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Signing off on the state

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Signing Off on the State

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Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts) 1998

Thesis submitted for the degree of:

Master of Arts (Creative Arts)

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Abstract

This thesis provides a contextual analysis of my creative practice as a visual artist. An overview of the social and historical relationships of the individual in societal organisations, and in relation to what Stuart Hall refers to as tendential lines of force, the dominant structures of religion and the state (Hall, 1996), set the context for a self-reflexive analysis of my practice.

In carrying out a contextual analysis of my practice, it is the intention of this thesis to map a context by which Australian national identity is manufactured. This context is the hegemonic processes that seek to maintain a cultural and political dominance using systems of representation and symbolic power to do so. I have framed this subject against the United Nations as an international body with which the nation-state needs to negotiate.

This thesis draws on the debates surrounding the history wars in Australia under the former Howard government, with particular reference to the Australian War Memorial and the National Museum Australia, and their particular responses to the histories of frontier warfare. The significations of state power on Anzac Day are examined, as are the state embodied mechanisms that have censored the representation of Australia's history. This is supported by a visual register of historical images from the archives of various state libraries depicting frontier violence in Australia over the first 160 years of European settlement.

This thesis is supported by visual documentation of my exhibition *Signing Off on the State* held at the Fremantle Arts Centre in 2005. Seminal texts I have referred to are; Pierre Bordieu's *Language and symbolic power* (1991), Stuart Hall, *Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (1996), Adolpho Sanchez Vazquez *Art and Society: Essays in Marxist aesthetics* (1973), John Connor's *The Australian frontier wars* (2002), and Mckernan and Browne, *Australia – two centuries of war and peace* (1988).

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

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Amanda Allering

Candidate Name

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Introduction and methodology

Signing Off on the State is a creative research project. This thesis is a contextual analysis of my practice and examines the relationship between signification and other representational practices of the state with the construction of an Australian national identity.

From the position of being a fifth generation Australian of Anglo-Scandinavian heritage, this work has been centred on particular cultural practices within Australian society that provoke sociological questions of my own lived experience and its congruency with Australian national identity, and how I identify or contribute to that identity and its associated narratives. I argue that a national identity is a fiction, in as much that it exists as a mediated discourse rather than being a homogenous cultural reality. On what basis is a national narrative constructed and what does it mean in the representative expressions for nation? I ask why some national histories are exclusive and by what criteria is a story – a history – included or excluded in the institutional dissemination of histories. What cultural effect does the exclusion of a history have on those whose history is excluded? I have considered the consequential erasure of other histories within the national rhetoric, other than the dominant histories, and how the privileging and institutionalising of particular national stories might have an impact upon reconciliation and justice issues. Nation, identity and history are intertwined in this aspect, and I have attempted in Chapter 1 to construct a framework around these paradigms from which to contextualise my exhibition of works, *Signing Off on the State*.

In both my practical visual artwork and within this thesis I have selected two opposing narratives to examine how each is positioned and represented within its own supposed significance in mainstream history. Two sites are contrasted, Gallipoli and the Pinjarra massacre site, as they are valued for their particular histories, and the place each is given within a hegemonic national culture is examined.

As a component of this research, *Signing Off on the State* manifested in November 2005 as a visual art exhibition of works locating the two sites which have a history of bloody conflict and hold significance for Australians. Three distinct but contesting groupings of work were presented as a cohesive body within the exhibition under the 'banner' of official narrative.

This exhibition of works came from a reflexive approach to my late discovery of a local history in a familiar landscape; the history of violent frontier relations between Nyungar people of South Western Australia, state officials and police, which was excluded from my education during the 1960s and 1970s. I have attempted to interpret these concerns within the body of work and to provoke an audience response to representations of the landscape through mapping and signification. Visual documentation supports this thesis in Appendix 1 with a register of images depicting frontier conflict drawn mostly from the collections of state libraries.

The point of intersection between these texts is the question of the real and the represented, for national identity is mediated identity. It is spoken and written about, reinforced and reaffirmed at shared cultural events but it can never be inclusive. It is selective and exclusive, leaving other histories in the margins. Symbolic power operates at the core of nationalism and I would argue that there is social gain in widening the net and allowing more stories to have resonance in the national character.

The format of this thesis is that *Chapter 1* sets up a theoretical framework and literature review examining the construction of nation, state and identity. I review some concepts aligned with representation and signifying practices. The former Prime Minister John Howard's 2006 Australia Day speech is used throughout Chapter 1 to frame the various theoretical writings I have drawn on in nation and identity. Howard's speech is almost a textbook case study for the theoretical framework.

Two chapters follow to map the context of my research and practice. *Chapter 2* looks at two institutional responses to frontier warfare, and gives attention to its representation – and lack of representation. It draws reference from the Australian National Museum's 2001 exhibition *Contested Frontiers* held in 2001. The Australian War Memorial is the second institution that looms large as an authoritative museum, heritage listed and given an unparalleled profile by the State as the museum most representative of the nation. The agency of these two museums is addressed as two quite different institutions that have a key role through their collections and educational policy in the telling and retelling of national narratives.

Chapter 3 is an examination of the signification and symbolic ritual of Anzac Day in Australian military commemorations and its role in identity and the nation state through a semiotic analysis. The backbone of the project has been my ritual visual documentation of Anzac Day over seven years and an interest in the growing

momentum of Anzac Day for the Australian public. I have used a sample of images from my photographic and video source material as a visual appendage to this section.

Chapter 4 is a subjective analysis of the *Signing Off on the State* exhibition. This exhibition used the politicised landscapes of Gallipoli and Pinjarra on the Murray River, South Western Australia, to critique an official rhetoric that attempts to construct a stainless and heroic national narrative within Australia's military history. It looked at the visual coding within military signification and how military honors are embedded within the visualisation of national values.

Appendix 1 is a formative register of images that depict frontier conflict, noting their positioning within archives and collections of various state agencies.

Appendix 2 gives an historical account of the Pinjarra Massacre.

Appendix 3 is a social document from a family biography. It is an unpublished poem that is about Australian attitudes to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War.

Introduction:

Reflexivity as a creative methodology

The individual as a node of social relations

Differing theoretical emphasis is placed throughout the thesis as I have taken an interdisciplinary approach to how particular cultural practices are positioned and operate within both a national or civic, and a state context. By attempting to map a context of national identity as a site of contestation, I am referring to the theories of articulation by looking at certain practices and theories as “elements in an articulated structure” (Slack, 1996, p.123) – with the structure of the nation-state as being a concrete reality. Within a cultural studies discourse, the ideological forces that contribute to the shaping of culture and identity are examined. Stuart Hall (1996) and others notably Althusser, (in Hall, 1985), Gramsci (see Mouffe, 1979, p. 193) and Laclau (1985), have largely theorised the idea of 'articulation' as a way of thinking about communication since the 1970s. Hall defines articulation as “the form of the connection that can make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage that is not necessarily determined absolute or essential for all time (..)” (Hall, 1996, p. 141), making the point that the state of play in cultural relations is active, that meaning is not located in the cultural object as much as the social relations into which it is inserted (Grossberg, 1996). Jennifer Daryl Slack writes that “articulation is then, not just a thing (not just a connection), but a process of creating connections, much in the same way that hegemony is not domination but the process of creating and maintaining consensus or of co-coordinating interests” (Slack, 1996, p. 114). By attempting to draw links between certain elements that are relational within the discourse of Australian national identity I am attempting to look at the process involved in the manufacture of national identity. That the discourse of national identity is a site of contestation, is drawn out by a definition of hegemony and the further examination of the nation-state’s practices as being hegemonic. By drawing links between the social and the historical conditions of certain cultural practices, such as Anzac Day and institutional practices within the National Museum Australia (NMA) and the Australian War Memorial (AWM), it is necessary to consider other elements as relational in the discourse of national identity. These elements will be identified throughout chapters 1-3. The social-historical relationships between the individual and the collective, the forces that shape, and the making of history through material practices, are elements in this articulation.

A self-reflexive approach (Giddens, 1992) to my creative practice, beyond the subjective interpretation of my own activities, raises the question of how my personal

experience can be interpreted within the wider field of shared historical and cultural experiences of others. It takes into account how it is positioned in relation to dominant power structures, or where it is placed in relation to the field of cultural / artistic production in which I am engaged. How can I identify certain sets of ideas as being ideological and then either work within or critique them? At what point does my aesthetic experience compromise the ideological function of my work? By attempting to identify the power structures and the codes by which they operate, I hope to be an active agent through my art practice. Taking a wider view of the field of cultural / artistic production and of some artists whose ideas and practices either manifest in opposition to dominant paradigms or are able to critique a social or political practice by using the codes attributed to that practice, is liberating, although censorship intervenes inconsistently. Censorship, as it can be exerted through the agency invested with the power to censor, is a tool dependent on the political climate but self censorship is that moderating force that people use as they become aware of how to negotiate the structures that they act within.

My activities involve a considered response to the world, within my sphere of experience and knowledge, through a contemporary art practice. I define my practice as being devolved from two core and very broad themes; the individual and the collective, and, structures that unite and divide. These two themes are intertwined throughout history in various social and political relationships as have been defined for example by Marx and Engels (1975), and within the texts that constitute the discourses of modernity. These themes are implicit as the realm of the social both defines, and is defined by, religious ideologies or belief systems such as Christianity or even Confucianism and Taoism. In the practical terms of process in art making within my practice, a considered response means that a chosen mode of working, for example printmaking, is appropriated for more than its formal qualities. Certain print processes are imbued with distinct historical points of reference from the origins of the press in Europe from the 15th century. Its role in reproduction and representation with the promulgation of printed material and the sharing of information through this new process fueled the development of modern institutions through central administration (Anderson, 1991). Print processes were later exploited in the 19th and 20th centuries by artists for reasons of political, economic, or cultural reflexivity, for example the montages of Max Ernst or the screen-prints of Andy Warhol. By choosing to exhibit a photograph, I step into a set of relationships that pre-exist in the field of practice and production of photography that will influence the reading, the place and the value of the work. Regardless of my level of awareness of those preconditions, they will influence how the photograph communicates to different audiences. In the same way the

calligraphic mark of the brush to a Chinese audience would speak of the individual collective relationship expressed through the Tao – the philosophy embedded or coded by the mark. As Stuart Hall argues:

There is no such thing as 'photography'; only a diversity of practices and historical situations in which the photographic text is produced, circulated and deployed....and of course, the search for an 'essential, true original meaning is an illusion. No such previously natural moment of true meaning, untouched by the codes and social relations of production and reading, exists. (Hall cited by Grossberg, 1996, p.157)

Within the scope of my practice I have needed to question my reasons for the production of these works and how I think they communicate in an exhibition context. What distinguishes them as artworks rather than historical images? How are aesthetics and taste implied in the production of my work? No work exists in isolation of its maker, its making or its surroundings, or of its own canon - its historical links and modes of production. Some of these questions remain unanswered or the answers lead into discussions that are beyond the scope of this thesis; I think what is important is that they are asked. This is part of the reflexive process and is a necessary ongoing methodology in my practice.

I have attempted to draw on the ideas of subjectivity and objectivity within practice from a broad range of sociological texts. Pierre Bourdieu's (1992) theory on 'habitus' and the 'field' has been particularly useful. He defines habitus as what is almost a 'second nature' - the habits and actions we display that sit slightly below conscious action. Habitus refers to a set of dispositions acquired particularly from childhood through education, family practices, social interactions that affect and effect manners of speech, use of language, the habits of body as well as the acquired tastes and aesthetic judgments influenced by previous cultural experiences and environments, etc. So that underlying all conscious determinations will be certain predispositions. Habitus can also be attributed to a generalised set of behaviours and manners that belong to a class and so are distinct. This has relevance for my research as I try to understand the nature of a reflexive practice, which means reflecting on what has influenced my own social positioning, and being enabled to demystify the symbolic relationships that construct the fields I work within.

The 'field', as Bourdieu defines it, is the set of structured relationships between cultural resources that are the contexts for specific social practices and production, for example, politics, art or history. Quoting Thompson in his introduction to Bourdieu's *Symbolic power* (1990):

Practices should be seen as the product of an encounter between a habitus and a field which are to varying degrees 'compatible' or 'congruent' with another in such a way, that, on occasions when there is a lack of congruence, (e.g. a student from a working-class background who finds himself in an elite establishment), an individual may not know how to act and may literally be lost for words (p. 17).

Reflexivity in social science according to Pierre Bourdieu has a logic of practice we are in danger of misconstruing, "the intellectual bias which entices us to construe the world as a spectacle, as a set of significations to be interpreted rather than as concrete problems to be solved practically" (Wacquant, 1992, p. 39). Bourdieu demands that the individual not only be aware of his or her trajectory but also of the symbolic relationships that define social constructions. Bourdieu insisted that the social and historical influences underpinning the formation of practices be included in systematic analysis of symbolic power, beyond the Saussurean semiotic analysis that offers a closed system of relationship between the signifier and the signified, (speech and language).¹

Bourdieu analyses the social world as fields, spheres of social activity containing various agencies, institutional and individual as contributing to a field of practices. The field of cultural and artistic production would encompass producers and consumers, technicians, educational institutions / art or music academy or schools, facilitators - agents and curators, concert halls and galleries, etc. All fields intersect and overlap other fields. The field of power for example which would contain the practices of politics and the state, drives the policy and budgets for arts related funding bodies such as the Australia Council and determines funding to universities. From within the field of power are individuals who sit as board and council members in cultural institutions, representing the will of the government and exerting that will through censorship, collections and exhibitions policy, and sometimes, curatorial practices.

The field I have identified as the structured object for reflexive analysis within the field of power, the nation-state – has within it a subset of cultural practices that are significations and symbolic relationships in which I am interested. Within the field of the object are the social agents of the nation, all whom recognise the authority of the state and are named by the state as the people of the nation. The ritual practices, the significations, the institutions that are the repositories for objects of national interest, and the symbolic vestiges of language as it is used within political discourse, exist as relational in this field. The concrete problem I have encountered that sits core to the

¹ See Barthes 1968 for a general introduction to the science of signs as determined by Ferdinand Saussure.

work in *Signing Off on the State*, is that of ethnic dominance and injustice to the first Australians in what has been a denial of the factual basis in the conquest of Australia through the ways we recount and narrate history through state institutions. The power of the state to privilege a history, to censor and to use official speech to reinforce the position of authority over a region is made manifest through its institutions, however, it is the moral issue that formal recognition of that history be acknowledged that has encouraged me to pursue this subject. It is the way the state exerts its power and the methods of intervention that can be exerted by agents working in the field of cultural / artistic production that is of interest to me. A useful definition of hegemony by Lawrence Grossberg (1996):

Hegemony (..) defines the limits within which we can struggle, the field of 'common sense' or 'popular consciousness'. It is the struggle to articulate the position of leadership within the social formation, the attempt by the ruling bloc to win for itself the position of leadership across the entire terrain of cultural and political life. Hegemony involves the mobilisation of popular support, by a particular social bloc, for the broad range of its social projects. In this way people ascent to a particular social order, a particular system of power (...) It is a struggle over 'the popular,' a matter of the articulated relations, not only within civil society (which is itself more than culture) but between the state (as a condensed site of power), the economic sector and civil society. (p.162)

Considering then the individual as a node of social relations, and reflexivity as a practice within a field of cultural /artistic production, I have turned to the field of social science for definition. As Anthony Giddens (1992) tells us:

Social science can 'display' that is, give discursive form to – aspects of mutual knowledge which lay actors employ non-discursively in their conduct. The term 'mutual knowledge' covers a diversity of practical techniques of making sense of social activities, the study of which is the task of social science in its own right. (p. 363)

C. Wright Mills (1959) asked these questions in the *Sociological imagination*:

What is the structure of this particular society as a whole? What are its essential components and how are they related to one another? How does it differ from other varieties of social order? Within it, what is the meaning of any particular feature for its continuance and for its change? (..) Where does this society stand in human history? What are the mechanics by which it is changing? What is its place within and its meaning for humanity as a whole? How does any particular feature we are examining affect, and how is it affected by, the historical period in which it moves? And this period – what are its essential features? How does it differ from other periods? What are its characteristic ways of history-making? (p. 6)

Some of these sociological questions are threaded through this thesis because to use reflexivity as a creative methodology there needs to be constant referral to, and a process of engagement with, wider social happenings. Citing Wacquant on Bordieu, Bordieu (1992) argues that, "as long as agents act on the basis of subjectivity that is

the unmediated internalisation of objectivity, they cannot but remain the apparent subjects of actions which have the structure as the subject. A *contrario*, as the more aware they [the individual] become of the social within them by mastering their categories of thought and action, the less likely they are to be actuated by the externality which inhabits them” (p. 49). Self-reflexivity in this sense means that the practitioner is less likely to act arbitrarily or to go along with the unconscious actions that are normalised by the repetitions within the social structure. This is where Bourdieu sees a way forward through the understanding of one’s habitus and one’s interaction with the field.

The discussion, centered on the individual and the universal, forms a central theme of Modernism as debate about how societies were constituted and how they could best function, was linked to progress in science and material culture as well as the development of humanist philosophies. Western philosophical thought during the Renaissance conceptualised the individual as a rational being at the center of the universe. The sovereign individual was “the ‘subject’ of modernity in two senses: the origin or ‘subject’ of reason, knowledge and practice; and the one who bore the consequences of these practices - who was subjected to them” (Foucault, 1986, cited in Hall, 1992, p. 283). As modern societies became more complex sociology developed “(..) an account of how individuals are formed subjectively through their membership of, and participation in, wider social relationships; and conversely, how processes and structures are sustained by the roles individuals play in them (..)” (Hall, 1992, p. 284).

Bryan Turner in *Religion and social theory* writes that, “social action involves knowledge and reflexivity on the part of social actors, a process in which the agent constantly reflects upon the nature of action and its meaningful quality” (Turner, 1991, p. x). He describes religion among many things as a system producing rituals and communal practices that are the binding agents of a communal order. “Religion creates powerful symbols of social life that generate a powerful experience of social membership” (Turner, 1991, p. xi). It is one of the intervening forces that in part, structure society and historically has been a powerful ideological force in determining the production of cultural artifacts, “In the absence of conventional, overtly religious beliefs common to all sections of society, sociologists have focused on rituals, ceremonies and national practices as the binding force for industrial societies as elements of social integration” (Turner, 1991, p. 58).

Critical analysis of the modernist project features further discussion about the individual and the collective, or the universal, arguing that de-centered relationships as opposed

to a cohesive set of ideas underpin our societal organisations. Throughout this thesis I refer to the development of ideas that originated from a utopian vision of a collective collaborative culture and formed the basis of the unifying tenets of national identities.

The privileging of either the individual or the collective has historically been subject to particular religious or ideological systems, to suit specific agendas that are in a constant process of change, and it is the economic base that determines which dimension of the social structure will be dominant, religion, politics, ideology, etc.

Civic organization during medieval times was developed through the formation of guilds, both merchant and craft that were closely linked to civic government through membership. Art and craft was in service to the church, and the artist / crafts-man and art / craft itself had a very particular social role. The signification of Christianity and the gospel was embodied in architecture, and in the Christian narratives illustrated in frescoes, paintings and manuscripts as Christianity was declared the official religion of the Roman Empire in 1313 (Beckwith, 1964, p. 9). The collaborative nature of the medieval guilds ensured the work safety of the individuals within a group, had a developed set of trade practices and performed charitable works and public service underpinned by the ideology of the church. Individually the craftsperson had little power, but as a group, crafts-men were able to have extraordinary power. Later in the renaissance, with developments in science and humanist philosophies and the domination over nature with the beginnings of industrialisation, humankind was able to exert more control over the environment and rely less on supernatural belief. The role of the producer of cultural artifacts changed, and this kind of individual experienced a new status. Within a humanist, rational philosophy, the artist / craftsperson could be positioned to impart new knowledge to the collective and yet “the humanist emphasis was firmly placed upon social groups, and the way in which the group itself should determine about which cultural direction is taken” (Crouch, 1999, p. 13). This new knowledge that could be imparted to the collective, within collaboration, forms the ideological crux of the Modernist movement. Scientific invention and discovery, industrial architecture that utilised new materials and processes and subsequent technological inventions such as photography, directed artists and designers to search for new forms with new meaning. Raymond Williams' cited in Hall (1992) summarises:

The notion of individuality, in the modern sense, can be related to the break-up of the medieval social, economic and religious order. In the general movement against feudalism there was a new stress on man's personal existence over and above his place in a hierarchical society. There was a related stress, in Protestantism, on a man's direct and individual relation to God as opposed to this relation mediated by the Church. But it was not until the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that a new mode of analysis, in logic and

mathematics, postulated the individual as the substantial entity from which other categories and especially collective categories were derived. (p. 283)

The debate about the social role of art has historically drawn upon the theories of Marx. Adolpho Sanchez Vazquez in his essays on Marxist aesthetics outlines the relationship between art and society according to Marx:

Art itself is a social phenomenon: first because the artist, however unique his primary experience might be, is a social being; second, because his work, however deeply marked by his primary experience and however unique and unrepeatable its objectification or form might be is always a bridge, a connecting link between the artist and other members of society; third, because a work of art affects other people - it contributes to the reaffirmation or devaluation of their ideas, goals or values - and is a social force which, with its emotional or ideological weight, shakes or moves people. (Vazquez, 1973, pp.112-113)

Anthony Giddens provides a critical engagement on the individual existing within a Western contemporary context. He outlines the complexity of personal identity bound by the mechanisms of power promulgated by the media. He discusses the shift from the individual existing within the traditional environment where issues of kinship and daily life have been superseded by new social and economic pressures. Giddens further provides a model of 'reflexivity' where the individual is a reflexive being determined by particular external influences:

Modernity must be understood on an institutional level; yet the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with individual life and therefore with the self. One of the distinctive features of modernity, in fact is an increasing interconnection between the two 'extremes' of extensionality and intentionality: globalising influences on the one hand and personal dispositions on the other. (Giddens, 1991, p. 1)

The sets of ideas that underpin and drive the representative practices, including the collections and operations of institutions such as the Australian War Memorial (AWM) the National Museum Australia (NMA), and the National Gallery Australia (NGA), reveals the mechanism of both a political agenda and the facilitation of contemporary cultural concerns. The tension that exists between 'personal dispositions', individual and cultural identities and the institution that is funded by the state, gains exposure at those times a controversial exhibit slips through the censoring net of the council. This has been demonstrated by the AWM's refusal to mount an exhibition that might deal with frontier conflict during the first 100 years of settlement.² In 1999 the NGA backed out of hosting the planned Saatchi exhibition *Sensation* after it caused controversy at the Brooklyn Museum of Art because of an unholy depiction of the Virgin Mary by Chris Ofili, and in 1997 the National Gallery Victoria closed the Andres Serrano's

² An example of this is given in chapter 3.

retrospective because of offense taken to the *Piss Christ* photograph.³ A reflexive consideration of the public and political will is a necessary function of the museum.

No individual exists in isolation. Recipricocity exists in communication. Vazquez outlines the nature of the individual artist and society as that of the artist “searching for a means of expression to make communication possible” (1973, p. 119). If I am to see myself as a communicator – communicating as a response to my experience and interaction with the world self reflexively debating my position as a human 'unit', then I need to be subjectively objective. That is I must find a balance between content and form. Stuart Hall frames this idea theorising that “the nature of the disposition of social positionality within social structures will necessarily touch on questions larger than our own personal experiences while never letting go of the subjective dimension” (Hall, 1996, p. 402).

The reality of the Australian nation today is that it is composed of heterogeneous cultural groups, and was so even before colonial invasion. The demographic reality of Australia at the 2006 census showed that net overseas migration (NOM), since 1998, has been adding to the population faster than natural growth by birth. Population growth of 46% over 2005 - 2006, was attributed to overseas migrants.⁴

Anne Zahalka is amongst the many notable individual artists working with ideas in the political or 'culture' fields who express themselves against oppositional structures. For example her photographic portraits explore individual and collective / cultural identities and situate them in contexts that question notions of representation. In both her series *Scenes from the shire* and *Bondi: playground of the Pacific* she subverts the Australian beach stereotype. Picturing three Muslim women dressed in modest beach wear burqinis at Cronulla, she positions Muslim identities on the beach in *Girls #2* as a response to the Cronulla riots. In the *Bondi* series she remakes Max Dupain's *Sunbaker* (1937) and Charles Meere's *Australian beach pattern* (1940) at a time when “we were questioning the dominant images of the nation (...) I wanted to rewrite these to reflect a more culturally diverse and balanced idea of its community” (Zahalka, 2002). In *Welcome to Sydney 2002* commissioned by the Sydney Airport, Zahalka's subjects are from the migrant communities of Sydney. Some are dressed in traditional

³ See Nicholls and Phillips article on the *Sensation* exhibition.

<http://www.wsws.org/articles/1999/dec1999/sens-d29.html>

See private members statements, Mr Robert Harrison commenting on the Piss Chris photograph in the NSW parliament.

<http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/prod/parlment/HansArt.nsf/V3Key/LA19971014024>

⁴ <http://www.census.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS>

dress but all are pictured against various and many familiar landscape around Sydney. Zahalka hoped “(..) That the audience would respond to the people as individuals who have different ethnic backgrounds, to the fact that each one brings with them the cultural and symbolic belongings that are part of who they are (..)” (2002, p. 43).

If I were to articulate the deepest emotive issue that underpins my art practice, it would be a sincere desire for world peace and social justice for all people or at least the desire for a more secure world where human values are not compromised. It is the grandest (and very utopian) ideal left in the face of potential threat from the many divided political and ideological entities that expend much wealth on the production of arms and modern military technology. What unites and divides people? History has illustrated what forces can unite people and that often the greatest solidarity among people follows adversity, calamity or opposition. The notion that difference on the one hand enhances existence, but is largely the cause of conflict on the other, is a fundamental premise if you look at the natural order of things, However in the realm of human affairs spanning political cultural and social life it is perception that is the protagonist of conflict because of difference. That is, the perception of difference or of identities through culturally constructed values.

The first ideas of universalism were a consequence of developments within science and industrialisation from early modernity that were considered to hold the potential for human development and emancipation, captured by the idea that a common set of values would underlie aspirations and developments in science and design, industry and architecture.

Hall (1996) frames this sociological premise; “where no human experience can sit outside of culture and all cultures are marked by differences, it could seem that the very institutions of modernism provide contradictions that both unite and divide people” (p. 245).

In this section I have explained my methodology as being a reflexive process and have identified myself as working within the field of cultural / artistic production. I have identified the sociological theoretical framework that analyses the relationship of the individual to the collective and given an introduction to the idea that art is a social phenomenon.



Zahalka, A. (2007) *The Girls#2 Cronulla Beach*, type C photograph, 74 x 90 cm.
Permission to reproduce image courtesy of the artist and of Roslyn Oxley 9 Gallery.

CHAPTER 1.

On nation, state and representation

Nation

This chapter aims to establish some of the broad paradigms that exist regarding nation, state and national identity in order to set up a framework as a key and guide to interpreting the case studies to follow of *Anzac Day* and *Institutional responses to frontier warfare*. This section attempts to map the context that articulates the processes at work in constructing a national identity. It is also the intention to map the context of the produced artworks in *Signing Off on the State*. Politics and the state are situated in the field of power and by identifying them as such, the relational aspects between that field and the artist as practitioner operating in a particular way within the field of cultural / artistic production can start to be addressed.

I establish some definitions of nation and state that apply generally to the modern nation, which exists in varieties of forms according to particular historical conditions, and I attempt to make a distinction between the discourse of national identity and that of cultural identities. To make sense of how a national identity is informed, a short review of the theoretical framework underlying signifying practices and cultural representations are key to understanding the function of discourse in constructing national identity. I have used excerpts from the former Prime Minister John Howard's speeches throughout as examples of the symbolic power exerted through mediation and acts of official speech, in an attempt to establish the particularities of a hegemonic Australian national identity. It is because Australian national identity under the former Howard government was a central theme in much of the political speech and symbolic actions expressed over their 11-year term, that I have privileged that political era throughout the thesis.

Definitions of nation

Ernest Gellner posed these two points for discussion in *Nations and nationalism* to describe the meaning of nation by the mutual obligations and responsibilities that exist for people that have recognised this duty to each other as a consequence.

1. Two [men] are of the same nation if and only if they share the same culture, where culture in turn means a system of ideas and signs and associations and ways of behaving and communicating.
2. Two [men] are of the same nation if and only if they recognise each other as belonging to the same nation. In other words, nations maketh man; nations are the artifacts of [men's] convictions, loyalties and solidarities (1992, p. 134).

John Howard in his Australia Day speech of 2006 authorised the part expectations of the state toward new Australians:

(..) It would however be a crushing mistake to downplay the hopes and the expectations of our national family. We expect all who come here to make an overriding commitment to Australia, its laws and its democratic values. We expect them to master the common language of English and we will help them to do so. We want them to learn about our history and heritage. And we expect each unique individual who joins our national journey to enrich it with their loyalty and their patriotism. (..) (2006)

Nation has an essentially racist character. To use Gellner's definition of the Australian nation soon after Federation it becomes obvious that in a reality this definition could not be applied to the entire Australian society. The concept of nation can only exist in the minds of people who accept the relationship they have with the body politic. Australian Indigenous peoples were excluded from participating in the political life of the nation as legitimate citizens. Federation was representative of the amalgamation of states, and presumed an identity based on common language and law. In 1834, the year of the Pinjarra Massacre and 66 years before Federation, the alterity of colonialism as a product of European culture and identity was firmly transplanted with the establishment of a British colony. Colonialism, and its imperial racism, was constructed on a biological principle that difference was fundamentally related to skin colour. According to Hardt, "colonialism homogenises real social differences, by creating one overriding opposition that pushes differences to the absolute and then subsumes the oppositions under the identity of European civilization. Reality is not dialectical, colonialism is" (Hardt and Negri, 2001, p. 129). Rigoberta Menchú Tum, Guatemalan Indigenous Leader and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate quoted from the 2001 NGO World conference on racism: "Racism has historically been a banner to justify the enterprises of expansion, conquest, colonization and domination and has walked hand in hand with intolerance, injustice and violence (UN, 2001).

It is important to understand the origins of attitude and thought that have preceded the nation-state. As John Howard further authorised in his Australia Day address in 2006:

(..)Part of preparing young Australians to be informed and active citizens is to teach them the central currents of our nation's development. The subject matter should include indigenous history as part of the whole national inheritance. It should also cover the great and enduring heritage of western civilization, those nations that became the major tributaries of European settlement and in turn a sense of the original ways in which Australians from diverse backgrounds have created our own distinct history. It is impossible, for example, to understand the history of this country without an understanding of the evolution of parliamentary democracy or the ideas that galvanised the Enlightenment (..)

To paraphrase Hardt, the celebration of difference during the Renaissance was a utopian element of globalisation that preceded colonialism and was in practice at odds with the totalising forces of imperialism and racist domination. Paul Gilroy makes distinction between biological racism and the kind of nationalist racism that developed during the last century based on cultural difference (Hall, 1992, p. 298). Despite Australia's changing demographic population and the official attitudes to multi-culture that have accompanied these changes over the last several decades, there is at the core of state national ideology a mechanism that ensures the "eclipse of internal differences through the representation of the whole population by a hegemonic group, race or class" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 103).

The mechanism that ensures the "eclipse of differences" is the ethnic core of nationhood. Anthony Smith in the *Origins of nations* emphasises the ethnic foundations of the nation-state; "Nations must possess a common history and culture, common myths of origin and descent, common memories and common symbols of culture. Otherwise we would only be speaking of territorial states" (2001, p. 341). Ethnic homogeneity on a national scale is generally an illusion. If language as well as kinship and the sharing of land and religion are the basis for ethnicity, then with approximately 6,500 languages extant around the globe how could every linguistic community be a nation-state? (Smith, 2001, p. 7).

Benedict Anderson defines the concept of nation as an imagined, limited and sovereign community. Imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never really know each other, yet by mediation and the naming of nation, the continual call to identify certain named characteristics is an unreality when the cultural diversity within a nation is thought about (1991, p. 7).

Pierre Bourdieu's (1991) analysis of performative rituals and symbolic acts of power emphasises the reciprocity necessary between the subject act of recognition and the delegation of legitimate authority. This social condition necessary for the symbolic power of the speech to be enabled is the mechanism that allows a nation to recognize itself as a nation.

State

The term 'mankind' or humanity implies a vague kind of collective that fundamentally refers to a single biological species who live on the planet and yet the anthropological nature of the nation, the nation-state, groups people politically and then these subjects

are considered basic political entities linked by power rather than cultural and ethical existences.

A nation-state exists because of the will of the people who in turn become the people through the actions of the State. "Although 'the people' is posed as the originary basis of the nation, the modern concept of the people is in fact a product of the nation-state and survives only within its specific ideological context" (Hardt and Negri, 2001, p.103). In *Empire* Hardt and Negri define the difference between a concept of 'the people' and 'the multitude': the former is a politicised body that provides "a single will and action that is independent of and often in conflict with the various wills and actions of the multitude. Every nation must make the multitude into a people" (2001, p. 103).⁵

Gellner's definition of the state as "the political roof over the nation" is a simple enough analogy to express that the nation state is a bounded territory with a national economy and a national culture (cited in Hall, 1999, p. 36). John Howard's Australia Day speech in 2006 extends his legitimate right to speak authoritatively as one of the delegates with the most symbolic capital. As Bordieu (1991) points out, the symbolic power of the speech itself, given by the delegate who has authority to act as well as speak, can still have power even without understanding by the listener but by virtue of a recognition of his legitimate social position. The social position of the representative to the represented fulfills one of the essential conditions of a successful performative ritual such as a political speech. Howard is affirming that it is consensus that contributes to the making of a nation on Australia Day 2006:

(..)Australia's ethnic diversity is one of the enduring strengths of our nation. Yet our celebration of diversity must not be at the expense of the common values that bind us together as one people – respect for the freedom and dignity of the individual, a commitment to the rule of law, the equality of men and women and a spirit of egalitarianism that embraces tolerance, fair play and compassion for those in need. Nor should it be at the expense of ongoing pride in what are commonly regarded as the values, traditions and accomplishments of the old Australia. A sense of shared values is our social cement. Without it we risk becoming a society governed by coercion rather than consent. That is not an Australia any of us would want to live in. So tomorrow let us indeed celebrate our diversity. But we should also affirm the sentiment that propelled our nation to Federation 105 years ago – one People, One Destiny (..). (2006)

Consensus is more likely from the dominant group than the dominated groups. The sentiment that propelled the nation at Federation did not allow women or Indigenous Australians to vote. It legitimised the sentiment – one people, as white Australians

⁵ Hardt and Negri give the historical origins of modern nation-state to the French revolution, citing the writings of Sieyes where he linked the concept of nation to the bourgeoisie and summarised that "the nation became explicitly the concept that summarised the bourgeoisie hegemonic solution to the problem of sovereignty".

through policy, acts of speech, slogans and images. It ensured that any attempt by 'others' to be part of the group – as citizens with rights, (including the human right to refuse assimilation) has been a site of continuous struggle. The struggle has been played out within all spheres of public life where identity is at stake, for example during bicentenary events, on January 26 Australia Days', and in the museums.

Bordieu asserts that the principle of classification works at the base of instituted relationships such as nation and religion to construct dominant groups based on certain distinctive properties that characterise the members of the group. Properties such as gender, language, race or ethnicity can be annulled and subsumed by the process (1991, p. 130). A public ritual such as what occurs on Anzac Day is a process that enables and binds the people in an act of complicity to the body politic, giving legitimacy to the nation-state. This ritual is effective by its ability to enclose a set of actions to outside referent, by the normalisation and repetition that characterises it. There is no need to think outside of the ritual but to experience and perform it. Anzac Day, through its rites, signifies where power and hierarchy reside in the societal organisation of the nation-state. It is a performance that makes all who attend or watch, complicit, even if not 100% consenting. Its institution and consensus has so strengthened that any struggle that takes place on Anzac Day will be barely visible. McKenna asserts that "the Anzac myth has expanded to the point where it has become one of the most important binding agents of our community, many people feel that to criticise Anzac is to criticise Australia" (McKenna, 2009).

The state as a political entity, a regulatory body, according to Gellner "is that institution or set of institutions specifically concerned with the enforcement of order" (1992, p.133). He cites Weber who defined the state "as that agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence. Violence can only be applied by the central political authority, and those to whom it delegates this right" (1992, p.132). This power although not enacted is made visible on Anzac Day by the symbolic presence of the uniformed police and armed forces in a structured and an ordered sequence of events.

In Howard's 2005 address to the UN he affirmed, "The nation-state remains the focus of legitimate action for order and justice in our world" (Howard, 2005). The nation as it is positioned in global context is beyond the scope of this text, however, to touch on how the nation has been written about in an increasing globalised world has some relevance because, in spite of the weakening sovereignty of the nation in an international context, it remains a powerful local agency for cultural diversity. The

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) made a Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity in 2002 to uphold the diversity of culture from the threat of standardisation because of globalisation. Yet ironically, within the hegemony of a nation-state, there is still tendency to subsume and assimilate cultural identities, unity in diversity, as long as it remains in the food halls, or at the rear of the Anzac Day parade. Diversity is acceptable as long as it does not interfere with the rites of representation as expressed by the state in particular institutional practices. It is the discussion of cultural diversity that has relevance to national identity and is intrinsic to the social justices of seeking fair representation of history, particularly for oppressed groups and indigenous cultures. It is through the most recent 'culture wars' that began during the 1990s with the Howard government's attempts to control through funding and influence on councils and boards of the country's major museums that Australian national identity became the focal point for much of John Howard's rhetoric on national identity while in term. As Mark McKenna writes about the rise of patriotism in Australia since the 1990s he notes:

Increasingly, Australian society is characterised by the culture of public display: of patriotism and allegiance, of faith and of wealth. The art of modern political leadership is to cast the nation's image, past and present, in that of the leader's political philosophy, to make party political language and the vernacular of national imagining blend so seamlessly that the only alternative is re-election. Howard has largely succeeded in defining the nation in the image of Australian liberalism: individual freedom, never-ending prosperity and uncritical nationalism. Pride and achievement are his watchwords. (McKenna, 2009)

Australia as a nation-state continues to weaken its sovereignty as part of the global community. The yielding of national sovereignty to global forces and the particular negotiations between governments must surely erode the democratic rights and power of individuals in the national context. The reflexive capability of a government to exercise its democratic character and maintain the unity and balance is the determining factor of maintaining the popular will of the national citizen. International bodies of jurisdiction such as the United Nations (UN) hold the balance of power along with economic bodies such as the World Trade Organisation (WTO), World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), but super alliances such as the USA, with Britain and Australia, can disregard the veto process between the five key members of the UN as in the case of the decision to invade Iraq in 2002 (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 336). Inter-connectedness of nations is self-evident; we do not exist in isolation. That moment when "(...) nearly all the worlds territories could be parceled out and the entire world map could be coded in European colours: Red for British territory, blue for French, green for Portuguese and so forth has passed" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. X11). Developing a strong national culture offers what would seem security for citizens

but demands loyalty in return. It would seem an imperative strategy for the state through its representative practices. As Australian governments involve Australian citizens in international war zones, a suitable rhetoric is required to keep the balance of unity between state and nation.⁶

The symbolism and ritual of a national event such as Anzac Day serves a powerful political function to engage citizens in a rite of state where the reaffirmation of solidarity within a shared national culture can be played out. Anzac Day has been gaining momentum over the last decade, drawing greater numbers of an increasing ethnically diverse Australian public. Its status according to the former PM John Howard, as Australia's most important national event has reached a peak in recent years with record numbers attending Dawn Services and Anzac Day Parades, the inclusion of the AWM as part of the National Heritage register and the increased pilgrimages to Gallipoli by Australian youth. Howard even nominated Anzac Cove be made part of Australia's national heritage in 2005. Statistics on attendance at the AWM on Anzac Days between 1999 and 2008 show an increase from 22,000 in 1999, to 50,000 in 2008. Numbers increased by 10,000 between 2004 and 2005.⁷

Mark McKenna argues that Howard's strategic motivation behind his nationalistic fervor was to ensure public support for Australia's involvement in military operations in Iraq, and cites Anzac Day as "a day that obscures the politics of war and discourages political dissent" (2009):

(...)One of the untold stories surrounding Anzac Day is the manner in which it has served to silence dissent over the Iraq war. As anthropologist Bruce Kapferer remarked last year, Anzac Day is now entrenched as a "symbolic extension of state authority". Regardless of which political party is in power, the issues involved raise important questions regarding the politics of Australia's military engagements, the use and abuse of military history and the future of our national identity. (McKenna, 2009)

The nation as an organised structure exists as a regulatory body between the flows of global forces that affect sovereignty, such as trade and international labour. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri write that the nation-state today serves many functions, "political mediation with respect to the global hegemonic powers, bargaining with respect to transnational corporations, and redistribution of income according to the biopolitical needs within their own limited territories. Nation states are the filters of global circulation and regulators of global command" (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 310).

⁶ Since Australia's involvement in Iraq, the government has introduced a number of initiatives to educate children about Anzac Day including the Anzac youth award initiated by the WA Government.

⁷ <http://www.awm.gov.au>

The Australian nation-state functions and negotiates in various contexts and relationships, perhaps the three most influential being its memberships with the UN, the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (ANZUS), and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). It is in the context of Australia's relationship with ANZUS that Howard told the National Press Club in explanation of his position on Iraq: "You either stay or you go ... you either rat on the ally or you don't" (McKenna, 2009).

It stands to reason that the nation state uses representational practices as a stabilizing mechanism against the loss of national sovereignty. Stuart Hall writes, "The nation was never just a political entity – it was always a symbolic formation – a system of representation – which produced an 'idea' of the nation as an imagined community" (Hall, 1999, p. 38). It reproduces itself through signs, language and its institutions.

Hall selects five main representational strategies that are used to construct identity by producing meanings by which we can identify:

- Firstly the narrative of the nation as it is told and retold in national histories, literatures, the media and popular culture, these provide a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals which stand for, or represent, the shared experiences, sorrows, triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation;
- The emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness;
- The invention of tradition;
- The foundational myth;
- The symbolic grounding of the idea of pure, original people, or folk. (1992, pp. 293-295)

The notion of Australia's discovery by Captain Cook in 1770 and the founding and settlement of white Australia seventeen years later in 1788 by Arthur Phillip is Australia's foundational myth and has been continually re-presented and signified to reinforce the powerful link that the Australian nation has with its Anglo-Saxon heritage. Authoritative representations as iconic imagery on coins and stamps, the many monuments of British Monarchy, explorers and states-men positioned in prominent capital locations, the investment of the myth within the state education curriculums, all conspire to cement the idea of the Australian nation with its British origins and values, a hegemonic state through its visual representations. The symbolic events enacted in full scale during the bicentenary celebrations in Sydney on January 26th 1988 created a moment of consensus building (Smith, 2001, p. 635) and a grand public display of national culture. The key event was a re-enactment of the arrival of the tall ships as the first fleet into Port Jackson and the re-enactment of the founding act by Governor Arthur Phillip in the presence of Prince Charles. Again, Howard states on January 26:

Most nations experience some level of cultural diversity while also having a dominant cultural pattern running through them. In Australia's case, that dominant pattern comprises Judeo-Christian ethics, the progressive spirit of the Enlightenment and the institutions and values of British political culture. Its democratic and egalitarian temper also bears the imprint of distinct Irish and non-conformist traditions. (Howard, 2006)

The Anzac myth is the second powerful narrative. Ritualised and combined with Judeo-Christian religious tradition, the commemoration of lives lost in WW1 practiced each Anzac Day on April 25 functions to promote a collective experience for Australians. It presents the foundational myth as the landing of troops at Anzac Cove, the emphasis on origins, continuity, tradition and timelessness. The values pertaining to the digger as uniquely Australian values, those including mateship, fairness, courage, humour and decency, are applied as the benchmark within the rhetoric of what is named 'Australian' and now what has been named 'un-Australian' values and behaviors'. The AWM is the key institution safeguarding the foundational myth, which is expressed through the many symbolic representations of the AWM and within its collections. Through these representative practices, visual significations and discourse, the national narrative becomes a prominent feature in the construction of a national identity with nationalist sentiment the emotional glue that creates patriotism.

The state asserts the history of the nation at and in war and warlike conditions through the AWM, through the war memorials in all states and on Anzac Day. The war memorials play a strong part in forming the dominant pattern that Howard referred to and are expressed through the Australian urban landscape in discrete forms and representations as public monuments. Memorials, whether representing men and women who served in wartime, the fallen, British aristocracy, or British and European explorers, are all historical markers plotted throughout the landscape in positions of prominence, signifying and asserting a history of the nation.

In the circumstances of a rapidly changing demographic and with globalising forces that transform and extend the possibilities of daily interactions (political, economic and social) beyond the geographic boundaries of Australia, the nation-state remains fixed and timeless by its visual significations. The Australian nation-state continues to define itself through official imagery and narrate an exclusive history that maintains a thread of continuity from its origins as a British colony. Defining and particular historical moments such as the battles of WW1 in Gallipoli and France lay claim to the development of a national identity that lives on through narrative, the Anzac ritual and military insignia. Australia's demographic population is represented under the signs and symbols of a hegemonic state. The nation as an imagined community, promulgated

through signs, speech and iconography, mediated through text and media in the interest of creating an official and representative umbrella culture, is the hallmark of the nation-state. These signifying practices are the essential elements in attempting a social identification with the state within a large nation. The sign for example, of the kangaroo and emu holding a shield representing the six Australian states with a spray of wattle behind the shield, the coat of arms expressed by the cross of St Andrew and the imperial lion, represents the Australian nation-state and signifies authority. It is recognised as official within a social context, it is unlawful to denigrate it. It offers a historical context of conquest by colonial Britain through its depiction on the shield of the golden lion and the cross of St Andrew and was issued by King George the V in 1912. As a sign, its primary meaning is to be a symbol of the state. What it signifies through its combined imagery of Australian flora and fauna combined with symbols of the British monarchy is that Australia still identifies with its colonial origins.

On representation and identity

Under the umbrella of representation, a number of theories and practices are at work and merge or overlap between fields such as that of cultural / art production, the political field (power), the field of history, which may include subsets of museology, media and advertising etc.

Ferdinand Saussure's semiology (see Barthes, 1968) is useful to decode and understand signification and the structured relationship between language and speech, or the signifier and the signified, but it is limited in its scope to draw on the social and historical conditions of an object for a fuller meaning of the relationship it seeks to explain. Beyond Saussure and his preoccupation with language as the primary object of communication, Barthes (1968) makes an important distinction between linguistics and semiology:

(..) Language, larger fragments of discourse referring to objects or episodes whose meaning underlies language, but can never exist independently of it. Semiology is perhaps destined to be absorbed into trans-linguistics, the materials which may be myth, narrative, journalism, or on the other hand objects of our civilisation, in so far as they are spoken through press, prospectus, interview, conversation, and perhaps even the inner language, which is ruled by the laws of the imagination,..To be precise, it is that part covering the great signifying unities of discourse. By this inversion we may expect to bring to the light of unity of the research at present being done in anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis and stylistics around the concept of signification. (p. 2)

A discourse revolves around a specialised knowledge. Within the discourse of art production and consumption, material realities concerned with the production of a

work, such as the artist's studio, the agency involved in a work's display, its publicity and funding, have severed the link that art history had with aesthetics and widened the knowledge and the way we can talk about art production (Bennett, 2005). As introduced earlier, the contextual relationship and attributed meaning to practice or objects created, for example, by photography or painting will be further articulated by particular institutional positioning. Stuart Hall explains that subsequent developments in constructionism theory became more concerned with "representation as a source of knowledge for the production of social knowledge, a more open system, connected in more intimate ways with social practices and questions of power" (Hall, 1999, p. 42). Embedded within each photograph, painting or sculpture are cultural codes that have the potential to explain according to its historical positioning, the mode of production relative to scientific knowledge, class or values within the given society and to reveal cultural nuances that are shared and particular to a cultural group. The positioning of various agencies and institutions within the structures of the state will impact to a degree upon the aesthetic or material value of the object. An example – the artwork known as *The Aboriginal Memorial*, commissioned by the bicentennial committee for the bicentennial year 1988 and conceived after the commission, is an installation of 200 hollow log bone coffins now installed as a permanent exhibit in the National Gallery of Australia (NGA). The hollow logs have been produced by the Ramingining artists of east Arnhem Land as rich works that not only draw on traditional culture but also symbolise coffins. Djon Mundine, who worked as Arts Advisor at the Ramingining Arts centre between 1980-1994 describes *the Aboriginal Memorial*:

(...) Originally being living trees, the installation is like a forest an Aboriginal artistic version of the forest and landscape. In the original ceremony each Pole would contain the bones of deceased people, embodying the soul. Each tree in this new forest would contain symbolically the spirit of a deceased person. The forest, the environment is us; we are the environment. Each Hollow log is ceremonially a Bone Coffin so in essence the forest is really like a large cemetery of dead Aboriginals, a war cemetery, a war memorial to all those Aboriginals who died defending their country. Two hundred poles were commissioned to represent the two hundred years of white contact and black agony. (Smith, 2001, p. 657)

Their production and installation at the Sydney Wharf during the bicentenary celebrations was a critical intervention of the celebratory nature of the events. The NGA purchased the work and in a unique contract with the Ramingining collective agreed that the work would be on permanent display.

Foucault's theories about representation are beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is useful to attempt to understand 'discourse' and 'discursive formation' as Foucault used the terms. "Discourse constructs the topic, it defines and produces the objects of our

knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others” (Hall, 1999, p. 44). As Hall further asserts:

(..)Discourse Foucault argued never consists of one statement, one text, one action or one source. The same discourse, characteristic of the way of thinking, or the state of knowledge at any one time (what Foucault called the epistome) will appear across a range of texts, and as forms of conduct at a number of different institutional sites within society. However, when these discursive events ‘refer to the same object, share the same style and...support a strategy...a common institutional, administrative or political drift and pattern (Cousins and Hussain, 1984, pp. 84-5) then they are said by Foucault to be of the same discursive formation. (1997, p. 44)

National identity in this sense is a discourse. It is also a *modus operandi* consisting of many varied practices that contribute to its existence and meaning, linguistic and non-linguistic, by what is said and by what is done (Hall, 1997, p. 48). Whatever contributes to this knowledge is part of the discourse. Hall discussing Foucault explains that power is not necessarily negative emanating from the top down. While not denying that there are positions of dominance within society, power circulates and permeates all levels of society, through its production of knowledge. It positively and actively contributes to a discourse by way of debates, publications, art works, literature, public speech, iconography, symbols, etc. In this way Foucault’s analysis of the source of power and knowledge makes sense of the sociological propositions that refer to the self and society, and the reflexive power of the individual as a node of social relations, to actively contribute to meaning making within a discourse. Within the discourse of national identity, the existing bank of images, texts on texts, narratives and political speech, all are implicit to varying degrees in its production because of the circulatory nature of knowledge and its power as a discursive formation.

Discussion about nation and identity from a sociological perspective would ask how meanings are produced by lived experiences and how the conscious actions of actors within a social system of interrelated elements contributes to society. Dorothy Emmet expands in *The Notion of function* a model of society “as a single system of interrelated elements with mutual adjustments and corrections, and it examines the ‘functions’ of social institutions by trying to see how they maintain this unity” (Giddens, 1992, pp. 347-349). This analysis of social relations and cultural reflexivity is a positive one, with the opportunity for each unique nation-state to shift from fixed perspectives and to adopt a reflexive nature towards the communities and groups within. We see the individual as able to interact between self and society and “having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identity becomes a moveable feast: formed and reformed

continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us" (Hall, 1992, pp. 276-277).

How Australians are addressed and represented is a mediated exercise. The discourse of national identity is promulgated through, and constructed by, media, the institutional practices of museums and libraries and the system of education. Benedict Anderson quoted in Liebes & Curran (1998) evidences this as a common daily mechanism of community imagining:

What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned? At the same time, the newspaper reader, observing exact replicas of his own paper being consumed by his subway, barbershop or residential neighbours, is continually reassured that the imagined world [the world imagined in the newspapers] is visibly rooted in everyday life.....creating the remarkable confidence of community in anonymity, which is the hallmark of modern nations. (p. 44)

In this section I have identified the theoretical framework that discusses the idea of how the nation-state uses representation strategies through its signs, language and institutions as a mechanism that operates to symbolically define the idea of nation and identity. Through Foucault's analysis of power not necessarily emanating from the top down, the individual as a political agent can actively contribute to a discourse. Considering an agent whose work is politically charged, Gordon Bennett is an artist who has worked with the politics of identity and representation since the 1980s. If Bennett works on historical themes, it is from a perspective of history marginalised and intrinsically linked with how 'difference' and 'other' are constructed through exclusion, language and image. Bennett attempts to frame his subjective experiences against the wider institutional frameworks that have employed culturally insensitive practices and racist policies against Indigenous Australians. Throughout Bennett's work, the racist language of white Australia is juxtaposed against the symbol of the church and the dominant foundation narrative that form the main current of Australian history, such as iconic works *Terra Nullius* (1989), *Requiem of Grandeur*, and *Empire* (1989). In *Terra Nullius*, Bennett's imagery is drawn from the event of Cook claiming the land in the name of King George the 3rd. The painting is constructed with the Union Jack alongside a representation of the foundational myth which appears as a ghostly imagining over a rich surface of dots painted in the style of the Western desert dot paintings.

In many works, Bennett uses alphabet blocks in a symbolic reference to the hegemonic process of language – or as Bennett asserts, alphabetisation. He asserts that:

Wherever an alphabet establishes itself, violence and suffering inevitably follow. Everyone will now have to be infected by the alphabet of the other in order to flourish, at the cost of the loss of themselves. Only to the extent that the victims

incorporate the letters of the other, are *literalised*, by the other who oppresses them. Will they be able to acquire the skills necessary for dignity. Those who don't learn, however, will remain outside, subordinate, brutish, subhuman. They must be prepared to die for refusing to incorporate the means which would help them to contest the worst excesses of the alphabet masters, these rapacious alphabeasts. (Bennett, p. 107)

Bennett's series *Bounty Hunters* (1991) are six narratives painted in watercolour, depicting the disempowerment of the Aborigine by violence, rape and murder. For example, in the *Valley of Dry Bones* (Bounty Hunters 1991), he uses the iconic imagery of an angel statue, perched on a dais of alphabet blocks in a dry creek bed, where sits an Aboriginal person amongst human skulls and other bones. The sky is yellow with red crosses that form an ordered grid and the church that sits on the horizon concludes the narrative. In other works of the series, titled, *The Small Brown House*, *Blooding the Dogs*, and *Cornfield (with scarecrow)*, Bennett exposes with graphic imagery and symbolic references, a history of violence on the frontier (Bennett, 2007).



Gordon Bennett (1991). *Valley of Dry Bones*, watercolour on paper, 37 x 27 cm, The Paul Eliadis Collection of Contemporary Art, Brisbane, Australia. Permission to reproduce the image courtesy of the artist.

Construction of identity

"IDENTITY IS rooted in representation"

Anne Marie Willis

"When we look at ideas to do with national identity we need to ask, not whether they are true or false, but what their function is, whose creation they are and whose interests they serve" (White, 1981, p viii).

Many writers have treated the subject of national identity at length. I will summarise some key points on cultural identity as a platform from which to discuss Australian national identity. In Stuart Hall's contribution to *Modernity and its futures*, 'The question of cultural identity', he tracks the 'birth and death of the modern subject.' He gives an analysis of three concepts of identity that trace the social implications for the individual from the sixteenth century in Europe: "The enlightenment subject, the sociological subject and the postmodern subject" (1992, p. 275). It is the postmodern subject that I am most interested in because it is within the cultural dislocations that the 'postmodern' subject has experienced that provide an alternative narrative to the discourse of state nationalism.

Hall places the subject in relation to the societies that they were part of and identifies "the character of change in late modernity", in particular the impact of globalisation on cultural identity. Drawing on Marx who wrote of the "uninterrupted disturbance of all social relations by the constant revolutionising of production", modern societies are characterised by rapid change due to the forces of modernity (Hall, 1992, pp. 276-77). Hall makes this distinction between traditional and modern societies: "Traditional societies as a means of handling time and space where the continuity of history seems more plausible. The modern subject has become fragmented. Mass migration and colonial expansion have ruptured identities since the middle of the nineteenth century". Hall also suggests that the fragmentation of the subject has been impacted upon by a series of ruptures in modern knowledge: notably through the discourses of Marx, Freud, Lacan, Saussure and Foucault. "National culture functions as a source of cultural meanings, a focus of identification and a system of representation" (Hall, 1992, p. 296).

The fragmentation of indigenous communities around Australia since 1788 has resulted in crisis after crisis. The social damage to Indigenous communities as a result of massacres that occurred on the frontier during the first 160 years of contact was of a

significant consequence.⁸ The many social deprivations experienced by the people of those communities are now being examined as the shocking revelations of substandard education and health issues facing remote indigenous communities has come to the forefront of public knowledge.⁹ The acknowledgment of 'the Stolen Generation' has been part of a global concern, being topical at the United Nations' organised *World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and related intolerance* for NGOs in Durban, South Africa 2001, as Canada and America also start to address the past wrongs committed against the colonised indigenous.¹⁰ Wrenched out of that traditional space where according to Hall "the handling of time and space [makes] the continuity of history seem more plausible" (1992, p. 277).

The intertextuality of history operates as a discourse to build Australian national identity through its various agencies and institutions. It does not exist in isolation from the epistome of its modernist origins. The discursive formation of Australian history has several dimensions in the character of its operation including the dominant version of discovery and settler histories, maintained and promulgated through the collections of the majority of museums, state, maritime and war, within each museum's particular agenda. Tony Bennett wrote:

Museums have served as important sites for the historical production of a range of new entities (such as art, community, prehistory, national pasts or international heritage), which though, through contrived and carefully monitored civic experiments' directed at target populations (the workingman, children, migrants) within the museum space, have been brought to act on the social in varied ways. (2005, p. 08.4)

Against the historical certainty of the terms that describe nation and state, nationalism and identity, there are the other histories and narratives that make the locality of culture. Eric Hobsbawm was one historian who "more deliberately than any other general historian, writes the history of the modern western nation from the perspective of the nation's margin and the migrants exile" (cited in Bhabha, 1990, pp. 291-92). In writing on "the complex strategies of cultural identification and the discursive address that function in the name of 'the people' or 'the nation'", Homi K. Bhabha attempts to "displace the historicism that has dominated the discussions of nation as a cultural force" (Bhabha, 1990, pp. 291-92).

⁸ The tradition within indigenous communities of the individual as being associated with a totem that had a direct connection with particular food sources, meant some communities were unable to kill certain animals for food if the individual killed was the totem for that animal.

⁹ Statistics now show that the gap of life expectancy between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians is seventeen years and that infant mortality is three times higher for indigenous babies and three times higher for indigenous children under the age of 15.

<http://www.antar.org.au/node/223>

<http://www.healthinfonet.ecu.edu.au/health-facts/overviews>

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/WCAR/durban.pdf>

It is in this context that I shall discuss later the role of the National Museum Australia (NMA) in presenting through its exhibition programme, a more inclusive history of Australians and their lived experiences.

Richard White (1981) in *Inventing Australia* wrote:

There was no moment when, for the first time, Australia was seen 'as it really was'. There is no 'real' Australia waiting to be uncovered. A national identity is an invention. There is no point asking whether one version of this essential Australia is truer than another because they are all intellectual constructs - neat, tidy, comprehensible - and necessarily false. They have all been artificially imposed upon a diverse landscape and population, and a variety of untidy social relationships, attitudes and emotions. When we look at ideas about national identity, we need to ask, not whether they are true or false, but what their function is, whose creation they are, and whose interests they serve. (p. viii)

Richard White examines the formation of Australian identities through the reciprocal nature of language and imagery. The first descriptions of Terra Australis, the Indigenous peoples, the landscape, flora and fauna by early explorers William Dampier, Cook and Tasman provided a vision of Australia as a land of oddities, of interest from a scientific botanical perspective but nonetheless a barren continent with little commercial interest; primitive and an inversion of European civilisation.

The notion that images of Australia were constructed in line with the political and economic will, once the colony was established, supports White's ideas of how images have been implicit to the invention of a national identity. Australia evolved from a perceived land of 'convicts and kangaroos' prior to 1830, to a land for the emigrant, "a working man's paradise in support of new industries, particularly the wool industry" (1981, p. 29). White examines the complex social fabric between early free and convict settlers, the Indigenous population, second generation Australians and their changing attitudes, against economic and political forces both local and British. White has tracked some pertinent literary and visual sources that aided the digger after Gallipoli to: "emerge as a national hero" (p. 125). White adds "He held a special place in the national identity because he could be seen as the fulfillment of all the hopes that had been invested in the 'coming man', the ideal expression of the 'Australian type'. It was with a mixture of relief and pride that patriotic Australians could regard the national type as tested and found not wanting. With those credentials the digger soon came to stand for all that was decent, wholesome and Australian. Not only did he embody Australianess but also, he was its greatest protector" (p. 125).

Donald Horne (1989) tracks the particular history and evolution of the Australian nation from Federation as changing its character from a form of bush nationalism in the 1890s to a civic nationalism he associates with a style of speech and poetry making around the turn of the century. The two great faiths he maintains that were shared by most Australians were 'The White Australia Policy' and their membership with the British Empire and the 'British Race' (p. 2). These 'two faiths' were maintained through most of the 20th century until, as Horne notes, the 1967 referendum where Aboriginal peoples became legal citizens and after WW2 when Australia's relationship with the USA began to weaken the strong British identification that had existed with Australia until then.

Anne Marie Willis in *Illusions of identity* (1993) locates the transition from early colonial Australian reliance on Eurocentric views and how this impacted upon 'Australianness' from an attempt to identify what is uniquely Australian. However, this is bound up with politics, the media and emblems of the state. Versions of national identity are constructed through imagery. Willis exposes ethnocentricity at the core of national imagery and the role that curators and art historians play in the classifications of visual culture that create a national narrative.

Elizabeth Gertsakis is curator of the national philatelic archive and responsible for the Universal Postal Union collection. Gertsakis accounts the official imagery on stamps as recording the "construction and destruction of public national identity" (Gertsakis, 1997, p. 40). Postage stamps convey pictorially many dimensions of political and social life. In *The Stamp of republicanism*, Gertsakis looks at the stamps of some republican nations during the times of political struggle for independence. Elizabeth Gertsakis' practice, specifically her series dealing with national identity through different countries stamps, provides a dialogue with political ideology and its impact on the public. Her analysis of postage iconography employed by nations becoming republics reveals the mechanisms of the political machine in an attempt to convey very particular associations between people and government. She suggests that the "token nationalistic" images on the postage stamps of republics such as France and Spain have relied on polarising people against previous oppressions, however, she concludes with an observation that "a leadership that denies the existence of oppression within its political framework must alternatively work very hard to keep 'general satisfaction' of the populace in the apathy it requires for a sustained balance of its authority, its control" (Gertsakis, 1997, p. 41).

Silverman (1994) writes in *Textualities*:

History does not begin at a certain moment and then continue - in a linear fashion-from then on. Rather, moments of dominance, of certain discursive practices prevail for a time and then are succeeded by a new set of practices. Where a particular practice ends, a new one is about to begin; origin will then take place where a new discursive practice begins to take place. (pp. 22-2)

The exclusion of certain textual realities from a narrative that began with British invasion and intervention is certainly selective and motivational. Imperialism and anthropology fed notions of cultural superiority that underpinned the racism of 'White Australia' attitudes. The formation of the White Australia Policy, with its strong anti-Asian sentiment, prevailed into the latter half of the 20th century when the range of practices core to those ideas began to shatter and be replaced with new practices and a new discourse. Certainly reflexive behaviors must be the catalyst of new practices, for example the 1000 Indigenous Australians who wearing black on January 26 1938, declared the first Day of Mourning in a movement for citizens rights. The Australian Aboriginals Progressive Association (APA) was formed in 1924. "The three aims of the APA were full citizenship rights for Aborigines, Aboriginal representation in Parliament and the abolition of the NSW Aborigines Protection Board. From March 1938, the *Australian Abo Call*: the voice of the Aborigine was published as the official journal of the APA" (Sydney City Council, 2002). The formation of the first NADOC committee in 1957 and anti-racism activities led by people like the first Indigenous Australian university graduate Charles Perkins during the 1960s have challenged and overcome at least some of the obstacles presented to Indigenous Australians before the 1967 referendum.¹¹ These actions alone were not the agents of change. Other influences such as the formation of the United Nations and the Bill of Human Rights have also distilled a consciousness that evolved over the last century toward humanitarian and justice issues and certain unacceptable treatments of Indigenous peoples in postcolonial nations.

Anthony Giddens (cited in Hall, 1992, p. 34) developed a model to explain four key institutions of social organisation and the relative social actions that can be instrumental in bringing the institutions of modern nations toward change, toward post-modernity. The social action concerned with changing the practices, policies or administration of the institution of the military is an example of a collective action toward peace. The desired outcome would be the transcendence of war and demilitarisation. The institution of 'administrative power' can be challenged by civil and human rights movements; 'capitalism' by Labour movements and 'industrialism' by counter culture - ecological movements or action. Giddens' model is a useful one to

¹¹ 1957 – The National Aborigines' Day Observance Committee (NADOC) was formed. This became NAIDOC in 1991 to include Torres Strait Islanders.

see a relationship in action between collective agency and the subjective against the institution (Held, 1992, p. 34).

It is often through collective action and reaction to these institutions that a sense of identity is contributed to and contextualised against a wider institutional (national, international, global) framework. Through particular personal and familial experiences I can identify certain social / historical events as possibly forming my habitus. I can identify the experiences of collective positions in reaction to these institutions named by Giddens as I reflect upon the strong influence of my maternal grandparents throughout my childhood. They were both quite involved in the Labour and trade union movements that occurred in Australia after WW1. They were initially members of the Australian Communist Party (ACP) and later became socialists within the ranks of the Australian Labour Party (ALP) during the 1940s-60s, with my grandmother presenting as independent candidate for the House of Representatives in 1969. My family institution provided me with fertile ground for developing an empathy with the working class, the migrant, and related social justice issues, through real experiences; the spoken ideals and actions taken by my grandparents to improve upon life's conditions for family and community. Difficult conditions for the working class created a sense of solidarity amongst others in similar positions. My grandfather, Alex J. Laherty worked on the wharf where the working conditions were extreme. Those conditions of hardship and adversity forged a sense of community among people of the same class and manifested amongst members of the ACP who called themselves and identified with 'the group,' because of their shared ideology. Laherty's prose and poetry, collated as an unpublished biography (Laherty, 1999), are social documents reflecting a particular social and historical condition in Melbourne during the post WW1 decades. He writes in a vernacular of the working class, making social comment of the poor treatment of Aborigines, the difficulties and realities of life on the wharf and his opposition to war. I have included in Appendix 3, one of his poems to offer a snapshot of his subjective views concerning Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War in a socio/political context.

The 1967 referendum, when Indigenous Australian people were officially recognized as citizens of Australia in a majority vote of 90.77%, would have been a momentous occasion.¹² The 'origin' of a new historical period could be seen as the 1967 referendum marked new cultural freedoms and rights that brought the publication of

¹² Australian Government fact sheet from the National Archives supports this statistic.
<http://www.naa.gov.au/about-us/publications/fact-sheets/fs150.aspx>

new texts, public debates, policy and the telling of new stories. This created a possibility for new cultural expressions marked by seminal works such as WEH Stanner's *After the dreaming* (1969), in which he says Australia's forgetfulness of Aboriginal histories has been "practiced on a national scale". Stanner lamented the tragedy of "several thousand aborigines who lived and died between 1788 and 1938 were but negative facts of history, and, having been negative, were in no way consequential for the modern period. "I hardly think that what I have called the great Australian silence will survive the research that is now in course. Our universities and research institutes are full of young people who are working actively to end it (..)" (Stanner, 1968, pp. 25-27).

Donald Horne who as editor of *The Bulletin* from 1960, provided an overview of this period wrote:

That Australia was on the edge of a great bi-partisan sweep of change running through three post Menzies liberal governments defined by the eventual abolition of the 'White Australia Policy,' the abandonment the narrowly defined assimilationist policy towards immigrants, and its replacement by acceptance of a more hybrid Australia, and by the recognition of the indigenous people as part of the polity and with a new indigenous agenda. (Horne, 1989, pp. 6-7)

Two decades followed the referendum with pluralist views establishing a legitimate expression through the social, cultural and political spheres of society. The process of reconciliation is still in process, however, its progress is implicated in the 'cultural wars' that have enveloped the Howard government in its position of representation.

Howard used history as a mechanism to develop a linear narrative of key events through which a national identity would be forged by identification with the values asserted and named through the struggles and triumphs of those particular events. Through his government's initiatives such as the National Values framework and the Australian History Summit, Howard attempted to embed within the education system a particular national story underpinned by settler narratives, explorers and the Anzac legend. Howard states in his introduction to the Australian History Summit in August 2006:

(.).I do not believe, and the Government does not believe, that you can have any sensible understanding and, therefore, any sensible debate about different opinions of Australian history unless you have some narrative and method in the comprehension and understanding of history. How you can just teach issues and study moods and fashions in history rather than comprehend and have a narrative has always escaped me. (Bishop, 2006)

Howard's comments lead into the next section and are again relevant in Chapter 4, the creative project. The privileging of some histories and the role of the museum and the

education system in promulgating and presenting history through images and objects is of a general consequence to my practice.

Making the audience aware of the difficulty / impossibility of being presented with one linear narrative was a central consideration in a collaborative work I made in 2002 with four other artists. The video installation work titled *Identities / Hybridities* drew on the theme of incommensurability with the idea of presenting different cultural subjectivities. As one of a group of five, all individually working with the theme of identity and histories, we organised to assemble and juxtapose our distinctly different video files in a way that would place familiar images and sounds 'oft seen and heard' in relation to each other to form new narratives and to prevent a dominant view from forming in any one frame as it was presented. For example Queen Victoria represented by her monument in Kings Park (Kaye) was framed against the Scottish Pipe Police band during an Anzac Day Parade (Allerding). The images were a moving feast; as the pipe band finished a jigsaw assembled forming kangaroo and banksias against a narration in Putonghua–Chinese from the journal of Joseph Banks (Barstow). Footage of beach waves crashing and repetitious (Blank) framed and was alternatively framed by a suburban garden with the resonant image of a willow pattern plate (Crouch). The work was a projected installation on two opposite walls, with the intention of making the audience aware of the difficulty – impossibility – of being presented with one linear narrative.¹³

The question of why Australian national identity was so core to John Howard probably has a number of angles to consider and is well beyond the scope of a summary. My earlier quote by McKenna (2009) sites Howard's championing of national identity as bearing directly on Australia's involvement in Iraq. Indigenous land rights present another angle. The previous Keating government had presided over the Mabo decision in the High Court and native title was a hot public topic. What was / is at stake? Greg McCarthy (2004) argues that there is logic between the insecurity and discontent caused by the declining material conditions of the majority of Australians and the concurrent cultural wars. He cites Berman in *Postmodern discontent and the NMA*, "the philosophical promise of modernity was the development society of abundance" (McCarthy, 2004, p. 2), and links capital accumulation, household debt, loss of security for the poorer of society and increased working hours for the average worker as being some of the contributing factors toward the strong assertion of national identity. The

¹³ *Identities / Hybridities* artists were Nicola Kaye, Clive Barstow, Christopher Crouch, Jeremy Blank and myself. The work was first shown as part of Visuals Connection 11 at the Shanghai International Arts festival 2002, and later represented in the Biennale of Electronic Arts Perth (BEAP) festival at Spectrum Gallery Perth 2007.

idea of maintaining and asserting a dominant, populist and exclusive view of a nation through representing linear and modernist history has a rationale based on progression and security. "The logic is to assert control of the disparate avenues and discourses (Dean, 2000), whether they be public or in civil society, for voicing discontent over the material insecurity felt by the majority of people. This insecurity is to the move from modernism to post-modernism" (McCarthy, 2004, p. 4).

Donald Horne proposed during the 1980s that the abstract concept of 'The Economy,' developed as transformative economic global practices took Australia to its post-industrial state from being a nation with a strong sense of national economic development and that it was a difficult concept to grasp. No leading politician was able to appear sympathetic to the jolts and uncertainties in the workforce (Horne, 1989, p. 10). There was nothing to replace the old faith in national economic development through Australian industry. He notes that Pauline Hanson's maiden speech in 1996 had an instant effect and words like mainstream and minority began to become part of the discourse.¹⁴

Quoting Stuart Hall cited in Grossberg in summary of this section:

Society is an 'expressive totality' in which every practice refers back to a common origin. A chain of equivalences is constructed for example, a particular class = a particular experiences = particular political functions = particular cultural practices = particular needs and interests = a particular position in the economic relations of capital. That is a particular social identity corresponds to particular experiences, defines a particular set of political interests, roles and actions, has its own 'authentic' cultural practices, and so on. What determines this network of correspondences is - whether in the first instance or the last instance - the economic. (1996, p.155)

¹⁴ An excerpt from Hanson's maiden speech: "We now have a situation where a type of reverse racism is applied to mainstream Australians by those who promote political correctness and those who control the various taxpayer funded 'industries' that flourish in our society servicing Aboriginals, multiculturalists and a host of other minority groups" (Hanson, 1996).
http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/hanson_1.pdf



Ramingining Artists *The Aboriginal Memorial* (1987-88), installation of 200 hollow log bone coffins, natural pigments on wood, height irregular, 327.0 cm, National Gallery Australia collection. Permission given to reproduce the image courtesy of the NGA.



Allerding, Kaye, Barstow, Crouch & Blank (2002), *BBACK*, *Identities / Hybridities*, digital video still.

CHAPTER 2

Privileging histories / institutional responses to frontier warfare - The Australian War Memorial and the National Museum of Australia

We express our concern that in some States political and legal structures or institutions, some of which were inherited and persist today, do not correspond to the multi-ethnic, pluricultural and plurilingual characteristics of the population and, in many cases, constitute an important factor of discrimination in the exclusion of indigenous peoples; (United Nations, 2001, ¶ 22.).

We are conscious of the fact that the history of humanity is replete with major atrocities as a result of gross violations of human rights and believe that lessons can be learned through remembering history to avert future tragedies (United Nations, 2001, ¶ 57).

This section gives a context to my practice by relating it within the wider social framework of the discourse to do with the privileging of histories and with particular reference to two major institutions, the National Museum Australia (NMA) and the Australian War Memorial (AWM). This section is relevant to my practice because it looks at the institutional responses to the broader histories that are relevant to the events that took place on the two sites of Pinjarra and Gallipoli, which forms the basis of the content that inspired the works in *Signing Off on the State*. The narrative of the Pinjarra massacre is positioned as a marginalised local (state WA) history and has not gained a prominent place as what would be considered a narrative of national significance. Within the field of 'history,' and specifically Australian history in the first 100 years of settlement or colonial conquest of the British over the Indigenous peoples, many events evaded public consciousness until recent years. Part of the controversy surrounding the history wars as they have played out around these two institutions, is on whether or not oral histories are acceptable historical material with which to base exhibition content.

The importance of acknowledging the historical reality of frontier violence has implications for social justice. If war has an 'enduring impact of on Australian society' as outlined by the AWM's mission statement, then surely the story of dispossession by often violent means has an influence in the national psyche not yet adequately resolved? The NMA's attempt to give importance to some of these histories was evidenced in 2001 when the museum held the *Contested Frontiers* exhibition. Through the exhibition the museum offered a national context for another local history, the Bells Falls Gorge massacre purported to have taken place in the Bathurst region west of Sydney during the 1820s, indicating that the foundational myth told through the NMA is

contained within its First Australians Gallery.¹⁵ A new module called Resistance has been since added to the NMA exhibition programme that tells of stories of resistance by Indigenous Australians.¹⁶

By contrast, the foundational myth for the AWM is told through the Anzac's foray into WW1 via Gallipoli, as conceived by Charles Bean before WW1 was even over.¹⁷ On the ABC's *7.30 Report* of 26/02/2009, introduced as *War Memorial battle over frontier conflict*, it was reported, "The Australian War Memorial in Canberra is engaged in a behind-the-scenes battle about whether it should commemorate the fighting between Aboriginal people and the early colonial settlers" (Peacock, 2009). The interview conducted by Matt Peacock brought together a significant group of individuals in the field of history and museology to comment upon whether or not the war on Australian soil should be included in the AWM's representations of Australians at war. The interviewees included former Deputy Director AWM Michael McKernan, AWM historian John Connor, historian Geoffrey Blainey, President of the Returned soldiers league (RSL) Bill Crews, General John Coates, historian Ken Inglis, Peter Stanley NMA (former principal historian AWM) and Gordon Briscoe, history at Australia National University (ANU).

Australian War Memorial

The representation of Australia's history in war operates with a clear agenda at the AWM on a number of levels with clearly outlined objectives; the functions of the Board were defined by the Piggott report in 1975:

- (a) To control and preserve the war relics of Australia and to arrange, so far as the Board considers desirable, for their public display.
- (b) To carry out, and assist other persons in carrying out, research in connection with any war or warlike operations in which Australians have been on active service.
- (c) To disseminate information relating to the Memorial or any war or warlike Operations in which Australians have been on active service (Piggott, 1975).

¹⁵ David Roberts, 'Bells Falls Massacre and Bathurst's History of Violence: Local Tradition and Australian Historiography', *Australian Historical Studies*, Vol. 26, no. 105, 1995, pp 615–33.

The supporting material for the exhibit being mostly the oral histories of the Wiradjuri, evidence from post research carried out during the 20th century including an excerpt from the Sydney Gazette October 1824 'Bathurst and its surrounding area is engaged in an exterminating war, the declaration of martial law in 1824, weaponry and other objects.

¹⁶ http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/now_showing/first_australians/resistance/

¹⁷ Charles Bean began his career as a journalist and was the official correspondent to report the story of the AIF at war for the Australian newspapers. He determined that the story of Australia at war should be recorded in an official history of which he wrote and published six detailed volumes. He conceived the AWM as a memorial.

These have remained as operational priorities although a new act was passed in 1980 that gave the AWM the opportunity to extend its charter to cover other wars that Australians had been engaged in. The AWM now outlines its own purpose as: To commemorate the sacrifice of those Australians who have died in war. Its mission is to assist Australians to remember, interpret and understand the Australian experience of war and its enduring impact on Australian society.¹⁸ It was on this point that Michael McKernan remarks, “that change in the Act gave the opportunity for the much wider coverage, and that’s when it began to be discussed about frontier conflict and the War Memorial” (McKernan interviewed by Peacock, *7.30 Report* 26/02/2009).

The AWM outlines its functions as:

to develop and maintain a national collection of historical material; to exhibit historical material from this collection; to assist in research into matters pertaining to Australian military history; to disseminate information relating to Australian military history and the collection, and; to use every endeavour to make the most advantageous use of the collection in the national interest. Australian War Memorial Act 1980.S 5(1), (2)¹⁹

As the AWM has grown to give a fuller account of the Australian history of military operations, it privileges the Anzac legend and WW1 as its foundational myth. The AWM opened in 1941 with plans already to extend to include WW2. An act of 1952 determined to extend the memorial to include all wars that Australians had been involved in retrospectively and to make provision for the future should there be a need. Currently the AWM galleries represent a history of Australia in war from colonial times to its newest gallery which opened in 2008, and covers conflicts from 1945 until the present covering six decades including peacekeeping operations. Kerry O’Brien introducing the *7.30 Report* (26/02/2009), said “the official response from the AWM, as it is called upon to include the history of frontier warfare, is *that “such fighting falls outside its charter”*, a claim that is clearly disputed by some respected military historians and Aboriginal people” (Peacock, 2009).

The Colonial Commitments Gallery within the AWM has been assigned a location within the museum that positions the history associated with it in a dislocated and distant past that does little to portray the complexity or realities of colonial conquest and warfare. By stark contrast to the visual displays throughout the rest of the museum, the Colonial Commitments Gallery is unimaginative and incomplete. It covers

¹⁸ <http://www.awm.gov.au/corporate/overview.asp>

¹⁹ http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/cth/consol_act/awm19800244/s5.html

the military conflicts from the Boer War, the Boxer Rebellion, the Eureka Stockade, and portrays the Queens soldiers as relics from a distant colonial past.

AWM military historian John Connor points out that very little has been written from a military point of view on the subject of warfare between Aborigines and soldiers or police on the Australian frontier. But he does define 'warfare' as an appropriate term to use for engagements on the frontier, citing a clear definition of warfare from Prussian military thinker Clausewitz as "an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will" (Connor, 2003). The AWM's research profile includes contribution from current and previous staff members, John Connor, Brad Manera, and Michael McKernan within the context of covering some of the history of frontier war in Australia. In Connor's book *The Australian frontier wars 1788-1838*, he introduces the subject of frontier conflict as being a consequence of worldwide European expansion. Looking at how the subject has been treated with silence until the 1970s, he quotes WEH Stanner when he points out that "in the archives of all the states there is ample material to prove that the Aborigines fought a very vigorous if unavailing battle" (Connor, 2002, ix). Connor writes a thorough commentary on particular battles and massacres across the country, informing the reader of the social implications arising from and causing frontier violence, the factual composition of the military and police, examining military tactics, comparing fighting tactics and weaponry of both soldiers and aboriginal warriors. Manera was the curator at the NMA during the time of the *Contested Frontiers* exhibition, then positioned as a military historian at the AWM and is currently a historian at the Hyde Park Barracks in Sydney.

Richard Broome (1988) in *Australia – two centuries of war and peace*, published by the AWM, surveys the struggle for Australia 1770 - 1930, beginning with Cook's arrival giving a social and historical overview of the colony. He details the role of the military, their class within the colony, the conditions of their posting and gives a history of the rise of the colonial force and the mounted police, noting that the "armed force, along with the law and the established church, was one of the institutions upon which the colonial authority rested" (p. 67). Broome also gives an account of the social effects on the Indigenous peoples caused by European invasion and warfare. He looks at the weaponry used by both sides, the fighting tactics of both sides, and reports and details that Aboriginal resistance was met by punitive campaigns. He concludes by saying "that since the 1970s it has been beyond dispute that a bloody frontier war moved across Australia for 160 years, leaving almost 2000 Europeans and perhaps as many as 20,000 Aborigines dead" (1988, pp. 92-120).

When Ken Inglis launched his book *Sacred places* at the AWM in November 1998 he said “warlike encounters between black and white” should be commemorated in the Australian War Memorial”,²⁰ quoting calls by Geoffrey Blainey in 1979 that the AWM recognize warfare between whites and blacks 'within the next ten years' (Ball, 1998) (Peacock, 2009). Comment at the launch by the Governor General Sir William Deane “that there were certainly almost no official monuments to the Aborigines slaughtered in such warlike encounters during the 19th century” was a simple statement of fact, according to the Governor General’s official website in explanation after the comments went to press to refute the connotation that Deane had been suggesting the AWM recognise warfare between blacks and whites²¹ (Ball, 1998).

Henry Reynolds, whose seminal work was *The other side of the frontier*, has attempted unsuccessfully to persuade the AWM to mount an exhibition about the history of engagement in the Tasmanian offensive. Known as the ‘Black Line’ operation in Tasmania, an offensive against the entire Aboriginal population of Van Diemens Land was declared in 1828 under martial law by Governor Arthur Phillip. The operation mobilised a force of 2200 men, comprising 550 troops and civilians including police and surveyors, and was carried out between 7 October and the 24 November 1830 as a military operation. John Connor describes the operation:

The force was divided into three divisions, and each division was divided into corps commanded by army officers. Civilians were organized into parties of ten with leaders chosen by the local magistrates, but were ultimately under military command. The parties moved forward in extended order with no attempt at stealth. The aim was to beat the bush in a systematic manner and drive the Aborigines ahead of them towards the coast. 900 muskets were issued (...).(2002, p. 154)

The AWM holds only one image relating to frontier military conflict in its vast art collection. The lithograph titled *Mounted Police and Blacks* is attributed to Godfrey Charles Mundy and depicts mounted soldiers / police engaged in a battle with Indigenous Australians at Slaughterhouse Creek. Colonial art has never been the target of acquisitions at the AWM (see Appendix 2).²² The overwhelming majority of paintings, drawings and lithographs depicting warfare between aboriginal people and

²⁰ Tom Griffiths quotes Inglis in the Language of Conflict - in (Bain Attwood & S, G. Foster, 2003).

²¹ <http://www.gg.gov.au/governorgeneral/news.php?action=view&id=74>

²² Catalogue description as forwarded to me by AWM research staff: Mounted Police and Blacks depict the killing of Aborigines at Slaughterhouse creek by British troops. The image appeared as a front-piece to the first volume of Mundy’s publication, ‘Our Antipodes or Residence and Rambles in the Australasian Colonies, with a Glimpse of the Goldfields’ (3 vols, London 1852). It was one of twelve landscapes and stylised action scenes he drew for the volume. The lithograph was executed by W L Walton after sketches by Mundy and his wife, Louisa. The Slaughterhouse Creek massacre occurred in 1838 when mounted Police, mostly European volunteers, set out in response to conflict on the Liverpool Plains north of central NSW. At ‘Vinegar Hill’, a site on Slaughterhouse Creek, 60 to 300 (exact number unknown) Aborigines were reported killed. The only European casualty was a corporal speared in the leg.

soldiers or mounted police are in the collections of state libraries. By contrast the AWM holds a vast collection of paintings drawings and prints relating to the conflicts of WW1 and WW2. Clearly, and despite the existence of a reasonable number of visual works, both historical and contemporary, that illustrate the first war on Australian soil along with the other evidence gathered, these histories sit outside the dominant view.

The discursive formation of practices relating to what has been termed within historical debates in Australia as 'black armband history' underpins this section because it is the use of the terminology as a phrase of symbolic language that becomes a representation of the fact that a prevailing strategic view, and not necessarily a fair view, operates to construct the fiction of a national identity. 'Black armband history' as a phrase, was first coined publicly by Geoffrey Blainey in 1993, the meaning given by McKenna (1997) to represent:

the 'swing of the pendulum from a position that had been too favourable to an opposite extreme that is decidedly 'jaundiced' and 'gloomy'. Blainey's interpretation has been influential in determining the position of the Howard government on Australian history-just as Manning Clark's reading had previously guided the Keating government's initiative to recast Australian identity. (McKenna, 1997)

The issue of national identity was core to Howard's vision. The surrounding debate of black armband history is extensive and beyond the scope of this section but an excerpt from Howard's Menzies Lecture of 1996 below gives Howard's perspective. McKenna in *'Different perspectives on black armband history'* offers a context to the emphasis Howard placed on history and its importance in promoting national cohesion. Howard recognized the Keating government and Keating's own ideas about the history of white Australia's treatment of Indigenous Australian people, the Mabo and Wik victories in the High Court, the new critical histories that emerged throughout the 1970s - 1980s and the Aboriginal protests of bicentenary year, as all being very destabilising elements.²³

An excerpt from Howard's Menzies Lecture follows:

(..) There is, of course, a related and broader challenge involved. And that is to ensure that our history as a nation is not written definitively by those who take the view that we should apologise for most of it. This black armband view of our past reflects a belief that most Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination (..) I profoundly reject the black armband view of Australian history (..) I think we have been too apologetic about our history in the past. I believe it is tremendously important, particularly as we approach the

²³ The black armband has been worn by Aboriginal people as a mark of protest and mourning of their dispossession at least since 1970. A protest on Australia Day 1938 marked a day of mourning for Aboriginal people and saw people wearing black in protest.

centenary of the Federation of Australia, that the Australia achievement has been a heroic one, a courageous one and a humanitarian one. (Howard, 1996)

Despite the evidence that exists to support the story of frontier violence and bloody conquest on Australian soil during the first one hundred years of settlement it has been a hard won story to gain a place within the museum context and to gain national significance.²⁴ The evolution of the debate on history in Australia has been characterised over the last 12 years, and especially under the former Howard government, as a struggle between the ideologically ultra conservative Howard agenda and a groundswell of pluralist views espoused by historians, educators and administrators of Australian cultural institutions. The rhetoric from the Howard government on the subject of frontier warfare has on occasion been a contravention of historical facts, and Howard's refusal to acknowledge that the narratives of conquest are important for many Australians was underpinned by his subjective view of history as much as it is characteristic of nation states to resist the narratives of colonial conquest by force. A more recent call by newly named Australian of the Year in 2009, Professor Mick Dodson, to change the date of Australia day so that it no longer coincides with the invasion of Australia to give the opportunity for all Australians to celebrate the day, was rejected by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on Australia Day 2009. It highlights the continuing push within Australian society for a justice of recognition.

The history of violent conquest due to British invasion of Australia on the grounds of terra nullius is well documented.²⁵ The intervention of postcolonial narratives across dominant paradigms, have redefined the particular historical fixed and linear notions of time, space and place, and enabled new possibilities to re-negotiate relationships to the land, to respect indigenous claims, and to tell and be told other stories, so that those stories may begin to have a resonance within the national narrative. Following the referendum of 1967 a more enlightened period of two decades began where the discourse of race relations opened and new and substantial research in early settler and Aboriginal relations was conducted by historians most notably Henry Reynolds in

²⁴ The evidence exists through the research of historians such as John Connor, Henry Reynolds, Bruce Elder, Neville Green, Lyndall Ryan, Richard Broome, to name only a few, see my reference list. Evidence also exists through the oral histories of many Indigenous Australians. It exists through newspaper reports of the day where frontier violence was commonly spoken about as a fact of life in the early years of the colony. It exists through the drawings and paintings depicting historical events that exist in the collections of state libraries and which are also corroborated with other research, including official documents such as the letters of Stirling to the colonial Office. (see Stratham-Drew).

²⁵ Richard Broome asserts, "It was ironic that Cook, who genuinely admired the Aborigines, played a preliminary role in their subjugation and dispossession". He claimed they were not numerous, had no fixed habitation since they moved about from place to place like wild beasts in search of food, and did not cultivate land. Cook concluded on little evidence that the country was 'in the pure state of Nature the Industry of man has nothing to do with any part of it.' Under prevailing international (European) law, people who did not plant, till, improve or labour on the land they occupied had no right to it. Such land was deemed *terra nullius*, or waste. (McKernan & Browne, 1988, p. 92).

The other side of the frontier (1995), with Neville Green's *Broken spears* and *Forrest River massacres* (1984 & 1995), Bruce Elder's, *Blood on the wattle* (1988), and Grassby and Hill's, *Six Australian battlefields* (1988), to name only a few with other historians and researchers producing many texts on the subject. In the absence of a written indigenous history, these historians have done much to provide a more expansive narrative of conquest. Oral aboriginal histories have provided important material, not only to evidence the acts of violence but to also provide testimony to the cultural and social devastation sustained by Indigenous Australians subject to massacres by both military parties and settlers. The paradigm of a western history as being a dominant and historical valid practice against the oral histories of Indigenous Australians has and continues to be a site of contestation in a hegemonic state. Selective representation of histories is a trait in the construction of national identity. Selectiveness in the instance of building a national history on postcolonial narratives, enables hegemony despite the reality of cultural pluralities in society and the heterogeneous nature of histories within a postcolonial nation.

Richard White (in McKernan & Browne, 1988), remarks on a strange paradox:

The only war that has been fought out in Australia apart from Aboriginal tribal battles and European ones at Vinegar Hill and Eureka, was that on the fringes of white settlement between Aborigines and Europeans. In a very complex relationship, the two cultures had recourse to a variety of strategies, more or less organised armed struggle among them. The result was a spasmodic but nevertheless long bitter, agonising guerilla war. Yet white Australian society, for so long fascinated by war, has done its best to forget about that conflict, to erase it from its consciousness, to adopt tortuous definitions of war in order to exclude it. The Aborigines have never forgotten it, but only in the last decade or so have white Australians begun to write it back into their history. (pp. 393-4)

Reflecting on the nature of war and society, White notes the different responses Australians have had to war:

The three most significant wars affecting Australia have been the long war of attrition between Aborigines and Europeans (perhaps up to 20,000 Aborigines and 2,000 Europeans killed in physical confrontation), and the world wars of 1914-18 (60,000 Australians killed) and 1939-45 (34,000 killed). In their magnitude they are comparable, yet our responses have been entirely different. The first has been suppressed, the second endlessly celebrated, the third marked by a curious ambivalence. (1988, p. 395)

Mark McKenna provides a summation that black armband history is a matter of emphasis rather than content that has been swept up in the rhetoric of Australian politics. He summarises that the underlying tensions of the debate are more to do with coming to terms with the fact that there is more than one national story to be told, that for many years the stories of many Australians have been suppressed and now

questioning how it is possible for Australians to 'listen' to different histories and accept the legitimacy of 'different' perspectives, while also retaining a shared history which can act as a binding force in the national community (McKenna, 1997).

Symbolic power operates throughout both institutions, the AWM and the NMA, most notably through architecture and position in the urban landscape. The NMA has a controversial architectural design that links it with a zigzag footprint, which closely resembles the recently completed Jewish Museum Berlin designed by Daniel Libeskind.²⁶ MacCarthy describes in *Postmodern discontent and the NMA* that "Raggatt's design sought to link the past with the present, drawing out the idea that the Enlightenment had to be deconstructed to expose how it could allow genocide, for example, the Nazi Holocaust along with the State removal of "half-cast" indigenous children"(McCarthy, 2004). Amongst its many other symbolic elements is the Uluru line, a large bright orange sculptural element that forms a loop and points northwestward towards Uluru.

The AWM operates symbolically and ideologically at the centre of the apparatus that keeps the memory and the history of WW1 in the hearts and minds of the population. The AWM has received increased numbers of visitors over the 2007-8 year, 873,000 people compared to 845,000 in 2003-4.²⁷ Symbolism is the mechanism that makes reference, and depending on a visitor's awareness of the symbolic codes, operates provocatively between an emotional and cognitive level imparting an ideology through its well-considered exhibits, architecture and narratives. The ideology of the state and its values are signified (to the state's subjects) throughout every aspect of its presence but firstly and notably by the geographical positioning of the AWM and its architecture. Situated on the eastern point of the land axis intended by Walter Burley Griffin to run between Mt Ainslie and Capital Hill, the Byzantine architecture of the AWM connects it to its classical heritage. Visitors enter the AWM into the commemorative area through the symbolic medieval stone lions presented in 1936 by the local government of Ypres in France to the AWM. Beyond, *the Pool of Reflection* and its *Eternal Flame* is the *Hall of Memory*, where lies the *Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*, surrounded by the work of Napier Waller.²⁸ The Roll of Honour surrounds the cloisters naming Australia's war dead since 1885: - 102,000 names²⁹. As the AWM doesn't officially recognise that war was fought on Australian soil, the earliest conflicts where the dead are named are the

²⁶ Both institutions are heavily symbolically coded. Embodied in the architecture of the NMA designed by Ashton Raggatt McDougall is reference to the Jewish Museum Libeskind Building in Berlin.

²⁷ Statistics were directly communicated to me by AWM staff.

²⁸ This short survey cannot do justice to the symbolism embedded in every detail of the AWM.

²⁹ <http://www.awm.gov.au/visit/visit-special-entrance.asp>

Sudan, New Zealand's Maori wars, and the Boxer Rebellion in China. The chronological ordering of the galleries begins via the Orientation Gallery featuring an original boat from the Anzac landing with the emphasis placed on the birth of the Anzacs through WW1, and proceeds through Anzac Hall, WW2, the Aircraft Gallery, Hall of Valour, Special Exhibitions and post 1945. It takes a step back in time to the Colonial Commitments Gallery, situated on the below ground level.

In summary of this section and with the mediation of the *7.30 Report* interview by the ABC, it would seem that while the RSL, through their spokesperson Bill Crew, is opposed to the AWM including the history of "skirmishes at the time of early colonial development", that there is no legal ground to prevent the AWM from expanding its charter to include the history of frontier warfare. Peacock asserts, "In fact, the advice the director received in 1999, which we have a copy of here, left the question open. He concluded there was little doubt that the frontier conflicts were a war or war-like operations, and although the British Army units used against Aborigines were not raised in Australia, the quasi-military police forces involved were. It concluded that if the War Memorial wanted to interpret its Act in that way, it was legally free to do so (Peacock, 2009). As Gordon Briscoe commented, the AWM's refusal is a form of cultural racism, and Peter Stanley called for the history to be recognised in this context as did all the other interviewees.

The National Museum Australia

The museum offers a way to provide interactions between citizens and the displays that create new ways of understanding and interpreting the world around. The Whitlam government in 1975 commissioned a report into the future of museums in Australia. The progressive report known as the *Piggott Report*³⁰, made recommendation for a national museum that would employ new techniques and ideas about content and display particularly and avoid linear notions of history. It argued for a major display of Aboriginal history as well as a substantial European history pavilion with the belief that there, both the Aboriginal and European histories of Australia could be seen in a wider and fairer perspective. It argued for a dynamic museum that would be encouraged by a flow of scholars as enhanced relationships might be forged between universities and the museum. The report announced the role of Australia's major museums as educative and emphasized that they could become more influential in tertiary education

³⁰ Australian Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections, *Museums in Australia 1975: report of the Committee of Inquiry on Museums and National Collections including the report of the Planning Committee on the Gallery of Aboriginal Australia*, Canberra, AGPS, 1975. (Chairman: P.H. Piggott).

particularly if they displayed controversies or issues of uncertainty - a more critical approach. Three thematic components were recommended for the national museum: Aboriginal Australia, non-indigenous history since 1788, and people and the environment, to be later named, 'Land, Nation and People', when the National Museum Australia finally opened just in time for centenary celebrations of federation on March 11 2001 under the Howard government.

The NMA opened with the *Contested Frontiers* exhibit in its First Australians Gallery, curated by Brad Manera and under the directorship of Dawn Casey. Controversy erupted over the content of the exhibit narrating the history of an Aboriginal massacre and using oral histories to do so.³¹ Casey defended the museum and said it was fulfilling its role in its commitment to encouraging public debate on issues of national importance, as intended by its planners. The struggle of contested views that followed the exhibition and the papers delivered at its related symposium subsequently published in *Frontier conflict the Australian experience*, (Attwood, 2003), would offer as a case study in itself, an insight into the machinations of conservative politics under Howard and the debate that has emerged over history and the role of the museum since 2002. The Howard government's intervention into the operations of the NMA in 2003 with the subsequent sacking of Dawn Casey and the replacement of several members of council with Howard supporters was directly related to the government seeking to maintain control of the type of content and views expressed by the National Museum (McCarthy, 2004).

Greg McCarthy in *The "new" cultural wars* (2004) examined Howard's political agenda and his narrow linear view of a modernist settler history that he sought to have embodied in the new NMA. He examined the relationship between ideology, funding and the institution, citing the threat of withdrawal to funding of bodies such as the Australian Conservation Council and the Australian Council of Social Service, who sought to challenge the Government's preference for individualism and private enterprise over the public institution.

Censorship again intervened at the NMA with the acquisition of the Queenie McKenzie painting *Massacre at Mistake Creek* in 2005. The NMA purchased the painting that depicts the massacre of eight Aborigines at Mistake Creek in the East Kimberley around 1930. Queenie McKenzie, who died in 1998, was noted as one of the most

³¹ Windschuttle publishes his article - *How not to run a museum* in criticism of the museum's practices at <http://sydneyline.com.au>

collectable Aboriginal artists in 2000. A stock camp cook in the Kimberley for 40 years, McKenzie was a preserver of law and culture through her painting, and of international and national reputation (Lagan, 2006). The controversial painting purchased for \$30,000 was denied a place in the National Historical Collection under the recommendation of David Barnett, the National Museum's Collections Committee Chairman, also a Howard Government appointee post *Contested Frontiers* and John Howard's biographer. He was quoted in *The Bulletin* magazine as claiming that the massacre was a lie (Lagan, 2006). The decision was given support by the NMA Council headed by Chairman Toney Staley, former Liberal Party President. (Lagan, 2006). Keith Windschuttle the historian whose opposition to the research methodologies of the histories of frontier warfare is well known, also launched public attacks on both the purchase of the painting and the Governor General William Deane who travelled to the East Kimberley in 2001 with the *7.30 Report* to apologise to the Kija people of the Mistake Creek area.³² Lagan comments that:

The apology was "one of Deane's last Vice Regal acts, he travelled to the sight of the slaughter, in the shadow of a Boab tree on a dry creek bed, marked by a simple commemorative tablet that reads "in memory of our ancestors who were shot and burned here." He stood there and did that which the Howard government will not do, he apologised to the Aboriginal people for events such as Mistake Creek in which whites had massacred Aborigines. (Lagan, 2006)

Windschuttle in *How not to run a museum*, launched an attack on the museum's approach to history:

Another problem for social history - and this is the one from which the National Museum suffers most - is lack of coherence. By abandoning the traditional approach to history based on a narrative of major events and their causes, in favour of equal time for every identifiable sexual and ethnic group, history loses its explanatory power and degenerates into a tasteless blancmange of worthy sentiment. (2001)

On the subject of the *Contested Frontiers* exhibit and the *Bells Falls Gorge massacre*, Windschuttle claims it is "complete fabrication" (Windschuttle, 2001).

The furor surrounding the painting *Massacre at Mistake Creek* symbolises the history wars that went on during the Howard years. A submission to the NMA (Clement) reviewing exhibitions and public programmes, examined the controversy surrounding the telling of histories of frontier conflict in the National Museum noting the particular risks to museum staff in the use of oral histories. Her paper rigorously examines the research methodologies that could have been used to support and substantiate the Bells Falls Gorge massacre and the Mistake Creek massacre if the denouncers of

³² Examples of articles on the subject by Windschuttle include *How not to run a museum: Peoples history at the postmodern museum* at <http://www.sydneyle.com>

those histories had chosen to do so. She cites that it is also Windschuttle's credibility on the line here (Clement). She concludes by citing Minister Eillicott in [Davidson, 2003] that it is unfortunate that controversy has attached itself to an exhibit in the First Australians Gallery because:

Visitors to the museum should have an opportunity of obtaining a comprehensive understanding of life in Australia. Massacres were part of that life and should not be sanitized or hidden because some people object to the provision of information about such events. It is crucial for the violent aspects of the past to be portrayed as part of frontier life, rather than representative of it, and, from what has been written elsewhere, the Museum seems to be doing the right thing in that regard. (pp. 204 -6)³³

The discussion about how the museum may function as an instrument to promote cultural diversity (Bennett, 2005), occurs amidst the changing practices within museums that seek to reconfigure and reposition their objects to provoke new situations, new ways of understanding the world and the manipulation of objects already decontextualised from their natural place. Bennett refers to the museum as an instrument within the "programmes of civic management, which aims to order and regulate social relations in particular ways" (Bennett, 2005). Foucault refers to the museum an 'institutional apparatus' that through its techniques and practices conveys and constructs information and ideas according to its particular framework (Hall, 1992, p. 265).

Bennett offers a critical analysis:

The scope for thinking of museums analogously as places in which new forces and realities are constructed, and then mobilised in social programmes by those who are empowered to act as their credible interpreters, is readily perceptible. Museums have served as important sites for the historical production of a range of new entities (such as art, community, prehistory, national pasts, or international heritage), through which contrived and carefully monitored 'civic experiments' directed at target populations (the workingman, children, migrants) within the museum space have been brought to act on the social in varied ways. The role that museums have played in mapping out both social space and orderings of time in ways which have provided the vectors for programmes of social administration conducted outside the museum has been just as important, playing a key role in providing the spatial and temporal coordinates within which populations are moved and managed. (Bennett, 2005)

Bennett's analysis offers a rationale to help understand the machinations of the responses to frontier warfare as a social history of national importance by both the NMA and the AWM. "By those who are empowered to act as credible interpreters" is

³³ Clement's paper can be accessed from this link but it is not dated.
http://www.nma.gov.au/about_us/nma_corporate_documents/exhibitions_and_public_programs_review/submissions/

key to understanding the site of both potential and actual struggle in these two institutions. In the instances of the two museums, government and council decisions have overruled the credible interpreters, the curators, historians and others who hold expertise in the fields of cultural production to ensure that the museum exhibits are in line with a prevailing and majority view of history.

The question of the intersection between cultural identities and the discourse of a national identity finds its point when a cultural identity seeks to express a narrative, a history, a viewpoint in a particular context or institution that is incongruent with the national narrative or the dominant values. The particular institution or location of this desired expression will be underpinned by the values and stories that pertain to the dominant ideology or the views and beliefs of the majority. In Australia this is not always consistent within different cultural institutions, and the success of a cultural expression in pushing the parameters to exhibit content that borders or sits outside of the dominant framework will be dependent to an extent on government funding, council influence, curatorial decisions and sometimes on public attitudes as in the case of the Serrano retrospective at the National Gallery of Victoria in 1997 where Jane Goodall asks: “Who would have expected that *Piss Christ* would spark off a major public row in Australia, eight years after it was originally made notorious in the United States?”(Goodall).³⁴ In the case of Greg Taylor’s sculptural work commenting on militarism ‘*If The Boots Don’t Fit*’, John Howard wearing an oversized slouch hat with bayonet at his side, appeared uninvited in an open public space beside Lake Burley Griffin. Federal Police removed it and Tony Smith notes “it is unclear whether political sensitivities have played a role in silencing dissenters, but the removal suggests that ridiculing the Anzac legend offends an emerging orthodoxy” (Smith, 2006).

I need to acknowledge that within the scope of this thesis, the interrelationship between museum practices and the discourse surrounding museums and their social role cannot be given detailed attention. Despite my assertions that the State does intervene in the decision making processes of the institutions it is not the intention of this section to over interpret the reasons or political agenda of government, council or curatorial decisions and interventions regarding the privileging of certain histories within these national institutions. Moreover my aim is to establish a contextual background to my

³⁴ Goodall examines the debates surrounding the controversial photograph by Serrano illuminating the arguments as they were mediated from religious, political and the right to freedom of speech. <http://www.artlink.com.au/articles.cfm?id=250>

project by this short survey and to keep reference to the framework already established on power relations and national identity.



Queenie McKenzie, *Massacre at Mistake Creek* (1997), painting, the National Museum Australia collection. Reproduced with permission given by the trustee of the artist.



Godfrey Charles Mundy, *Mounted Police and Blacks* (1885), lithograph, the Australian War Memorial collection. Reproduced with permission given by the AWM.

CHAPTER 3

Anzac Day

“Every nation must make the multitude into a people”.

Hardt and Negri

How is the power of the state signified on Anzac Day?

What is the relationship of the people to the state through Anzac Day?

How is that relationship articulated - what is communicated?

What is my relationship to Anzac Day as I have been documenting it?

I have attempted to address these questions in this section as they sit at the crux of my reflexive practice of ritual documentation on Anzac Day.

The ritual and the visual

The acts of theatricalisation through which groups exhibit themselves (and above all to themselves) in ceremonies, festivals, processions, parades, etc... constitute the elementary form of objectification and, at the same time, the conscious realisation of the principles of division according to which these groups are objectively organised, and through which the perception they have of themselves is organized. (Bordieu, 1991, p. 186)

ANZAC Day, as an annually commemorated event. It is loaded with signifiers creating a web of connection to empire, from the reciting of the British poem the ‘Ode’ during the Dawn Service and the bugle sounding ‘The Last Post’ through to the band music leading the marchers in the parade, medals flags and banners featuring royal insignia and title. At school the making of wreaths and the monuments where we laid the wreaths, were all invested with a symbolic potency and ensured my identification with the nation-state from an early age. Anzac Day functions as a powerful social and political event. Intertwined with the genuine commemoration of those soldiers who fought and died in WW1 are the mechanisms of symbolic power and are evident in the political field.

I have been photographically documenting Anzac Day each year between 2002-9. It has become imperative as a methodology for a reflexive practice and has become a ritual practice to participate in all aspects of the day’s social events. I attend the Dawn Service at the Royal Australian Engineers regimental barracks at Karrakatta, I then head into the city of Perth after the service to observe people arrive and prepare for the parade. I stay for the parade and the after-parade speeches and then return afterward to the barracks for the afternoon ritual of the game Two-up.

The act of recording Anzac Day has been an attempt to make sense of the day and to participate as a critical observer. It has become a day for me to observe a social and a political practice and its many dimensions have offered me the opportunity to be reflexive of my subjective position in relation to nation and nation-state and to undertake a more objective analysis of what is signified and how symbolic power operates. This has informed my practice and my practice has fed back into and contributed to the discourse and is an ongoing process.

Emile Durkheim (1972) argued that people need social communion; found in common actions, to produce bonds of solidarity. Rituals are a mechanism that allows individuals to establish common bonds. The sociological dimension of Anzac Day lies within the compelling and powerful nature of ritual performed as a rite of the state and its ability to generate a meaningful context for people by their performative and shared actions. The hierarchical construction of society is evident as are the values of the state, reinforced through the content of the speeches and by the select representation in all the formalities. Throughout the day, the forming and breaking of groups and divisions through the distinctions of hierarchy, or of honour, the individual and the collective are framed. Be it a recounting of sapper Fred Reynolds, the first Australian to die on the beach at Anzac Cove, or of John Simpson Kirkpatrick, the Scot saving the lives of wounded soldiers with his donkey at Gallipoli. The individual, as given value in Christian nations, forms the emotional core of Anzac Day. The relationship of the individual as a member of the group, unit, core, or country is the pivotal relationship on which values are articulated.

Anzac Day has provided me with a rich source of visual information that has fed my practice. Through digital video and photography, I have ritually collected images over the previous seven years. It is a circular exercise, the ritual remains unchanged, the symbolic vestiges of power are repeated, and the groups march in the same order. Difference can only be found in the multifarious details of individual expressions that cannot affect the fundamental intent of the ritual – which is to maintain a constancy to create and perpetuate a tradition.

One notion is that Anzac Day contains cultural significance because of its being a shared event. As a national commemorative event it gains greater power by its mediation and synchronicity. It is played out across the states and across borders, in Turkey, London, New Zealand, with only minor variations of the same semantic elements unfolding throughout the day in each location. Graham Seal (2004) is

concerned with the culture of the Digger and the relationship of that culture to national identity. In *Inventing Anzac* he cites the Anzac tradition as a:

Complex cultural process and institution involving the formal, official apparatus of Anzac day, war memorials, particularly the AWM in Canberra - the army, the Returned Soldiers' and Sailors' Imperial league of Australia and similar organisations, and, ultimately the politics of nationalist and military pragmatics. (p. 24)

Throughout the ritual order of the day all expressions return to the idea of nation and to state. I have looked at how nation and state – the social and the political represent, are represented and are given meaning by the elements of ritual and the visual displays of the day. A semiotic analysis of these elements can be applied to understand the signification and associated cultural meanings that refer to the dominant power – the nation-state, which is quite apparent. Bordieu (1992) addresses the manner in which myth is presented as a tautological proposition whereby the myth has no outside referent but in line with Bordieu's view on reflexivity proposes a neo-Kantian argument that would raise the productive activity of consciousness to account for the relation between the sign and the signified.

I will focus below on the semiotic aspects of the day as they unfold in the ritual, acknowledging that a fuller social analysis could be given. When a myth is presented within the context of ritual the ability to question it becomes difficult. The repetitious quality of the ritual and its compelling structure based on its lexicon – or timing, close the ritual. The ritual provides the mechanism for participation. Through the symbolic acts of power that are committed throughout the ritual, it is the recognition that these acts are legitimate that creates the affirming nature of the ritual. Within the unfolding events of the day, the ritual, the visual, the political and the social are intertwined and provide fertile ground for the perpetuation of a national narrative and signification of the power of the nation-state.

Function of the Anzac Day ritual – A semiotic analysis Perth, Western Australia

The Cambridge dictionary gives the definition of a ritual as; a set of fixed actions and sometimes words performed regularly, especially as part of a ceremony: or from the Oxford dictionary; • noun 1 a religious or solemn ceremony involving a series of actions performed according to a set order. 2 a set order of performing such a ceremony. 3 a series of actions habitually and invariably followed by someone.

Anzac Day is held for the purpose of causing Australians to remember WW1. The day provides a well-ordered sequence of events that moves through 3 distinct stages; the

Dawn Service; the parade; and the after parade closing prayers with address and speeches. The ritual of the Dawn Service is contextualised against the narrative of Gallipoli which begins at dawn when the first wave of Australian soldiers attempted to land at Anzac Cove, and continues with its' own inner ritual of military origins.

I have carried out a semiotic analysis in this chapter on Anzac Day as I have experienced it over the last seven years at the Karakatta barracks for the Dawn Service and in the city of Perth. I link the actual practices of the day with the particular representative practices through signs, language and institution and what they mean against the theoretical framework in Chapter 1. I have examined Anzac Day as a ritual practice and treated each element of the ritual practice as a sign or a symbolic practice. The signified is linked to the sign italicised and enclosed in brackets where it is relevant, as are symbolic practices.

I have identified in the five sections that follow:

The function of the ritual,

How the function is articulated,

The ritual in operation - the symbolic elements,

The visual and the social within the march / parade,

The 'After Parade' gathering: how is the social and political signified?

1. The ritual functions to:

Be an affirmation of identity,

Allow the articulation of symbolic political power,

Legitimate the state and by doing so create consensus and complicity and at the same time create distinctions and classifications,

Create a sense of social cohesion.

2. This function is articulated and operates through:

1. The presence of the Christian church through its chaplains giving the presiding speeches during the Dawn Service and the 'After Parade' official gathering. (*signifies the relationship based on values, tradition and power between the state and the church through the presenting of values – imparting of Christian values – blending religion with state, affirms identity*).

2. The presence of high-ranking military and state officials (*signifies authority and an institution of the nation-state, legitimating state power*).

3. The visibility of symbols and insignia such as the flag, military medals, banners, etc. (*signifiers of state and military traditions, values and cohesive groups and corps – legitimates the state*).
4. The visibility of the police and the armed forces in the context of the parade (*symbolising the power of the state*).
5. The visibility of the police and the armed forces, both formally during the parade and their other associated duties and functions, and as spectators and participants – as ordinary citizens throughout other parts of the ritual (*non-threatening relationship of symbolic power to the individual – social cohesion*).
6. Display and integration of military ritual in the valorisation of the day with the presence of a catafalque party, and the later de-valorisation of the day with the 'fly over' (*legitimates the state through the military traditions – symbolic power*).
7. The elements of ritual that invoke social act in unison such as the two-minute silence, the singing of the national anthem (*social cohesion – affirmation of identity*).
8. The compulsory action of the salute as participants in the parade pass the Governor or other high ranking state or military official (*signifies power of the state, symbolising through the act, a recognition to higher authority, hierarchy, obedience and order*).
9. Mediation; the Prime Minister and Governor General's official Anzac Day address, the proliferation of documentary material surrounding WW1 and the Anzacs, the inclusion of a broadcast from Gallipoli on TV (*state propaganda – symbolic language, symbolic power*).
10. Anzac Day being a state sanctioned national holiday (*social cohesion – symbolic power*).
11. Structure and sequence - the lexicon that continues the ritual through tradition – the ritual can expand only within the confines of its lexicon. An example may be the way that new groups are included in the parade each year. These groups wish to retain their cultural identities but to be acknowledged for their role in assisting Australia in some capacity during war times. Their inclusion has not changed the fundamental ritual.

The ritual in operation – the symbolic elements;

1. The Dawn Service is held at dawn as a remembrance to the diggers landing at Anzac Cove at dawn on April 25th, 1915. (*a commemorative function – affirms common values and shared history*).
2. Valorisation of the ritual occurs at the Dawn Service to consecrate the day (*religious and state values in military tradition*).
3. Structure and order as symbolic elements of ritual are played out through the sequence of events.

4. The element of time is a symbolic element of ritual (*time encloses the ritual*).
5. The catafalque party (*honours a military tradition, the soldiers stand vigil over the catafalque, normally a raised platform where a coffin may lay. On Anzac Day it becomes a symbolic act of vigil*).
6. Raising and lowering the flag to half-mast (*tradition and value – a symbolic gesture of respect*).
7. Participation in collective acts done in unison – observing the two-minute silence, prayer, sitting, standing (*social cohesion*).
8. Address by the chaplain with strong religious component (*identifying the relationship of Christian values to the state – emotion and rational join – symbolic language*).
9. The reciting of poems such as Laurence Blinyon's 'For the Fallen' invokes tradition and ties to a British cultural heritage, remembering associations with allied forces and the power of Britain that pulled Australia into the war (*former imperialist links are embedded in contemporary national culture*).
10. 'The Ode' (*former imperialist links embedded in national culture*).
11. The laying of wreaths offers a symbolic gesture to remember lives lost in service (*further symbolism in the various flowers chosen and in the circular wreath itself - for example rosemary that grew wild on the slopes of Gallipoli*).

The punctuations that occur between the Dawn Service and the parade, between the parade and the 'after-parade' speeches, and between the 'after-parade' speeches and leaving the city, present twilight for those in uniform. The uniform and the wearer represent 'one in service' to the nation-state. The space in between the three organised components of the ritual creates a casual space where the uniformed can mingle and appear as ordinary citizens although still be set apart by the uniform. I have observed this each year, as it is for me the most interesting part of the day, it is unordered and surreal.

The visual and the social within the march / parade:

1. The presence of dignitaries on the dais – the Reviewing Officer, the state president of the RSL and others (*symbolic power*).
2. The route of the parade, its beginning and its end are determined by the City of Perth, but often the dais is positioned against or opposite Trinity church for the high ranking State and military officials to observe from (*symbolic reference to the heritage of Christianity in this society*).
3. The spectators and the participants engage in mutual recognition of social positions and the relationship between the citizen and the state acknowledged by the act of marching and of clapping (*symbolic power - social cohesion*).

4. The wave-past, signifies double recognition - recognition from the marchers to the social position of the person to whom they wave, recognition from the Governor to the symbolic representation of Australia's armed forces (corps and units) as well as to the individuals involved in collective service (*symbolic power - social cohesion*).
5. The order of the marching corps in the parade, the first group to march wear the Digger uniforms of WW1, although are preceded by the mounted police.
6. Military formations (*representing the forces and signifying the symbolic power of the nation-state*).
7. Military bands are of British and Scottish predominance (*signifying tradition and former imperial ties that presuppose a dominant mainstream culture*).
8. Flags and insignia signify the nation-state and collective groupings within the services (*signifies a service to the nation-state, or signifies bravery in action – values*).
9. Embracing of new multicultural groups to the parade (*signifies diversity and openness – but also hierarchy within the nation as these groups march at the rear*).

The after-parade gathering – the social and political signified.

1. Linking mythical Anzac values to Australian national identity in speech acts (*signifies symbolic power – affirming common values and identity*).
2. The projection of WW1 film archive and the telling of personal narratives. Collective and personal memories formed and framed through speech acts (*history and emotion / symbolic language signifies the political intent to construct a national identity based on particular values*).
3. The de-valorisation brings closure to the parade with further imparting of Christian values through prayer and hymns. They are said for 'The men and women who died in Service', for 'The leaders of our nation', for 'The Queens Majesty' and 'The Australian Defence Force' (*signifies closure to the ritual / signifies symbolic language through blending of religious and state ideologies*).
4. The singing in unison of The National Anthem and the singing in unison of 'My Country' (*signifying a recognition by the people for the language of nation*).
5. The Youth Address is awarded to a recipient each year through a state government Anzac Day award (*signifying the successful imparting of state, values through education*).
6. The 'fly-over' makes a symbolic allusion to the cross, both as crucifix and as the Southern Cross (*signifying military tradition – power of the state*).

The following images are a selection of photographic and digital video still images from my archive of documentary footage from Anzac Day 2002–2009 with a focus on the parade.







©

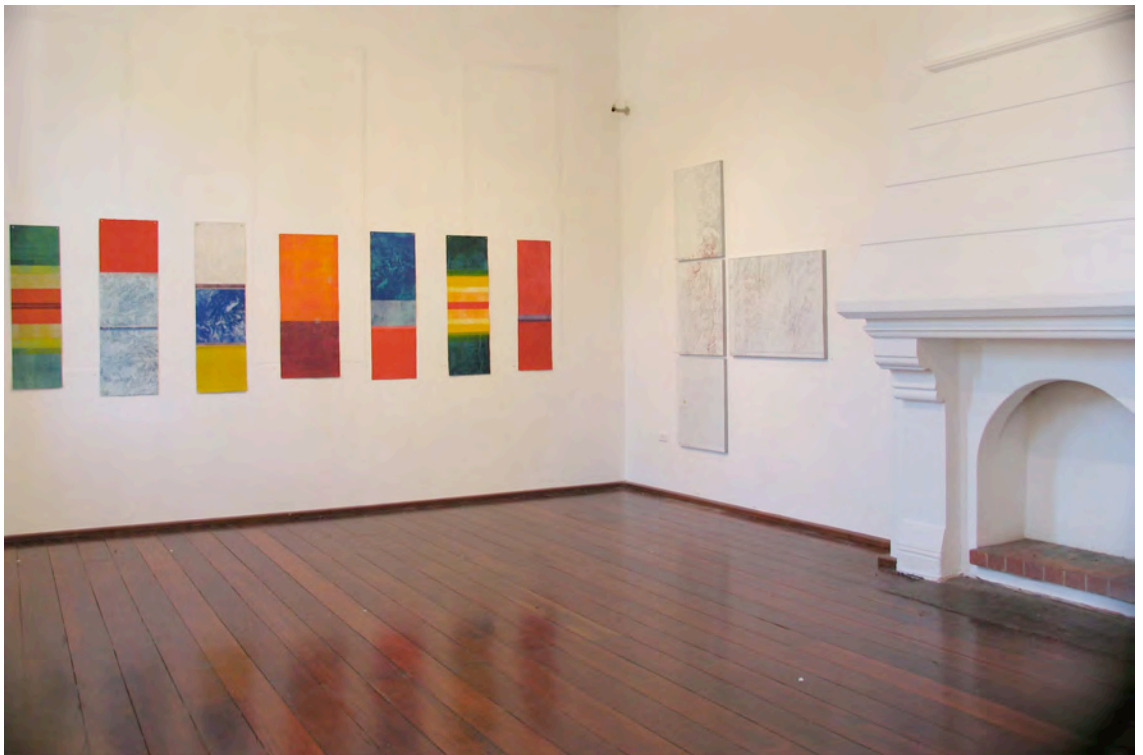
Chapter 4.

Contextualising the project 'Signing Off on the State' – The creative project

The exhibition and works:



Exhibition catalogue front-piece for the *Signing Off on the State* exhibition, 2005. ©



The works in situ at the Fremantle Arts Centre, 2005.



The works in situ at the Fremantle Arts Centre, 2005.



1. *North Beach* (2005), screen-print on zinc, 75 x 59 cm.©



2. *The Nek* (2005), screen-print on zinc, 75 x 59 cm.©



Top: detail; 3. *Brighton Beach* (2005), screen-print on zinc, 75 x 59 cm // Bottom: detail; 4. *The Bloody Angle* (2005), screen-print on zinc, 75 x 90 cm.©



5. *Flag for the Individual # 1* (2004), etching, relief & screen-print on paper, 150 x 37 cm.©



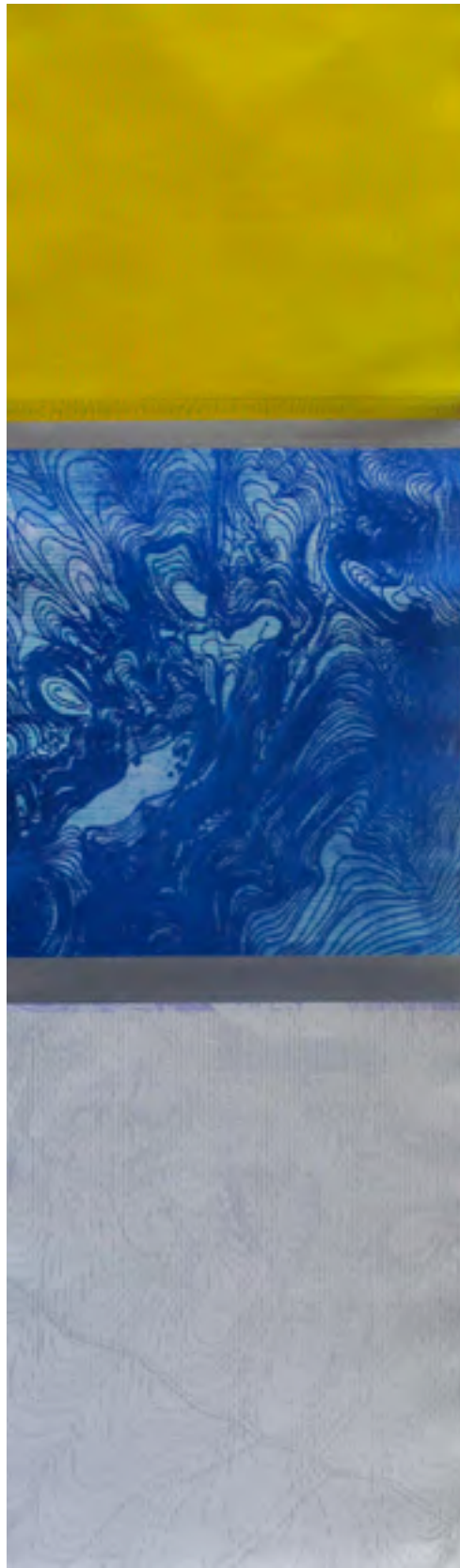
6. *Flag for the Individual # 2* (2004), Etching, relief & screen-print on paper 150 x 45 cm.©



7. *1914/15 Star* (2005), etching, relief & screen-print on paper, 150 x 45 cm.©



8. *Victory* (2004), etching, relief & screen-print on paper, 150 x 45 cm.©



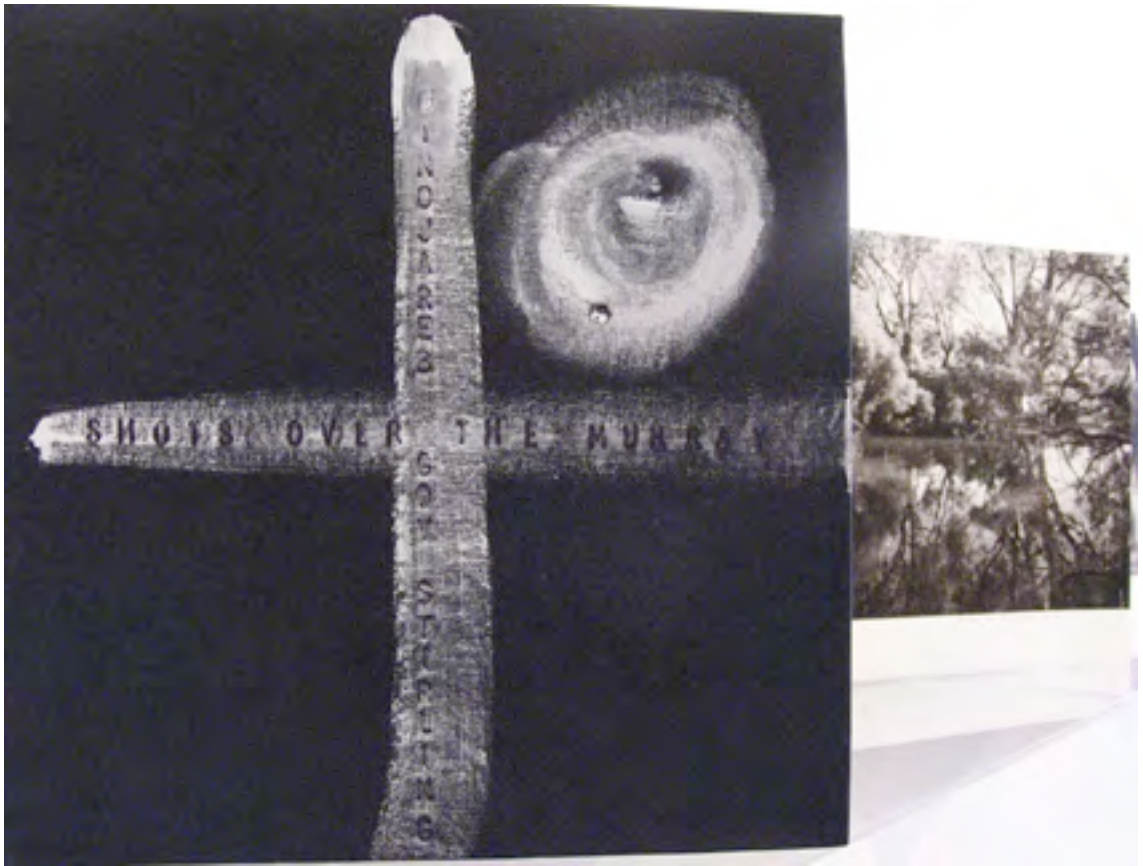
9. *Gallipoli Star* (2004), etching, relief & screen-print on paper, 150 x 45 cm.©



10. *Bravery* (2005), etching, relief & screen-print on paper, 150 x 37 cm.©



11. Detail from: *No Mans Land* (2005), etching & woodblock print, 150 x 50 cm.©



12. *Shots Over the Murray* (2004), concertina book ink-jet print, 500 x 40 cm.©



Shots Over the Murray (2004), concertina book ink-jet print, 500 x 40 cm.©



13. *Ford A.* (2004), type C print, each print 90 x 90 cm.©

Contextualising the project – Signing Off on the State

The creative project

'Signing Off on the State' began through an attempt to understand the processes of nationalism, and the nation-state as a social institution with the capacity, through oration, text, education, policy, institutional power, architecture, etc., to construct rules, law and impart values and authority through its various agencies of power to a society, and so have influence on the causes of unity and division in a given society between cultural groups.

The aim of the exhibition was to visually articulate the two incommensurate sites – the "battlefields" of Pinjarra and Gallipoli - together in one space and link them through an excerpt of John Howard's *Australians at War* address delivered at Australia House in London 2003. Three sets of work referencing differing perspectives of these landscapes were juxtaposed in 'Signing off on the State' and were mindful of the representational practices that historically underpinned their creation. The idea of mapping and recording these battlefields, and referencing particular geographical locations symbolically through a set of etched representations of WW1 military ribbons as the source imagery for the works, was intended to avoid emotive response. In some respect I wanted to mock-up a battlefield in the gallery space that was symbolic of the culture-wars going on in the public discourse concerning privileging particular history through national institutions, and therefore informing national identity. Although not the first, Howard had used the term 'black armband history' in 1996 as a reference to the growing discourse around Australia's history and treatment of Aboriginal peoples. I see this exhibition in part as a visual metaphor both for, and within, that discourse.

The sites contrasted as oppositional were the Pinjarra massacre site, (represented photographically) and Gallipoli (represented through imagery drawn from Turkish topographical maps). The Pinjarra site is a representative site of frontier conflict between military and Aboriginal people during the settlement period. There are many other sites around the country where massacres occurred as previously stated but I chose to privilege the Pinjarra site for its immediate familiarity to me.³⁵ Gallipoli has been selectively privileged in the narrative of the nation, considering that 85% of Australian lives lost during WW1 were on the battlefields of the Western Front. Throughout the making of the works I have attempted a symbolic use of colour and of materials.

³⁵ Six Australian Battlefields - Grassby and Hill (1998).

The risk of producing and exhibiting works through quite different processes was particularly marked for me by my use of photography with the photographic print exhibited in the specific context as an 'artwork.' It raised many questions for myself and created difficulties of definition and meaning. Bordieu (1990) has raised the issue of the lack of symbolism within the canon of photography as a frame of reference. It is easy to talk about the symbolic use of colour within a print or painting, because within the discourse of 'visual art' symbolism and colour exist as legitimate components or elements that the 'artist' may draw upon in an artistic invention. The relationship of content to form can be discussed because the history of art making, at least since the Renaissance, has been marked by styles and invention of technique linked to ideas and other developments in the sciences. Sociology explains these relationships not just as cultural manifestations but how they pertain to the individual and the collective, (large) peer groups within certain modes of artistic production, linked by either form or content. This underpins the self reflexive practice for me and invites a wider analysis of the field of cultural / artistic production that would necessarily involve an examination of funding bodies, curatorial practices and the gallery, the university, and other practitioners who I would call my peers. The photograph as a work of art crosses boundaries and I found it difficult to position the photographic work and name it as an intentional 'artwork.' I felt the only way I could give the solo photograph meaning was to attempt an outside referent to the image itself, to add to it in an attempt to direct its meaning as being relevant to the other works in the exhibition.

The works – ribbons

The ribbons represented through the etchings were mainly of British awards awarded to the allied soldiers as all military awards conferred on Australian soldiers were of the British system until Australia developed its own index of awards in 1975. The Gallipoli Star, the Victory medal, the 1914 / 15 Star, the Victoria Cross and the Star of Gallantry each have particular attributes signifying either military service or bravery in wartime. The works I made that were referential to these awards, were exhibited as a set of seven etched and relief prints, embossed with sections of the Turkish topographical maps of Gallipoli, and hung as vertical columns to denote a reading of landscape through a tradition of military awards and conventions that give symbolic reference to geographies and values through the uses of particular colours.³⁶ For example, the ribbon of the Victoria Cross is crimson in colour and the bravery ribbon a red, denoting bravery symbolised by the cultural connotation of red for courage and blood spilled. The Victory medal's ribbon represents a double rainbow joined at the centre by a red band. The rainbow is meant to symbolise a new era and the 'calm after the storm' of

³⁶ See works numbered # 7, 8, 9, 10 & 11 in the previous section.

WW1. The double rainbow signifies the joining of allied and associated forces using the heraldic colours for conflict and bravery. Whereas the ribbon of the Gallipoli star has 5 bands of colour representing the Australian golden wattle flower, the Australian red flowering gum 'eucalyptus' with the centre colour representing the Aegean Sea (gold, red and blue). The opposite side of the ribbon represents the New Zealand's red flowering 'rata' and New Zealand's frond of the 'silverfern' (red and grey/silver) .

Within the award itself is inscribed a historical link with tradition and values, imbued with meanings that are both shared – a common system used by other warring nations to promote their collective values; but also particular meanings are conveyed. The highest award for bravery, the Victoria Cross, is exchanged for individual's deeds and sacrifice. The Victory medal of 1919 was awarded as a service medal to allied soldiers and conveyed a meaning of both solidarity and victory. These awards are markers in a relationship between the individual and a collective where there is a clearly defined charter of values that are both religious and civic. These objects then have reference to a range of civic values such as loyalty, service, bravery and gallantry. Signifiers of collective engagement in either warfare or so called peacekeeping operations – marking territory through symbolic associations between geographical location and colour – honours and awards are the tangible objects that link the individual with a particular system and this is their ideological function. New medals and awards that have been created in Australia since 1975 signify shifting political ideologies and military alliances. The United Nations Service medals are marked by the UN emblem of a world map, represented as an azimuthal equidistant projection centred on the North Pole surrounded by an olive wreath, which signifies the UN as an agency for peace. The official colours of the UN are blue and white; blue as an opposite primary to red, which is considered representative of war and blood. The ribbon for each operation is marked by colour bands and given to the collective of UN member troops who participate. The colours of the ribbon always carry symbolic meaning or reference to the geographical location of the operation, for example using a yellow sand colour to depict the deserts of the Sinai in the UN Emergency force medal, or, as in the 1960 operation in the Congo, when green for hope was used as the ribbon's predominant colour (Secretary-General, 1946).

The relationship of state and military insignia to the decorative arts and imperial heraldry is the visual embodiment of a national ideology. It signifies in a wider context a static and timeless signification that draws historical connections to medieval times and cultural specificities. Whether we are talking about the coats of arms, swans, lions,

unicorns or wattle, all come together to form simple representations that are ultimately connected to land and ownership; two primary values of the state.

Flags for the individual

Two prints were included in the exhibition from a previous series titled 'Flags for the Individual' which were the seeding works of the ribbon etchings. The idea was to construct a series of prints using thumbprints and military topographical maps as the imagery within the flags. The thumbprint representing a topography of the body was intended to lose its iconic autobiographical status once displayed amongst 50 other flags with thumbprints, so while each flag portrayed the mark of the individual, as a group the marks became representative of a collective and lost their individuality. The topographical map was intended to offer a perspective of landscape that was geographical and aerial, a view of place unnamed and without political division. A standard format template was then intended that would conform the elements to the flag in a particular way, the underlying reason being to denote two unassailable facts; the existence of the individual, and that of a physical and geographically located existence on this earth. Both the thumbprint and the topographical map are used analytically; the flag is a symbolic object of representation. The individual is a node of social relations regardless of the particular ideology that may espouse an emphasis on the collective. A key moment of perception occurred to me while on my first trip to China in 1997 that was to be the initiator of the ideas that have led to this work. The initial visual impact of a group of people en masse can appear like a single body, (like any group or collective when viewed from the outside), bound together in some sort of similarity of appearance or ethnicity and made me acutely aware of my difference. However, once 'inside', connecting with other individuals in the social realm, the differences within what appeared to be the 'body en masse' - between individuals are again made apparent. But then not only are those differences discernible, so is that of your own sameness, that of your common humanity.³⁷ The nature of 'perspective', shifting viewpoints, both perceptual and quantifiable has become a foundational premise in my practice on both a formal and conceptual level and is the reason I have used imagery or ways of making new images with perspective in mind, such as topography of land or body, or the photographic landscape.

³⁷ *The Individual and the Collective* and *Lines of Tendential Force* were art works both made in response to this experience in China. *The Individual and the Collective* is a carborundum collograph print 3000 x 2500 cm that uses the individual mark shaped as a roof shingle to form a collective of marks punctuated by spaces and was exhibited in the Fremantle Print Award in 1998.

Turkish maps

A second group of works in the exhibition was a set of four screen-prints with imagery reproduced from Turkish topographical maps of Gallipoli from the AWM's collection.³⁸ Depicting the terrain along the coast and inland from North Beach, through Anzac Cove and Brighton Beach in the south of Gallipoli, the maps are detailed at 50:1 and include the names of hills, valleys and coastal locations as well as strategic positions where camps had been set up and borders and tracks in Turkish script with annotations in English overlaid. With permission from the AWM I enlarged and reproduced them as screen-prints in white enamel on mounted zinc plate. To these maps I have referenced well known battle sites for places Australians have named 'the Nek' and 'the Bloody Angle' with stenciled iconic wattle balls as symbolic interventions overlaid.³⁹

These topographic maps present a perspective of the landscape as terrain, reduced to geographical information and are located before the inventions of geospatial mapping. Calligraphic and scientific, familiarity of place is once removed. Turkish script and English text overlaid add meaning to place and site it as a place of shared history. In this instance, given a modified form and new context – the art gallery – and removed from military purpose or objective historical importance, the maps are meant to take on an iconic and symbolic status. They are objects intended to be 'stainless' representations of Gallipoli, which has been accorded a status that is akin to being Australian soil, an almost sacred place that draws thousands of Australians and New Zealanders for the annual pilgrimage each Anzac Day. These four prints are highly reflective due to the metallic zinc substrate of the print that was integral to their intended meaning, they are difficult to read therefore and their function is reduced to that of object (sacred). They are printed in white as a symbolic reference to purity.

³⁸ 38 The maps in series IX were produced by the Turkish Mapping Directorate, under Brigadier General Mehmet Şevki Paşa. There are 43 maps in this series: IX GALLIPOLI 1:5000 (TURKISH) Thank-you to the AWM for allowing me to reproduce the maps.

"After the evacuation of Allied forces from Anzac and Suvla in December 1915 and Helles in January 1916, the Turkish Government decided to compile a set of maps showing the battlefield as it was left in 1916. The Turkish Mapping Directorate, under Brigadier General Mehmet Şevki Paşa completed a set of 43 maps, including an index and key. The maps are undated, but the survey was finished by the end of 1916.

The series was acquired by the Memorial in two parts from 1919 to 1921. The Australian Official Historian, CEW Bean, saw copies of these maps during the Australian Historical Mission in 1919 and obtained some copies from the Turkish War Office at that time. Later in 1920 Brigadier-General Blamey wrote to the Memorial, bringing to their attention an article in the *Geographic Journal* in September 1920, referring to the 1:5,000 Turkish maps of the Gallipoli Peninsula after the evacuation. The Memorial Director wrote to the Governor General to gain his support to obtain a full set and a complete set was purchased in 1921." Correspondence from Mel Hunt, Curator, Published & Digitised Collections. Research Centre, Australian War Memorial.

³⁹ See works numbered # 1 - 4 in the previous section.

Shots Over the Murray, Pinjarra

Shots Over the Murray was the third component of works within *Signing Off on the State*. A set of two photographs depicting the Pinjarra Massacre site on the Murray River and a five metre concertina book, titled *Shots Over The Murray*, were intended to convey a sense of history through the documentary, although subjective documentary approach to the subject.

Five black and white photographs later digitally stitched together as a panorama were shot from the western bank across the river looking east. The book, because of its own dimension and paper 's weight, folds and expands both convex and concavely along its shelf. The book was earlier taken to a rifle range and shot with the lead ball shot of an ex-army Ruger handgun. A neat hole ripped through, cover to cover, violently but neatly boring through each page. A dramatic performance in its own right, this action attempted to present an object that was 'authentic' to an experience. Behind the book, concealed until a musket hole reveals, is a text, white on red with excerpts from Howard's speech at Australia House in London 2003.

The image-making history of panoramic representations intersected my approach to the site. Panoramic and narrative views were popular representations in the early nineteenth century depicting new colonies across the world to the British, Canadian and French. Images of the Australian landscape were often sent back to England and reproduced as prints or panoramic representations to be viewed in a rotunda where viewers could gain a 360-degree view such as in Barkers Panorama in Leicester Square.

I photographed along a four hundred-metre stretch of the Murray River to document the 1834 massacre site, including certain landscape features in the panorama that were connected to the history of the Pinjarra massacre as retold and discovered in the journals of Septimus Roe, the surveyor who accompanied the government party. The texts that accompany the history of that event influenced my decisions to record and emphasise pictorially some features over others. The narrative of events that are recorded about the massacre (see Appendix 1, part B) indicate a ruthless strategy employed by Governor James Stirling and the military party that was enabled by the particular geographical features of the area, including the ford, the trees and the height of the river bank on the opposite side, which I found easy to imagine when I visited the site. I photographed from the west bank beginning somewhere in the close vicinity of the Nyungar Bindjareb campsite where musket shells had been found over the last ten

years by other researchers.⁴⁰ Facing the east bank where I imagined the mounted police had positioned themselves 40 metres apart firing into the river, I photographed the large Marri trees with long roots that reach down into the river. I then continued northwards up-river following the direction of the Nyunga retreat. I wanted to commemorate my experience with the place and the date of the massacre, visiting the site on the anniversary of October 25, 1834, over two consecutive years.

A double photographic print was produced on metallic paper, the first in black and white and the second in colour. Central to the image is a large Marri on the ford. It locates the advantage spot taken by soldiers and mounted police to cross the river and affect the strategy that enabled the massacre of the Bindjareb people on the day. The Marri is reflected in the water almost symmetrically so that the tree mirrors in each print.

The thread of commonality ascribed to these works is the theme of landscape and conquest, signification and nation. Mapping, the military, and representation by political iconography and propaganda are implicit in that theme. The installation of these three groupings of work together was not incommensurate in this context but within the rhetoric of the government representing the state through an institution such as the AWM, as I have asserted in Chapter 3 these sites pertain to two Australian histories that exist as relational within current critical discourse but are dominant / submissive within the state sanctioned representative practices constructing an Australian national identity. What articulates these two histories as 'unities' is the representative practices of the state, which denies one a place within its processes of hegemony, and sanctifies the other.

Two key speeches delivered by former Prime Minister Howard set the context for this particular body of artworks. First his address *Australians at War* delivered at Australia House in London, November 10 2003 on the eve of the unveiling of the Australian War Memorial in Hyde Park, and Howard's address at the Shire of Murray's morning tea, at the Civic Centre, Pinjarra in February of 2004.

Howard's speeches set the specific context for these works to be cohesive because they are both explicitly concerned with nation and identity and yet are incommensurable with the cultural realities of different Australians and their lived histories. A thread of connection was enabled through the speeches as Howard sought

⁴⁰ Contos and Thearing, also Blackburne, and Stratham-Drew, have provided by description and maps gained from their own research, a reasonable indication of where the actual site of the massacre took place.

to impart a mythology of Australians at war, first re-presenting and upholding the value of the heroic digger narrative on the now sacred shores of Gallipoli, and then by stating that the conquest of Australia by Europeans was without bloodshed. He may as well have been reaffirming the idea of *terra nullius*.

When John Howard stated in his address *Australians at War* in London that:

Australians are not by nature a war-like people. There is no tradition of conquest or imperial ambition. We've had no history of bloody civil war, of winning our independence through armed insurrection or fortifying our borders against some constant military threat (...). (Howard, 2003)

It was at odds with the established historical archive of literature, official documents, images, and the oral histories of Indigenous peoples.

It came hot on the heels of the National Museum of Australia's 2001 controversial exhibition *Contested Frontiers* and the ensuing symposium *Frontier Conflict – The Australian Experience*.⁴¹ It was an attempt to use that particular occasion to once again assert a view he espoused in his Menzies Lecture of 1996 when he said “this black armband view of our past reflects a belief that most Australian history since 1788 has been little more than a disgraceful story of imperialism, exploitation, racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination” (Attwood & Foster, 2003, p. 14). My use of the Howard speeches is intent to expose a methodology within the power of symbolic language in the creation and perpetuation of a national identity, to expose the expressed value when it comes to privileging some stories over others, and how those particular values are reinforced, rather than offering a subjective opinion about the Anzac legend or the Pinjarra massacre:

(..)Indeed, there's something revealing in the fact that only two statues of individuals are placed outside our national War Memorial in Canberra. The Memorial contains relics, artwork and historical records that tell the story of Lone Pine, Beersheba, Villers Bretonneux, Kokoda and Tobruk, Kapiong, Long Tan and the hundreds of other places where Australians have performed some of the finest feats of arms in the history of warfare. And yet it's Simpson with his donkey who brought wounded from the firing lines at Gallipoli and Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop, the doctor whose dedication saved countless lives during a long and cruel captivity along the Burma-Thailand railway – both unarmed and unlikely warriors - that stand in bronze as symbols of the Australian military tradition and character. (Howard, 2003)

Following is an excerpt from John Howard's speech at the shire of Murray Pinjarra on Feb 2, 2004. The speech in its fullness was addressing current economic and social issues, Medicare, the impending Free Trade agreement, family values, funding for

⁴¹ *Frontier Conflict the Australian Experience* is a publication of the papers delivered at the symposium and produced by the NMA.

roads, preserving rail history, national security, border protection policies, social stability and cohesion. Given the history of the Pinjarra massacre in 1834, the circumstances that led to it and the devastating consequences for the Bindjareb people after it, the former Prime Minister's speech is blatantly insensitive. This is particularly so, given that during his term he would not publicly acknowledge there was a frontier war that underpins the first 160 years of Australia's history, and was the beginning of the subsequent disenfranchisement of Australian Indigenous people:

This country is very proud of its history, we're very proud of what we all understand to be the traditional Australia, we're also though very proud of the fact that since World War II in particular we have accepted into our midst millions of people from different parts of the world and above everything else they have overwhelmingly become wonderful Australians and have made a wonderful contribution to the development of our country and part of the social cohesion that we now have is to continue to preserve that great tolerance. It's an incredible privilege to an Australian and it's an even greater privilege to be Prime Minister of this wonderful country and I never wake up in the morning without thinking how fortunate I am to have that privilege and resolve to do everything I can each day to try and better not only the country collectively, but also the opportunities and the lives of the 20 million individual Australians for which I feel a particular affinity and a particular obligation.

Now to all of you of the Pinjarra and field district, thank you for having me, these are very important interactions between a Prime Minister and different groups of Australians around our country. Finally and again can I commend to all of you the remarkable energy and efforts of your Federal Member Don Randall who does a great job for all of you and I am absolutely delighted to be with him and to have the opportunity of meeting you.
Thank you. (Howard, 2004)

The irony here is in present day attitudes to refugees and the measures taken to ensure maximum control by the Howard Government. The attitude is embedded within multicultural and immigration policies, reflected in Aboriginal affairs and revealed in outbursts such as Howard's in October 2001 at the Liberal Party campaign launch in Sydney when he threw two hands in the air and departed from the script to proclaim "We will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances by which they come" (Cater, 2006, p. 35).

Approximately five kilometres south of Pinjarra on the high bank of the western side of the Murray River, a large rock sits as a memorial to the members of the Bindjareb tribe who were massacred in an act of frontier violence and resistance one morning in 1834. On October 28 each year the Murray District Aboriginal community mark the day.

Conclusion:

I have offered a reflexive analysis of my practice in an attempt to understand the meaning of my work from both a subjective and objective perspective. By drawing on Bordieu's (1992) *habitus* and Vazquez' (1973) theory of the artist as a node of social relations, I have mapped the context of my practice subjectively by looking back at what might be particularities that have formed my habitus and by identifying the values that are core to my work. By positioning myself as a node of social relations I have examined my practice from an empowered position as an agent with the opportunity for communicative action through my practice. In doing this I have drawn upon Giddens' (1991) model of social organisation and the possibilities for institutional transformation (cited in Held, 1992, p. 34). I have also looked at the social and historical relationships of the individual in societal organisations and in relation to, what Hall refers to as tendential lines of force, religion and the state to give example of the changing nature of these political relationships according to dominant ideologies. I have given examples of how individuals working within the fields of cultural / artistic production have been both censored and sanctioned according to the institution and given examples of artists whose practice is focused on presenting a view of a cultural reality that challenges the dominant and hegemonic representations of national identity presented by mainstream media and the state as normative.

I have examined cultural identity as individuals attempt to engage against the systems of representation that seek to assimilate – by example of Australian artists Ann Zahalka and Gordon Bennett. I have established how cultural identities have challenged and subverted, through artworks, mainstream notions of identity and representation – by example of *The Aboriginal Memorial* and the Ramingining artists. I have analysed how a meaningful cultural object, independent of its maker, becomes a politically charged object in its own right within the domains of the intersecting fields of cultural / artistic production and the field of power, such as the cultural representation expressed by the Queenie McKenzie painting *Massacre at Mistake Creek (1997)*.

In contextualising my practice against a wider framework, I have identified various elements as belonging to an articulated structure – the structure is the nation-state – and I have mapped those elements as the context by which a national identity can be constructed.

In mapping the context by which Australian national identity is formed in the specific examples that relate to my practice, I have identified some cultural practices that operate to produce meaning. I have set up a theoretical framework looking at the writing of Hall (1992, 1996), Bordieu (1991), (1992) Slack (1996) and Grossberg

(1996), to try and form a 'unity' of relations throughout, to try and draw links and make sense of how the elements I have included are part of an articulated structure.

To do this I have drawn upon the theoretical text of Barthes (1968) in relation to structural linguistics and signification, as well as those of Stuart Hall (1996), to provide an explanation of the role of representative practices in relation to power. I have cited particular texts that draw upon the social and historical formations of representing Australia from Richard White (1981) and Elizabeth Gertsakis (1997). I have used the ritual of Anzac Day as such a practice and the codes and significations embedded within to look at symbolic power and the relationship of the individual to the collective. I have given examples of the power of symbolic language as an element in the process of constructing and shaping a dominant cultural position by the state and supported these examples with theoretical texts by Bordieu (1992) and Hall (1992). I have framed the examples of symbolic speech notably delivered by the former Australian Prime Minister John Howard against the cultural realities that he seeks to dismiss as an example of the process to maintain hegemony. I have given examples of these struggles to exert dominance in the field of cultural production and produce meaning to assert a dominant and exclusive view of war history in Australia within the institutions, the Australian War Memorial and the National Museum Australia.

Through the making of the works and my exhibition *Signing Off on the State* I have analysed the social and political function of Anzac Day, and examined the state embodied mechanisms that have censored the representation of Australia's colonial history. I have referred to the racist attitudes that pre-existed the colonial conquest of Australia and I assert that the cultural assumptions that are made on the basis of representative practices, contribute as a negative factor within the discourse of nation and identity. I have made this example in referring to the *United Nations World Conference on Racism* throughout the thesis, and in citing the works of Gordon Bennett in Chapter 2.

I have considered what underpins the assertion of a national identity although it requires further reference to economic - capital relations which is beyond the scope of this thesis. As Hardt and Negri (2001) assert, "How can the globalisation of relationships move us away from the divisions of national, colonial and imperial rule?" (p. 44). I concur with Willis (1993) as she has asked, "How will we manage intellectual projects connected to issues of global crisis, thought of in context of regional specificities, if we hold on to the project of nation building?" (p. 190).

What local structures could replace nation to enable voice and reflexivity between citizens and democratic institutions of a more global character? Thousands of non-government organisations (NGOs), local and international, such as Amnesty International, International Women's Development Agency, Oxfam, World Vision Australia, Australians Caring for Refugees, Australian Red Cross, to name only a few, cut across the mainstream to represent the under-represented or particular moral causes inadequately resolved by government.⁴² Oxfam for example are currently running the 'close the gap' programme working with many other NGOs toward Indigenous Australian health equality.

In summation, the following excerpt from the *United Nations World Conference on Racism* encapsulates the intent and the meaning, – the sentiment – that first underpinned my creative project *Signing Off on the State*:

We emphasize that remembering the crimes or wrongs of the past, wherever and whenever they occurred, unequivocally condemning its racist tragedies and telling the truth about history are essential elements for international reconciliation and the creation of societies based on justice, equality and solidarity; (.) (United Nations, 2001, ¶106).

⁴² Although in many instances are partially funded through the government body AusAid <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/makediff/default.cf>

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APPENDIX 1

The Pinjarra Massacre

This appendix, in two sections, is an historical account of the Pinjarra massacre. It is background research to the project. Section A is a statement of significance extracted from the register of the National Estate. Section B is a narrative account of the Pinjarra massacre drawn from both historical material and contemporary research.

Section A:

Source: Go to the Register of the National Estate for more information.

Identifier: 16859

Location: Greenlands, Pinjarra

Local Government: Murray Shire

State: WA

Country: Australia

Statement of Significance:

The place comprises an area which symbolises the Pinjarra massacre. The massacre is the most significant armed conflict to have taken place within southwest Western Australia (WA) (Criterion A.4). In 1834, Governor Stirling, the then Governor of WA, led a punitive raid on a large camp of Nyungar people. It was officially estimated that at least thirty Aboriginal people lost their lives but the number was probably greater. The massacre took place over an extensive stretch of land along the Murray River, in the vicinity of its confluence with Oakley's Brook. The place comprises a part of the massacre site.

The incident had a drastic effect on the local groups who occupied this area, virtually terminating the Pinjarra clans as functioning social units. As well, it triggered major changes in the political, economic and cultural life of Aboriginal people throughout the region. The place is significant to the Nyungar people of the southwest, who erected a commemorative plaque in the area c. 1978 (Criterion G.1).

Description:

A section of the Murray River and its environs was, in 1834, the location of a punitive raid on Aboriginal people led by the then Governor of WA. The massacre took place over an extensive stretch of land along the Murray River, in the general area of its confluence with Oakley's Brook. The full extent of the site cannot now be accurately determined. The locality is now subsumed within the township of Pinjarra and only a small part of it has remained as parkland. Before the massacre, the area was an important Aboriginal site. It was a nodal point for Aboriginal track ways, a major camping place and a significant ceremonial locality. The massacre, which saw the

deaths of at least thirty Aboriginal people, virtually terminated the Pinjarra clans as functioning social units. It thus had a drastic effect on the local groups who ranged across this area and also triggered changes in the political, economic and cultural life of Aboriginal people throughout the region. The site is of major significance to the Nyungar people of the southwest who erected a plaque in the area around 1978.⁴³

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- 1) Mulvaney, D.J. (1989). 'Encounters in place: outsiders and Aboriginal Australia 1606-1985'. University of Queensland press.
- 2) Ibery, E.S. (1927-1931). The passing of the Bibbulum. The battle of Pinjarra, 1834. pp 24-30 in 'Early days', the journal of the Royal W.A. historical society. Vol 1.
- 3) Smart, W.C. 'Mandurah and Pinjarra: history of Thomas Peel and the Peel estate 1829-1865.' Paterson Brokenshaw.
- 4) Richards, Ronald. (1978). 'The Murray district of Western Australia: a history' chapter 6. Shire of Murray.
- 5) Green, Neville (1984). 'Broken spears - Aborigines and Europeans in the southwest of Australia'. Chapter 11. Focus education Services
- 6) Contos, Natalie & Kearing, Theo. 1998. Pinjarra Massacre Site Research and Development. NEGP Report. 1. (Ferguson, 1992)

Section B:

The creative project works 'Shots Over the Murray' and 'Ford A' were influenced by the history of the early days of the Swan colony and the site of the violent clash that occurred between the Bindjarab group, local to the Murray River, and the official party of Governor James Stirling in 1834.

The accumulated research surrounding the event exists in form of official letters and newspaper reports, recorded oral histories and scholarly research.⁴⁴ The role and actions of the Governor, colonial regiments and mounted police were underpinned by the colonial mindset of expansion and racism.

The colony, formally established in 1829 under the Governance of Captain James Stirling had expanded from the area around Mt Eliza – Carakatta with settlements and land entitlements totaling one million acres by 1831 along the waterways of the Swan, Avon and Canning Rivers. Within the first six months of the establishment of the colony twenty-five ships landed carrying 669 people with livestock, bricks, tools, seed and plants. These new settlers outnumbered the local Wadjuk people who were numbered at 420. The land was surveyed by Surveyor General J.S.Roe and parceled out in neat divisions fronting the main route for transport, the Swan River. The western coastal areas and fertile inland regions of the Murray, Avon and Canning were occupied by the indigenous tribes Wadjuk from the swan settlement area, Avon Valley group and the Bindjareb of the Murray River area at the time of the invasion of British settlers (Stratham-Drew, 2003).

The first six months or so of settlement in the Swan colony did not meet with much hostility or resistance from the traditional owners until traditional food sources were affected. By 1833 the Swan settlement had almost entirely encroached upon the Wadjuk's staple food source the yam. The Colony had experienced considerable hardship in the first years with shortages of food, money and labour. The British Government had only offered support to Stirling for the first three years and had made it clear that the basics would be provided but the new settlers would have to grow the colony and make a success of it themselves.

⁴⁴ There are three written versions of events of that day and an oral history that belongs to the Nyunger Bindjarebs descendents, contemporary research has been done by Natalie Contos in collaboration with the Murray District Aboriginal Association. There are also letters from Governor Stirling to the Colonial Office, cited in Strathan-Drew's research. There are the daily journal entries of Roe and there is an unidentified eyewitness account. There also exists a letter in the state archives written by a man who remembers his grandmother's stories of the day of the massacre. There are several reports of the events surrounding the massacre and the event itself published in the Swan Gazette, the colony newspaper of the day.

Thomas Peel, wealthy British landowner and cousin of the British Home Secretary Robert Peel, had taken a land grant of several million acres that extended from south of Fremantle and encompassed the fertile region of the Murray River. Originally Peel had been offered a large parcel of land around the Canning River but on the condition he arrive in the colony by November 1830. His arrival was delayed and his grant forfeited, however Stirling offered him the new land further south.

On October 25 1834 Governor James Stirling led an expedition of 25 men to the Murray River district in the south-west of Western Australia. Stirling had offered to 'extend protection and assistance' to Thomas Peel so that he could build a settlement further upstream of the Murray. A previous attempt to occupy land upstream had failed because of resistance from the Nyungar Bindjareb against the settler occupation. With increased military support to the colony in 1834, Stirling was now intending to take reinforcements to Peel and set an outpost upstream at Pinjarra (Connors, 2002).

Two detachments of the 21st Regiment Soldiers of Foot (North British Fusiliers) were sent from Van Diemens land bolstering support to the colony from 20– 120 (Blackburn, 1999). Military historian John Connor suggests this and the newly formed Mounted Police would have given Stirling enough resources to fight the Bindjareb on their own land (Connor, 2002).

Heavily armed with over 300 rounds of ammunition and carrying new Baker rifles, the group left Perth separately so as not to attract attention or alert anybody as to their mission. They agreed to meet at Peel at the mouth of the Murray. The new Baker rifles had not yet been formally issued to the army, a request by Captain Ellis enabled their early dispatch. They were improved on the standard issue flintlock Brown Bess rifles by being double barreled and with the addition of sights (Contos & Thearing, 1998, p. 20).

The party of 25 included:

Governor Sir James Stirling

Captain John Septimus Roe (naval officer and surveyor)

Captain Richard Goldsmith Meares (retired cavalry officer)

Seymour Goldsmith Meares

Captain Theophilus Tighe Ellis (Superintendent of Police and retired Captain of the 14th Dragoons)

5 men of the Mounted Police (likely to have been former soldiers of the 63rd Regiment)

George Smythe (surveyor)

A detachment of the 21st Regiment of Foot soldiers (3 corporals and 8 privates)

Mr. Peel

Mr. Peel's servant

Mr. Norcott

Corporal Damage

The party moved forward over the next day, October 27, surveying the land, detailed accounts in Roe's journal describe the terrain and geographical locations. They set camp along a stretch of the Murray known as JimJam close to where the Ravenswood Bridge stands today and prepared to make a pre dawn start the next day. Under overcast skies and rain on the morning of the 28th when they came upon a large group of about 70-80 Nyungar men women and children camped by the river, Stirling's party approached with some degree of stealth, divided and took strategic positions on both sides of the river including posting men on the two fords. Captain Ellis moved forward to confront the group and very quickly shots were fired. A spear wounded Ellis and an Aboriginal named Noonar was shot dead by of the mounted police.

The Bindjareb retreated to the river immediately upon the firing to find the fords blocked. Seeking refuge in the river, secreted among the tree roots and the banks, Stirling's men spread at 40 metre intervals along the east bank and, as described in Roes journal, picked them off like bobbing heads. The firing continued for one hour according to Roe when Stirling noted that enough punishment had been inflicted and called a ceasefire. Stirling's group made a hurried departure without surveying the scene, probably due to the severe injuries of Captain Ellis and one other soldier who was speared in the arm. Because of that the Nyungar deaths could only be conservatively estimated between 15 and 35 (Contos & Thearing, 1998) (Stratham-Drew, 2003).

APPENDIX 2

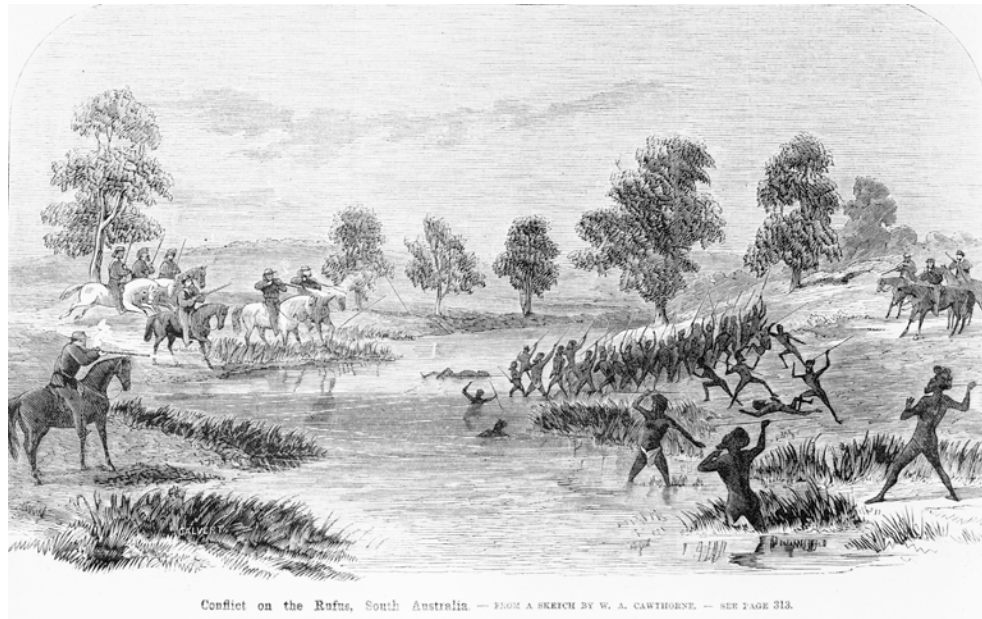
A register of images created pre-Federation depicting conflict on the Australian frontier.

This is not a conclusive register and may be the impetus for further research. Permission has been granted to reproduce all the selected images courtesy of; the State library of Victoria (SLV), the National Museum of Australia (NMA), The Mitchell library, State Library of NSW, (SL NW) and the National Library of Australia (NLA).

The selected works depict warfare between soldiers or police and Aborigines and warfare between Aborigines and settlers.



Unknown Artist, *A Skirmish Near Creen Creek* (1876), wood engraving, SLV collection.

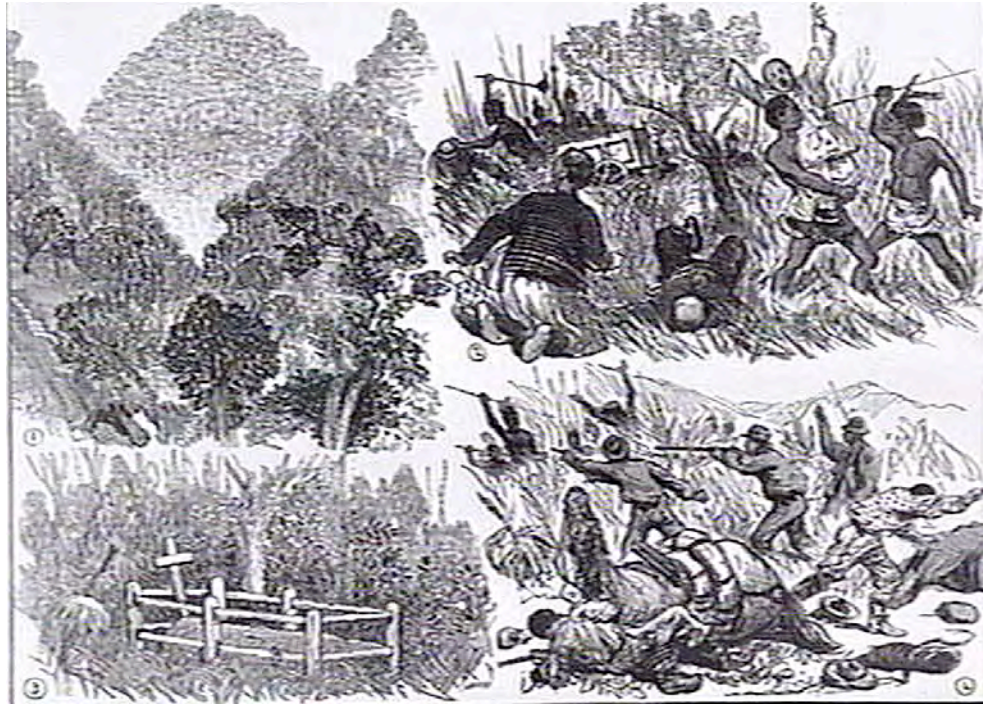


Conflict on the Rufus, South Australia — FROM A SKETCH BY W. A. CANTHORNE. — SEE PAGE 313.

Calvert, S, *Conflict on the Rufus, South Australia* (1866), wood engraving, SLV collection.



Unknown Artist, *The Fight at the Conglomerate 11* (1878), wood engraving, SLV collection.



Unknown Artist, *The Fight at the Conglomerate* 1. *Track over the Conglomerate* -- 2. *Burking a Chinaman* -
- 3. *Throckmorton's Grave* -- 4. *Packers Stuck up by Blacks* (1878), wood engraving, SLV collection.



[ATTACK BY NATIVES ON THE BARROV'S CREEK TELEGRAPH STATION,—SEE PAGE 42.]

Unknown Artist, *Aboriginal Australians on the Barrow's Creek telegraph station* (1874), SLV collection.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Shows a group of aborigines making a night time attack on the telegraph station, resulting in the death of the station-master.



Unknown Artist, *Australian Aborigines War* (1867), wood engraving, SLV collection.



Unknown Artist, *A night Attack* (1866), wood engraving, SLV collection.



National Library of Australia

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Calvert, S. *Natives attacking a Shepherds' Hut* (186-?), wood engraving, NLA collection.



National Library of Australia

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McFarlane J. *Sturt's party threatened by blacks at the junction of the Murray and Darling* (1830), photoengraving, NLA collection.



Unknown Artist, *Aboriginals of Van Demonds land endeavouring to kill Mr. John Allen on Milton Farm in the District of Great Swanport on the 14th December 1828* (1828), pencil drawing, Mitchell Library SLNSW collection (call no. DL Pe 279).⁴⁶



Gil, T.S., *Poor Harmless Natives* (1862-63), watercolour, Mitchell Library SLNSW collection (call no. PXA 1983/17).

⁴⁶ This drawing records an attack on John Allen's property at Milton (on the west bank of the Cygnet River, east coast of Tasmania) on 14 December 1828. After a series of raids in the district by Aboriginal people, and counter raids by colonists, Milton Farm was attacked whilst Allen was alone. This drawing records his single-handed defence of his farm. The incident seems to have become a defining incident in his life, and was even noted on his tombstone. Family legend says that the drawing was sketched from memory, and was not immediately contemporary to the event (information from David Hansen ML 1043/98). For a later oil painting, apparently based on this image, see SPF/TASMANIAN ABORIGINES (SL NSW accompanying notes from the Picman database)



NATIVE TROOPERS DISPERSING A CAMP.

Unknown Artist, *Native Troopers dispersing a Camp* (1886-88), steel engraving, Picturesque Atlas of Australasia Vol 2, p,340.



W.A.Cawthorne, *A Fight at the Murray* (1844 - 1864), watercolour, Mitchell Library SLNSW collection (Call no PX*D 70/32).



W.A.Cawthorne, *The Murder of Biddel* (1844 - 1864), watercolour, Mitchell Library SLNSW collection (Call no PX*D 30/10).



Hamilton G, *Overlanders Attacking the Natives* (1846), ink drawing, Mitchell Library SLNSW collection (Call no V/89).



Hamilton G, *Natives Attacking the Cattle* (1846), ink drawing, Mitchell Library SLNSW collection (Call no V/89).



Gil, T.S, *The Marauders* (188?), watercolour Mitchell Library SLNSW collection (Call no PXA 1983/17).



Blacks about to attack Leichhardt's Camp, near the Gulf of Carpentaria, 1845.

National Library of Australia

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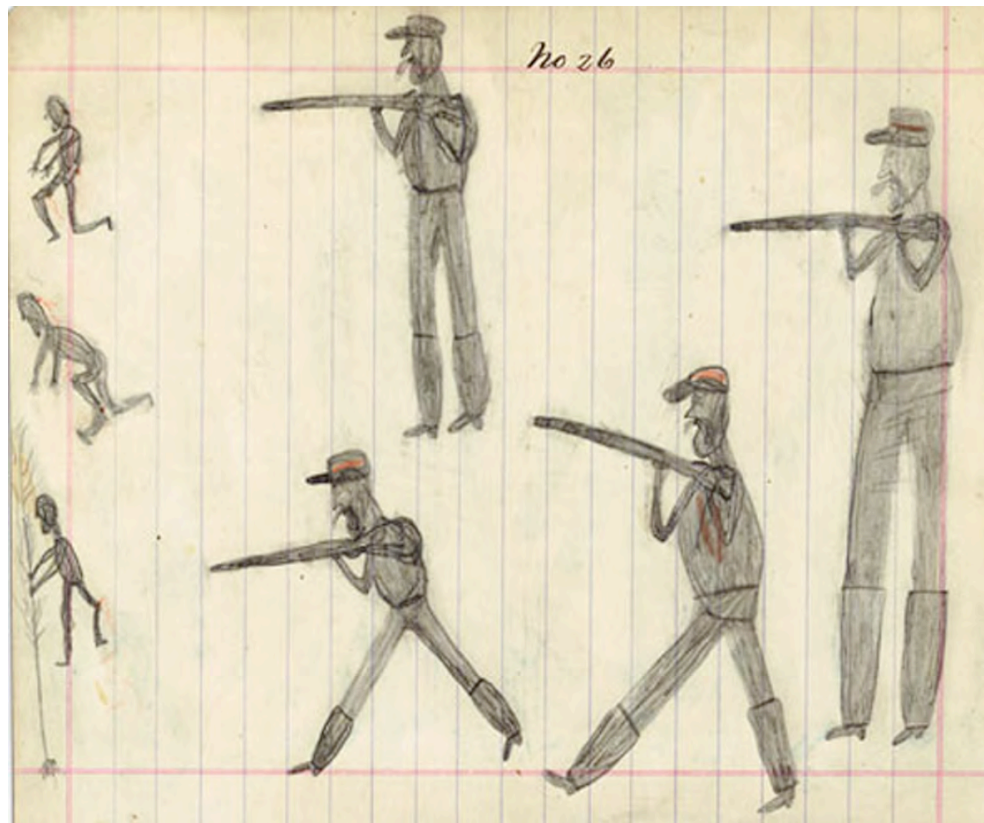
McFarlane, J, *Blacks about to attack Leichhardt's Camp, near the Gulf of Carpentaria* (189?), photoengraving, NLA collection.



Unknown Artist, *Governor Davey's [sic] Proclamation to the Aborigines*, 1816 (1828-30), oil on board, National Museum Australia, Object number 2006.0007.0001.⁴⁷

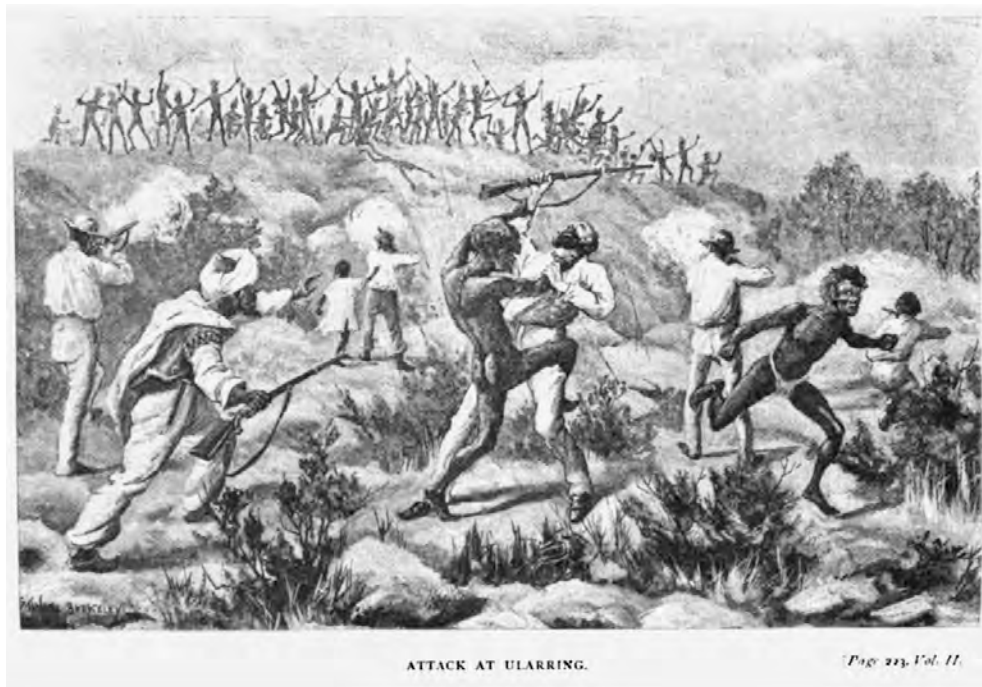
⁴⁷ 4 scenes are depicted:

1. Aborigines and white settlers in European dress mingling harmoniously
2. Aboriginal men and women, and an Aboriginal child approach Governor Arthur to shake hands while peaceful soldiers look on
3. A hostile Aboriginal man spears a male white settler and is hanged by the military as Governor Arthur looks on
4. A hostile white settler shoots an Aboriginal man and is hanged by the military as Governor Arthur looks on. (SL NSW accompanying notes from the Picman database)



Oscar, *Dispersing Usual Way* (1899?), pencil drawing, NMA collection from Oscar's sketchbook no.26.
http://www.nma.gov.au/collections/collection_interactives/oscars_sketchbook/⁴⁸

⁴⁸ When staff from the National Museum of Australia began cataloguing its collections in the early 1980s, they came across a cardboard box containing items once owned by the Institute of Anatomy. At the bottom of this box lay an old exercise book labelled 'Drawn by Oscar'. The sketches found inside were depictions of a young Aboriginal man's memories of growing up in far north Queensland. Oscar's pencil drawings depict a variety of scenes from traditional ceremonies to interactions with Europeans, to places he visited in the surrounding area – a rare record of life in the late 1800s from an Aboriginal person's perspective.(NMA notes with image)



Berkeley, Stanley, *Attack at Ularring*, (1889) After a sketch by Henry Charles Prinsep, From Ernest Giles, *Australia Twice Traversed*, London, 1889, vol2, facing p.223



Barnard, G *Attack of the Natives near Hanover Bay* (1841) Lithograph After a sketch from George Grey, *Journals of Two Expeditions of Discovery*, London, 1841, vol 1, facing p.106. SLV.



Cerebus, The attack by the blacks upon Mr. C.H. Johnstone [sic] and party at Barrow Creek, N.T. (1874), lithograph, NLA collection.



Graham, Peter, Massacre at Glencoe (1889), wood engraving SLV collection.



THE DEATH OF KENNEDY.

Unknown Artist, *The Death of Kennedy* (1886-88), steel engraving, Picturesque Atlas of Australasia Vol 2 p.472.

APPENDIX 3

I have included a poem written by my grandfather Alex J. Laherty from an unpublished book *Little Scraps of Paper*, a biography written by John Laherty in 1996 that includes several short stories and poetry.

This appendix is relevant to my practice as outlined in my methodology as to undertake a reflexive analysis of my practice is to include a consideration of the social influences that have contributed to my habitus. As I noted in Chapter 3, my grandparents were quite influential in my childhood years.

“Always opposed to war, he looked through the jingoism and the nationalistic fervour and sought out the economic reasons for international conflict. The Americans always had a hidden agenda in his mind” (Laherty J, 1999, p.103).

I read this untitled poem as a social document that provides a snapshot of Australian attitudes to our involvement in the Vietnam War, highlighting the racist and anti-communist attitudes that prevailed at the time to sanction Australia’s participation. The notions of difference by ‘othering’ the ‘Vietnamese’ as heathen and communist is an attitude I can remember experiencing during the 1960s.

The bombs fall on the Vietnamese
To try and bring them to their knees
To make them slaves to Yankee dollars
But you don’t have to be Rhodes Scholars
To realise they want to steal
The stuff that’s used for hardening steel
It’s called Tungsten - there’s plenty of it
By which the armament firms make profit
If there was none in Vietnam
America wouldn’t give a damn
Australia wouldn’t have their sons
Being slaughtered by Viet-Cong guns

We’ve seen these things go on before
We’ve seen it in the First World War
When leather from Australian cattle
Was used by German troops in battle
Encased in leather to their knees
While Aussie troops wore puttees
Explosives from Australian fat
Was used to kill out troops - how’s that?
The Labour Party don’t back Ky⁴⁹
And Arthur Caldwell’s⁵⁰ told them why
We shouldn’t send our sons to fight
A war that’s neither just or right.

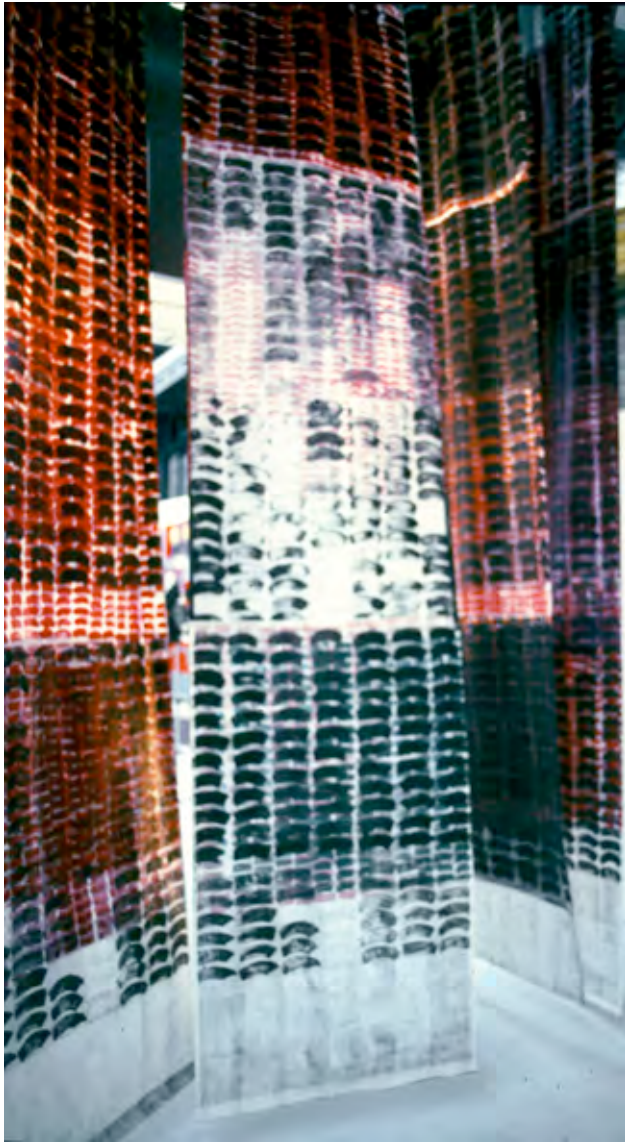
If the money spent on bombs and planes

⁴⁹ Air Marshall Ky, Leader of South Vietnam during the escalation of the war. It was widely believed, and subsequently proved that he was a puppet of US installed by the CIA.

⁵⁰ Arthur Caldwell, parliamentary leader of the ALP in opposition (against Menzies) for many years. Deposed by Gough Whitlam, he was an old hard liner well left of centre. (Laherty J, 1996).

Which each year down on Vietnam rains
Was used to buy them clothes and rice
The Viet-Cong would say, "That's nice"
We're three times better off than before
The Yankees stared this cruel war

Of course there's folks who'll say you're wrong
And label you - say you're pro com
If you oppose this senseless slaughter
Say, "Would you like to see your daughter
"Raped by a low heathen Chinese
"Or have to bow on bended knee
"To Ho Chi Min or Mao Tse Tung
"Or if not finish up being hung"



Allerding A (1998), *Tendential lines of force* (1998), collograph and screen-print on rice paper, 5 panels each 570 x 80 cm.©