatoo Island.
        Image by the author.

79.   Mike Parr, *Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi (Democratic Torture)* (2003),
        installation shot.
        Originally performed 2-3 May, 2003, Artspace, NSW.
        DVD projection on suspended screen at Cockatoo Island.
        Aspect Ratio 16:9. Duration 38:03

80.   Installation shot of Mike Parr's *The Tilted Stage*, showing two works:
        left: *Second Body Program* (1975); right: *White* (2002).
        Image by the artist.

81.   Mike Parr, *The Wax Bride* (1998), installed at the Bond Store, TMAG.
        Mixed media; dimensions variable.
        Image by the artist.

82.   Mike Parr, *The Wax Bride* (1998), installed at the AGNSW.
        Mixed media; dimensions variable.
        AGNSW; page: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/23.2001/

83.   Mike Parr, *Cartesian Corpse* (2008).
        Performance/Installation: 2 States.
        State 1 (pictured): *Cartesian Corpse, performance for as long as possible*, 21-22
        November 2008, TMAG.
        Image by the artist

84.   Mike Parr, *Bronze Liars (minus 1 to minus 16)* (1996), installed at the Bond
        Store, TMAG.
        Bronze and beeswax; 16 Pieces, dimensions variable.
        Image by the artist.

85.   Mike Parr, *Bronze Liars (minus 1 to minus 16)* (1996), installed at the AGNSW.
        Bronze and beeswax; 16 Pieces, dimensions variable.
        AGNSW; page: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/564.1996.a-p/

Chapter 3

86.   Installation shot of Roger Ballen's photographs at the 2010 Biennale of Sydney.
        Image by the author

87.		Port Arthur Historic Site.
		Artiology; page: http://artiology.blogspot.com.au/2010/05/time-away.html

88.		*Port Arthur Project* site map showing the distribution of artworks.
		Scanned from Frankham, *Port Arthur Project*, 16.

89.		Brigita Ozolins, *The Truth Shall Make You Free* (2007).
		Lead, steel, timber, glass, paper, pen and ink, voice (Jeff Blake); dimensions
		variable.
		Installed in the Separate Prison Chapel, Port Arthur, as part of the *Port Arthur
		Project*; curated by Noel Frankham and Julia Clark.
		Photo by Bec Tudor.

90.		Anne Ferran, *In the Ground, on the Air* (2006).
		11 Woollen blankets, DVD projection; each blanket approximately 90 x 60 cm.
		Installed in the Watchman's Quarters, Port Arthur, as part of the *Port Arthur
		Project*; curated by Noel Frankham and Julia Clark.
		Photo by Gerrard Dixon.

91.		Fiona Hall, *Breeding Ground* (2007).
		Planted garden bed, 11 painted beehives; installation, dimensions variable.
		Installed in the Trentham Cottage garden, Port Arthur, as part of the *Port Arthur
		Project*; curated by Noel Frankham and Julia Clark.
		Biennale of Sydney; page: http://www.bos17.com/biennale/artist/47

92.		Matt Warren, *Cantus 35* (2007).
		Sound installation.
		Installed in the Sentry Box, Port Arthur, as part of the *Port Arthur Project*;
		curated by Noel Frankham and Julia Clark.
		Photo by Bec Tudor.

93.		Lucia Usmiani, *I had a Wonderful Time* (2007).
		Digital images on card; dimensions variable.
		Installed in the Visitor Centre Gift Shop, Port Arthur, as part of the *Port Arthur
		Project*; curated by Noel Frankham and Julia Clark.
		Photo by the artist.

94.		Lucy Bleach, *Reserved* (2007).
		Bitumen, timber, paint, disc markers, rope, scanned prints of archival landscape
		paintings, interpretive signage frames; 450 x 200 cm.
		Installed on the foreshore lawn, Port Arthur, as part of the *Port Arthur Project*;
		curated by Noel Frankham and Julia Clark.
		Photo by Bec Tudor.

95.		Tracy Cockburn, *Forget Me Not* (2007).
		Laminated digital prints on acrylic; installation, dimensions variable.
		Installed in the asylum museum, Port Arthur, as part of the *Port Arthur Project*;
		curated by Noel Frankham and Julia Clark.
		Photo by Gerrard Dixon.

96.   Vicki West and Lola Greeno, *Premaydena* (2007).
       Woven tea tree (*Leptospermum)* and dodder vine (*Cuscuta*); 10 forms, each
       approximately 150 x 100cm.
       Installed on the central oval, Port Arthur, as part of the *Port Arthur Project*;
       curated by Noel Frankham and Julia Clark.
       Photo by Gerrard Dixon.

97.   Mary Scott, *At Least Three Jugs* (2009).
       Linen, painted jugs, glycol and pigment; installation, dimensions variable.
       Installed at Home Hill, Devonport, as part of *Trust*; curated by Noel Frankham.
       Photo by Gerrard Dixon.

98.   Mary Scott, *Porcelain* (2009).
       Oil on linen; 198 x 154.5 cm each.
       Installed at Home Hill, Devonport, as part of *Trust*; curated by Noel Frankham.
       Photo by Gerrard Dixon.

99.   John Vella, *Poleposition* (2009).
       Polystyrene, medium density fibreboard, dressed pine and plywood; 950 x 130 x
       130cm.
       Installed at Clarendon House, Evandale, as part of *Trust*; curated by Noel
       Frankham.
       Photo by Gerrard Dixon.

100.   John Vella, *Poleposition* (2009).
       Polystyrene, medium density fibreboard, dressed pine and plywood; 950 x 130x
       130cm.
       Installed at Clarendon House, Evandale, as part of *Trust*; curated by Noel
       Frankham.
       Photo by Gerrard Dixon.

101.   Pat Brassington, *Ambush in the Hall* (2009).
       Pigment print; 60 x 43cm.
       Installed at Runnymede, Hobart, as part of *Trust*; curated by Noel Frankham.
       Photo by Gerrard Dixon.

102.   Fred Wilson, *Viewing the Invisible: an Installation by Fred Wilson* (1998).
       Installation made up of objects predominantly from the University of
       Melbourne's art and science collections.
       The Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne.
       Scanned from Kent, 'Artists and Collections', 10.

103.   Fred Wilson, *Viewing the Invisible: an Installation by Fred Wilson* (1998),
       'Greeting Gallery.'
       The Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne.
       Scanned from Kent, 'Artists and Collections', 10.

104. Gordon Bennett, *Performance with Object for the Expectation of Guilt: violence and grief remix* (1997).
Video, television monitor, security monitors and cameras, furniture; installation, dimensions variable.
Installed at Old Parliament House as part of *Archives and the Everyday*; curated by Trevor Smith.
Scanned from Trevor Smith, *Archives and the Everyday* (Braddon, ACT: Canberra Contemporary Artspace, 1997), n.p.

105. Louise Weaver, *Eye-Dream* (1998).
Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
The Ethnographic Gallery, Grainger Museum.
Scanned from Cass, 'Parallax Error', 55.

106. Louise Weaver, *52 Soueux (Aphrodite)* (1998).
Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
The Ethnographic Gallery, Grainger Museum.
Scanned from Cass, 'Parallax Error', 55.

107. Carolyn Eskdale, *Untitled Room 10.98* (1998).
Aluminium and fabric; installation, dimensions variable.
The London Room, Grainger Museum.
Scanned from Cass, 'Parallax Error', 54.

108. Coco Fusco and Guillermo Gómez-Peña, one of their 'the couple in the cage' performances (location unknown).
Thing; page: http://www.thing.net/~cocofusco/video/cage/cage1.htm

109. Louise Weaver, *Moonlight Becomes You (Tawny Owl)* (2005).
Hand-crocheted lamb's wool, high-density foam; dimensions variable.
Installed at the Australian Museum as part of *The Butterfly Effect*; curated by Michael Goldberg.
Michael Goldberg; page:
http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=2005_The_Butterfly_Effect

110. Louise Weaver, *Moonlight Becomes You (I'm a Bandit for Your Love)* (2005).
Hand-crocheted lamb's wool, embroidery thread, felt, synthetic fur, high-density foam, tree branch; installation, dimensions variable.
Installed at the Australian Museum as part of *The Butterfly Effect*; curated by Michael Goldberg.
Michael Goldberg; page:
http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=2005_The_Butterfly_Effect

111. The jaguar diorama in the Hall of North American Mammals, American Museum of Natural History.
Epiconservation; http://epiconservation.wordpress.com/2012/02/13/epic-dioramas-at-the-american-museum-of-natural-history/

112.   Lord Howe Island diorama, Australian Museum.
        Australian Museum; page: http://australianmuseum.net.au/Lord-Howe-Island-
        Diorama

113.   Michele Barker and Anna Munster, *The Two of Us* (2005).
        Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        Installed in the Lord Howe Island diorama, Australian Museum, as part of *The
        Butterfly Effect*; curated by Michael Goldberg.
        Michael Goldberg; page:
        http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=2005_The_Butterfly_Effect

114.   Jackie Dunn, *Untitled (NSW)* (2005).
        Plastic figurines, Agate slice with Cassiterite; dimensions variable.
        Installed at the Australian Museum as part of *The Butterfly Effect*; curated by
        Michael Goldberg.
        Michael Goldberg; page:
        http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=2005_The_Butterfly_Effect

115.   Tom Arthur, *Some Numbers Expressed as Words, Pages 1 & 2* (2005).
        Skeleton cast, bronze figurines, mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        Installed at the Australian Museum as part of *The Butterfly Effect*; curated by
        Michael Goldberg.
        Michael Goldberg; page:
        http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=2005_The_Butterfly_Effect

116.   Tom Arthur, *Some Numbers Expressed as Words, Pages 1 & 2* (2005), detail.
        Skeleton cast, bronze figurines, mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        Installed at the Australian Museum as part of *The Butterfly Effect*; curated by
        Michael Goldberg.
        Michael Goldberg; page:
        http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=2005_The_Butterfly_Effect

117.   Brook Andrew, *NGAJUU NGAAY NGINDUUGIRR* (I See You) (2005).
        Neon; installation, dimensions variable.
        Installed on the western façade of the Australian Museum as part of *The Butterfly
        Effect*; curated by Michael Goldberg.
        Michael Goldberg; page:
        http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=2005_The_Butterfly_Effect

118.   Fiona Hall, *The Barbarians at the Gate* (2010).
        20 bee hives, planting, Trigona Carbonaria hive of Australian non-stinging bees;
        installation, dimensions variable.
        Installed at the Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney, as part of the *17ᵗʰ Biennale of
        Sydney*.
        Photo by the author.

119.   Janet Laurence *WAITING -A Medicinal Garden for Ailing Plants*, (2010), detail.
       Mesh, laboratory glass, acrylic, mirror, several plant species, seeds, water,
       medicinal tubing, salts, minerals, various fluids, organza wrapped botanic
       specimens, rice flour; installation, dimensions variable.
       Installed at the Royal Botanic Garden, Sydney, as part of the *17th Biennale of
       Sydney*.
       Photo by the author.

120.   Palm House, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.
       Michael Goldberg; page:
       http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/projects.php?p=1996_Ground_Zero

121.   Michael Goldberg, *Ground Zero* (1996), installation shot.
       Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
       Installed in the Palm House at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.
       Michael Goldberg; page:
       http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/projects.php?p=1996_Ground_Zero

122.   Michael Goldberg, *Ground Zero* (1996), detail.
       Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
       Installed in the Palm House at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.
       Michael Goldberg; page:
       http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/projects.php?p=1996_Ground_Zero

123.   Debra Phillips, *Untitled* (1999), detail.
       Found objects; installation, dimensions variable.
       Installed in the Palm House at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney, as part of
       Swelter.
       Michael Goldberg; page:
       http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=1999_Swelter

Chapter 4

124.   Hyde Park Barracks, Sydney.
       Wikipedia; page: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:HydeParkBarracks.JPG

125.   Hossein and Angela Valamanesh, *An Gorta Mor (The Great Hunger)* (1999).
       Bronze, sandstone, glass, granite; 300 x 1200 (diameter) cm.
       Installed outside the Hyde Park Barracks.
       Image by the author.

126.   'Ghost stair', Hyde Park Barracks.
       Image by the author.

127.   Heather Dorrough, *Convict Shadows* (1991).
       Painted board; installation, dimensions variable.
       Third floor, Hyde Park Barracks.
       Image by the author.

128.   Anne Ferran, *Secure the Shadow 2* (1995).
        Type C photograph, 86 x 62cm.
        Scanned from Brennan, *Secure the Shadow*, 12.

129.   Anne Ferran *Soft Caps* (1995).
        Silver gelatin photograph; 34.5 x 38cm.
        Scanned from Brennan, *Secure the Shadow*, 11.

130.   Narelle Jubelin, *Collector's Chest* (1994), detail.
        Mixed media; dimensions variable.
        Museum of Sydney.
        Image by the author.

131.   Michael Goldberg, *A Humble Life* (1995), installation shot.
        Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        Cellar, Elizabeth Bay House.
        Michael Goldberg; page:
        http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/projects.php?p=1995_A_Humble_Life

132.   Michael Goldberg, *A Humble Life* (1995), detail.
        Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        Cellar, Elizabeth Bay House.
        Michael Goldberg; page:
        http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/projects.php?p=1995_A_Humble_Life

133.   Michael Goldberg, *A Humble Life* (1995), detail.
        Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        Cellar, Elizabeth Bay House.
        Michael Goldberg; page:
        http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/projects.php?p=1995_A_Humble_Life

134.   Michael Goldberg, *A Humble Life* (1995), detail.
        Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        Cellar, Elizabeth Bay House.
        Michael Goldberg; page:
        http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/projects.php?p=1995_A_Humble_Life

135.   Bonita Ely, *A Home in the Swinging Sixties* (1997).
        Mixed media; installation, dimensions variable.
        Installed in the library, Elizabeth Bay House, as part of *Artists in the House!*;
        curated by Michael Goldberg.
        Michael Goldberg; page:
        http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=1997_Artists_In_The_House

136. Jackie Dunn, *Slip/Cover* (1997).
Calico; installation, dimensions variable.
Installed in the drawing room, Elizabeth Bay House, as part of *Artists in the House!*; curated by Michael Goldberg.
Michael Goldberg; page:
http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=1997_Artists_In_The_House

137. Anne Graham, *The Macleay Women* (1997).
Hair, cast wax; installation, dimensions variable.
Installed in the dining room, Elizabeth Bay House, as part of *Artists in the House!*; curated by Michael Goldberg.
Michael Goldberg; page:
http://www.michaelgoldberg.info/curatorial.php?c=1997_Artists_In_The_House

138. Liu Xiao Xian, *My Other Lives, #7* from the *My Other Lives* series (2000).
Type C photograph; 102.0 x 145.2cm.
NGV; page: http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/col/work/70060

139. Emanuel Phillips Fox, *Landing of Captain Cook at Botany Bay, 1770* (1902).
Oil on canvas; 192.2 x 265.4cm.
NGV; page: http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/col/work/5576

140. Julie Gough, *Chase* (2002).
Tea Tree, cotton, steel, jute; 699.5 x 358.9 x 234cm.
NGV; page: http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/col/work/69406

141. Julie Gough, *Imperial Leather* (1994).
Wax and cotton rope, drawing pins on tie-dyed cotton on composition board;
149.2 x 204.4cm.
NGV; page: http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/col/work/57527

Chapter 5

142. Brook Andrew, *Warrang* (2012).
Animated LED arrow, Australian hardwood with shou-sugi-ban finish,
sandblasted concrete; installation, dimensions variable.
Image by the author.

143. Sam Durant, *This is Freedom?*, *200 Years of White Lies* and *End White Supremacy* (2008).
Illuminated signs installed on the façade of the MCA; dimensions variable.
2008 Biennale of Sydney; page: http://biennale.sitesuite.cn/app/biennale/artist/64

144. Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley, *Edge of the Trees* (1995).
Sandstone, wood, steel, oxides, shells, honey, bones, zinc, glass, sound, 29
pillars; installation, dimensions variable.
Forecourt, Museum of Sydney.
Flickr; http://www.flickr.com/photos/janet_laurence/447745515/in/photostream

145.   Robert Stackhouse, *On the Beach Again* (1984).
Bronze; 16.5 x 915 x 182 cm.
Fujiko Nakaya, *Fog Sculpture* (1976).
Water vapour; dimensions variable.
National Gallery of Australia Sculpture Garden.
NGA; page: http://cs.nga.gov.au/Detail.cfm?IRN=43101

146.   Henry Moore, *Reclining figure: Angles* (1980).
Bronze, green patina; 113.3 x 219.6 x 156.8cm; 10.8cm bronze base.
AGNSW; page: http://www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/6.1981/

147.   Protesters at the "Save our sculpture" rally, August 1980.
Scanned from Wallace, *Peril in the Square*, 82.

148.   Ron Robertson-Swann *Vault* (1980), at its current site outside ACCA.
ACCA; page: http://www.accaonline.org.au/Vault

149.   Brenda Croft, *Wuganmagulya (Farm Cove)* (2000).
Stained concrete, terrazzo; installation, dimensions variable.
Installation along the harbourside pathway, Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.
City of Sydney; page:
http://www.cityofsydney.nsw.gov.au/cityart/resources/PublicArtPolicyStrategyG
uidelines.asp

150.   Hossein and Angela Valamanesh, *An Gorta Mor (The Great Hunger)* (1999).
Bronze, sandstone, glass, granite; 300 x 1200 (diameter) cm.
Installed outside the Hyde Park Barracks.
Image by the author.

151.   Fiona Hall, *A Folly for Mrs Macquarie* (2000).
Sandstone, wrought iron; 575 x 450 x 450cm.
Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery; page:
http://www.roslynoxley9.com.au/artists/17/Fiona_Hall/180/

152.   Fiona Hall, *A Folly for Mrs Macquarie* (2000), detail.
Sandstone, wrought iron; 575 x 450 x 450cm.
Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.
Art and Australia; page:
http://www.artaustralia.com/article.asp?issue_id=19&article_id=38

153.   Kimio Tsuchiya, *Memory is Creation without End* (2000)
Salvaged sandstone blocks; installation, dimensions variable.
Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.
Image by the author.

154.   Museum of Sydney, aerial view showing the paved outline of the old government house footings.
        Photo by Wayne Roddom; page:
        http://www.flickr.com/photos/roddom/153518871/

155.   Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley, *Edge of the Trees* (1995), detail.
        Sandstone, wood, steel, oxides, shells, honey, bones, zinc, glass, sound, 29 pillars; installation, dimensions variable.
        Museum of Sydney.
        Janet Laurence; page: http://www.janetlaurence.com/edge-of-the-trees/

156.   Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley, *Edge of the Trees* (1995), detail.
        Sandstone, wood, steel, oxides, shells, honey, bones, zinc, glass, sound, 29 pillars; installation, dimensions variable.
        Museum of Sydney.
        Image by the author.

157.   Janet Laurence and Fiona Foley, *Edge of the Trees* (1995), detail showing the oxides staining the installation base.
        Sandstone, wood, steel, oxides, shells, honey, bones, zinc, glass, sound, 29 pillars; installation, dimensions variable.
        Museum of Sydney.
        Image by the author.

158.   Achille Simonetti, Governor Phillip fountain (1897), detail.
        Granite and Bronze; dimensions unavailable.
        Royal Botanic Gardens, Sydney.
        Sydney Architecture; page:
        http://www.sydneyarchitecture.com/ROC/QUA14.htm

159.   Michael Nelson, *Possum and Wallaby Dreaming* (1985).
        Mosaic forecourt of Parliament House in Canberra based on Nelson's acrylic painting of the same name.
        http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/media/100504/Forecourt-of-the-Australian-Parliament-House-featuring-the-mosaic-work

160.   Fiona Foley, *Witnessing to Silence* (2004).
        Bronze, laminated ash, stainless steel, water feature, pavement stone.
        Installation outside the Brisbane Magistrates Court.
        http://jayyounger.com/?portfolio=fiona-foley-witnessing-to-silence

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Appendix III:

Museum Acronyms

ACCA   Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (Melbourne)

ACMI   Australian Centre for the Moving Image (Melbourne)

AGSA   Art Gallery of South Australia (Adelaide)

AGNSW   Art Gallery of New South Wales (Sydney)

AMNH   American Museum of Natural History (New York)

GOMA   Gallery of Modern Art (Brisbane)

MASS MoCA Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (North Adams)

MCA   Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney)

MoMA   Museum of Modern Art (New York)

MONA   Museum of Old and New Art (Hobart)

MoS   Museum of Sydney

NGA   National Gallery of Australia (Canberra)

NGV   National Gallery of Victoria (Melbourne)
                    NGV International

NGVA   The Ian Potter Centre: NGV Australia

PICA   Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts

QAG   Queensland Art Gallery (Brisbane)

TMAG   Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (Hobart)

Appendix IV:

List of Publications During Candidature

Writing

2012   'Inflight ARI in Partnership with Queensland Heritage Festival,'
            Artlink 32, no. 4: 82-3.

2012   'Joel Crosswell.' catalogue essay to accompany Joel Crosswell's
            exhibition at Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney.

2011   'Public Art and its Audience,' *Realtime,* 106: 43.

2010   'When the Walls Aren't White: Site-specific Art in Non-Art
            Museums,' *The International Journal of the Inclusive Museum* 3, no. 2:
            121-132 [refereed].

2010   'Sue Lovegrove: The Shape of Wind,' *Artlink* 30, no. 2: 95.

2009   'Unexpected Art,' *Realtime* 91: 17.

2009   'Discord: Art From MONA,' *Artlink* 29, no.1: 86.

2008   *Geometric Nature*. Exhibition catalogue, Devonport Regional Gallery.

2008   'Art When It's At Home,' *Realtime* 85: 54.

2008   'The Road to Here,' *Artlink* 28, no.1: 92.

Conference Papers

2010   'When the Walls aren't White: Site-specific Art in Non-art Museums,'
            2010 International Arts in Society Conference, Sydney.

2010   'When the Walls aren't White: Site-specific Art in Non-art Museums,'
            2010 International Conference on the Inclusive Museum, Istanbul.

2009   'The Significance of Site and Place to the Work of Mike Parr,' *2009
            International Arts in Society Conference*, Venice, Italy.

2009   Panel discussion on exhibiting art in historic sites with Dr Julie Gough
            and Dr Mary Scott, chaired by Dr Deborah Malor. *Colonial Spaces
            Conference*, Centre for Colonialism and its Aftermath, Clarendon
            House, Tasmania.

Curatorial

2008   *Geometric Nature*, Devonport Regional Gallery, Tasmania. Financed by a Tasmanian Emerging Curator Grant.

Exhibitions

2013   *Notice of Proposed Development: 100 Goulburn St, Hobart (Constance ARI)*, Constance ARI.

2009   *Forced Collaboration*, Inflight Gallery. Collaborative exhibition with Sarah Jones. Financed by a Janet Holmes à Court Artists' Grant

Grants and Awards

2012-13   CAST studio recipient, Contemporary Art Spaces Tasmania

2011   Venue Team Leader (May/June), Australia Pavilion, Venice Biennale.

2010   Graduate Scholar Award, *2010 International Arts in Society Conference*.

2010   University of Tasmania Graduate Research Candidate Conference Fund Scheme, to present at the *2010 International Conference on the Inclusive Museum*, Istanbul.

2010   *John Davis: Presence*, review writing award, NGV Australia. Judged by David Hurlston

2009   Janet Holmes à Court Artists' Grant, National Association for the Visual Arts

2009   University of Tasmania Graduate Research Candidate Conference Fund Scheme, to present at the *2009 International Arts in Society Conference*, Venice.

2008-12   Australian Postgraduate Award