

Inside out, outside in: changing perspectives in Australian art historiography

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Alertness to the foundational character of historiography, and to the innovative potential of that alertness, may be more pronounced among art historians working in Australia than in many other places—most evidently, the United States. For art historians of my generation this is a fact of experience; for those of a younger generation, the difference of approach may be less obvious. An anecdote might help make the point. When I began graduate studies at the Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, in the fall of 1972, I followed my interests as an art critic and a graduate student writing on Abstract Expressionism and ethics by enrolling in the courses on modern and contemporary art offered by Robert Goldwater ('Twentieth Century Sculpture'), Robert Rosenblum ('Friedrich to Rothko: Modern Painting and the Northern Romantic Tradition') and William Rubin ('American Art since 1945'). I also attended some of the Wrightsman lectures on the Renaissance in Eastern Europe given by Jan Bialostocki, and occasional talks by other luminaries such as Donald Posner, Gert Schiff, H.W. Janson and Henry Russell Hitchcock. But when I asked for guidance on art theory, on art historical methodology - even, in some desperation, art historiography- my adviser Goldwater looked puzzled, smiled then shook his head, sadly: 'We don't do that sort of thing here.'¹ He did, however, arrange for me to audit the only such course available in the New York university system at the time, G6001Y: Art History Theory and Methods, taught by Meyer Schapiro at Columbia University. This series of lectures compared the role of practices of classification within a variety of art historical approaches with those then current in scientific thinking, mostly cybernetics and semiotics. Given in a constantly changing form from the 1960s until the 1980s, it remains a touchstone of my own thinking, as it does for many others.

What led me to expect such instruction? Every honors student in the Department of Fine Arts at the University of Melbourne would have had the same presumption. A strong sense that art could be understood in utterly different ways flowed from the striking contrasts between the approaches of the main lecturers.

¹ It took a long time for such courses to be introduced at the IFA. Now, incoming Masters students must take a foundation course in 'Practices of Art History' which, according to the website, 'provides a systematic historiographic introduction to the history of the discipline, followed by case studies in art historical method.' While other current courses seem more theoretically informed than in the past, this is the only explicitly methodological offering in what is still ranked as one of the leading graduate art history schools in the world.

Professor Sir Joseph Burke personified connoisseurship, British style, combining Anthony Blunt's cool neoclassicism with a quite personal passion for its opposite, Romanticism, exemplified above all by William Blake. Franz Philipp embodied the deeply erudite iconographic immersion in, mostly, European art that had been pioneered by Vienna School art historians, along with their penchant toward warring over modes of iconological interpretation of that art. Bernard Smith represented a radically Marxist social history of art, applied above all to the national narrative of Australian art. The course structure offered us each of these lecturers in turn, in our first, second and third years, from a general introductory survey of ancient art to the present (Burke), through Gothic to Renaissance (Philipp), then Baroque to Modern (Smith). Honors students did extra work in each of these, and then, during their fourth year, undertook supervised research and also wrote a thesis guided by one of these men, as well as, in my year (1966), Philipp's course on aesthetics. It was this course that brought all of these elements together: in the first half of the year our small group (that included the future critic Ross Lansell and the scholar Margaret Plant) read a plethora of approaches to Velasquez's *Las Meninas* (regrettably, one year too early for Foucault, but there was plenty of variety); in the second we critically unpacked each sentence in Ernst Gombrich's recent book, *Art and Illusion* (1960).

There is, of course, a deeper set of reasons for Australian art historians' alertness to the provisionality of powerful interpretations, even those that seem canonical. When you are located at a cultural periphery, you become aware that the definitive interpretations of whatever is most valuable to you originate at centers some distance from where you live and work, and that they are subject to change, often radical change, for reasons that seem arbitrary. Yet you must learn to fathom them, and quickly, because they impact on your capacity to participate in the discourse as a whole. Obviously, this is true for cultural workers at any periphery anywhere. But it is true in a particular way in each place. For historians working in the peripheries whose focus is on art from elsewhere these necessities of adjustment over distance are especially acute. In those days, the profession internationally focused its attention almost exclusively on European art. In our case, it is telling that Bernard Smith did not teach the history of Australian art at Melbourne University, despite his pivotal role, at that time and since, in writing that history. Nor did Franz Philipp, despite writing the best monograph of the period, on Arthur Boyd. Nor did Joseph Burke, despite his appreciation of many local artists, and his work as a trustee of the National Gallery of Victoria. Nor did Ursula Hoff, despite writing the first monograph on Charles Conder. For some years after the founding of the Power Institute of Fine Arts in 1968 Bernard resisted such courses for undergraduates, on the grounds that honors students should be trained in the study of European art in order to develop the research and conceptual skills necessary to do deep historical work in Australian art. David

Saunders and I smuggled it in, eventually, under the guise of a survey of modern art and architecture.

This brings us to a second explanation for the sense of 'open go, all to do' that attends the writing of histories of art in places such as Australia. It is not just that university teaching of art history is so recent a phenomenon (Melbourne in 1947, Sydney in 1968, then many others since until the recent contraction). It is also that systematic historical approaches to art made in this country are themselves no older. Historical construction is a work in progress, a process that students can see happening, close up, warts and all, unclothed by institutional authority and the misty trappings of distant power. Indeed, they have the opportunity to be active participants in the construction of the narrative, not only in the details but also in the contestations that go into shaping the larger framework. This applies to the continuing story of the visual arts created by settler Australians, and to the other great task before us, the history of art by indigenous Australians. If the first story has, by now, been often told, it is not (one hopes, never will be) a settled matter. It continues in contemporary art, a practice that, among much else, regularly introduces change into the ways we see the art of the past. The story of indigenous art in this country, although much groundwork has been laid, is still searching for its definitive outlines. It will share some things with the settler narrative, but will be distinct in other ways. Finally, a third kind of practice (that has actually been around for some time) is coming into visibility: that of artists who, from bases or nodes in Australia, are genuine internationalists, truly cosmopolitan travelers through the complexities of our contemporaneous worlds. This will, I suspect, require another kind of historical reading, one that is nascent at the moment.

National narratives: necessary but not enough

In 1983 I wrote a review essay, 'Writing the History of Australian Art: Its Past, Present and Possible Future,' for the *Australian Journal of Art* (vol.3, 1983: 5-29) that tracked efforts to conceive our art historically, from Sidney Dickinson's 1888 question 'What Should Australian Artists Paint?' to the shelves of city bookshops that were then bursting with volumes on Australian art.² My methodological perspective can be readily identified: the 'new art history,' a polite term, popular in England especially, for what was actually a rollicking, full-scale revision of the uneasy amalgam of connoisseurship, iconography and modernism that had, by the 1960s, become institutionalized in museums, universities and art schools in Europe, the United States and their cultural colonies. The revision was undertaken, during the 1970s, by those of us inspired by Marxist, feminist, psychoanalytic, structuralist and semiotic approaches to questions of culture. This multi-faceted revisionism remains an unfinished project. Given that it has itself been revised, since that time,

² Sidney Dickinson, 'What Should Australian Artists Paint?' *The Australasian Critic*, vol. 1, no. 1 (October 1888): 21-2.

by poststructuralist and deconstructive approaches, and will doubtless be further revised by approaches yet to be envisaged, we might say that it is, in principle, unfinishable.

The article will be republished in the 'Documents' section of this issue, so I will not rehearse its arguments. I should, however, highlight my sense at the time that it was an addition to a series of similar reviews of the state of art historical studies in Australia, written by Franz Philipp in 1959, June Stewart in 1975, Bernard Smith in 1975 and 1982, and Ursula Hoff in 1983.³ It was also written with awareness that Ian Burn, Nigel Lendon, Charles Merewether and Ann Stephen were preparing an extended study of how the history of Australian art had been written since William Moore's *The Story of Australian Art* (1934) - a book that, despite Bernard Smith's dismissal of it as unprofessional and anecdotal, they wished to claim as the founding text in the field (as distinct from Smith's *Place, Taste and Tradition* of 1945). This move was in concert with Ian's general view that art history could be written by artists, and indeed frequently had been, before the eruptive professionalization of disciplines during the 1960s. Ian was of course himself writing a revisionist history of Australian art: it appeared as *National Life and Landscapes* in 1990.⁴ He was acutely aware of what he saw as the growing disjunction between the histories of art written by art historians and what he saw as the historical work, on both art and history, being undertaken in certain works of art: 'While any image or object can be fitted into many historical discourses, it cannot be at the expense of the historical discourse within the image itself.'⁵ To Ian, artists created that discourse less as picturing of it (as if it were a parade occurring at a representable distance), more in the way they composed their works, in the disposition of elements internal to each work. Sidney Nolan and Fernand Léger were prominent examples: in one of his essays, Ian showed that Nolan used some compositional ideas of Léger's not to create a local modernism, or to modernize his own art by imitation, but to negotiate a reconception of what landscape might mean in Australian art and history.⁶

I was part of the initial collective formed around the project of writing what became *The Necessity of Australian Art*.⁷ I withdrew partly for pragmatic reasons to

³ Franz Philipp, 'History of Art,' in A. Grenfell Price ed., *The Humanities in Australia* (Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1959); June Stewart, 'Bibliographical Essay in Australian Art Historical Studies since 1958,' *Proceedings of the Australian Academy of the Humanities* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1974); Bernard Smith, 'The Teaching of Fine Arts at Australian Universities,' *The Australian University*, vol. 13, no. 1 (May 1975: 8-18); Bernard Smith, 'Art Historical Studies in Australia,' *Proceedings of the Australian Academy of the Humanities* (Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1984); and Ursula Hoff, 'Observations on Art History in Melbourne 1946-64,' *Australian Journal of Art*, vol. 3 (1983): 5-9.

⁴ Ian Burn, *National Life and Landscapes: Australian Painting 1900-1940* (Sydney: Bay Books, 1990).

⁵ Ian Burn, 'Is Art History Any Use to Artists?' in Ian Burn, *Dialogue: Writings in Art History* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1991): 6.

⁶ 'Sidney Nolan: Landscape and Modern Life,' in Burn, *Dialogue*, 67-85.

⁷ Ian Burn, Nigel Lendon, Charles Merewether, Ann Stephen, *The Necessity of Australian Art: An Essay About Interpretation* (Sydney: Power Publications, 1998).

do with relativities of career paths, partly because it soon became clear that my own writings of the 1970s would be a point of focus in the book (chapter 7 is devoted to 'The Provincialism Debates'), but also because of my sense that, while conventional art history was subject to this kind of critique, the best of it being practiced around the world was able to revise itself in the manner suggested above, indeed, was embroiled in the very exciting project of doing just that. To me, these commitments were at least potentially convergent with the conceptual and historical work that many artists undertook as they made their works. Criticism, too, could partake in this deconstructive enterprise. A volatile, three-way interplay between art practice, criticism and history had been alive for me in the late 1960s in Australia, had informed my (modest) contributions to the work of Art & Language, and has continued to inspire me, in all its proliferating complexities, ever since. It informs, for example, the project of *Transformation in Australian Art*, the historiographical aspects of which are spelt out in the introductions to each chapter in volume 1 and in the general introduction to volume 2.⁸

In the early 1980s, however, the real difference between us was that while I was entirely in sympathy with the need to fully value the depth, solidity and force of the inventiveness that had occurred, and was occurring, in Australian art, I was also profoundly aware that this needed to go on in full awareness of Australia's embedment within a world system in which power was distributed inequitably and deceptively. Thus the division of the 'Writing the History of Australian Art' essay into six 'moments' in which art in Australia was imagined according to 'internal' priorities and another set in which 'external' factors structured art historical practice here. Overemphasis on the necessity of locality risked narrowing into a restrictive parochialism, an ultimately conservative nationalism. In contrast, I argued that a distinctly local, openly contradictory and contestatory embrace of the demands of internationalism was the only way to break the provincialist bind. This argument is implicit in the text of 'The Provincialism Problem' essay but quite explicit in its rhetorical tone.⁹ It is also the program taken up at the time by a number of postmodern artists in Australia, among whom Imants Tillers, Juan Davila and Gordon Bennett are only the most prominent. Indeed, Ian himself was secretly exploring this strategy, tentatively and somewhat awkwardly, in his *Value Added Landscapes*. Nevertheless, whatever the limits of *The Necessity of Australian*

⁸ See Terry Smith, *Transformations in Australian Art*, vol. 1, *The Nineteenth Century: Landscape, Colony and Nation*; vol. 2, *The Twentieth Century: Modernism and Aboriginality* (Sydney: Craftsman House, 2002).

⁹ Terry Smith, 'The Provincialism Problem,' *Artforum*, vol. XIII, no. 1, September 1974: 54-9). The argument is explicit in much of my subsequent writing, for example, 'Provincialism Refigured,' *Art Monthly, Australia and International*, no.13 (August 1988): 4-6; 'Postmodern Plurality: 1980-1990,' in Bernard Smith with Terry Smith, *Australian Painting 1788-1990* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1991): 518-557; 'Generation X: Impacts of the 1980s,' in Rex Butler, ed., *What is Appropriation?* (Brisbane and Sydney: IMA and Power Publications, 1996); and 'Conceptual Art Then and Since: Terry Smith interviewed by Jelena Stojanovic,' *Agenda Contemporary Art Magazine*, nos. 26 & 27 (Jan-Feb. 1993): 19-34.

Art in setting out an alternative history of Australian art, we have to acknowledge that, as an art historiographical study, it has rarely been matched by subsequent authors. It was invaluable to me, for example, in developing the alternative history implied in *Transformations in Australian Art*. I am sure that it has been influential on Rex Butler, as he develops what is emerging as another art historiographical paradigm: unAustralian art.¹⁰

The obvious conclusion to draw from these examples is that transformation in the writing of the history of Australian art is frequently, and perhaps most profoundly, the outcome of battles about which kind of history *ought* to be written—in other words, these are contestations that are historiographical in form, value-laden (that is, political) in content. In the introduction to the first volume of *Transformations in Australian Art* I characterized this as a struggle between ideologies: ‘It is important to recognize just how driven by ideology the writing of art history in Australia is: most of the writers just mentioned [Bernard Smith, Christopher Allen, Tim Bonyhady and Joan Kerr] attempt to make their theoretical and ideological concerns as explicit as they can. This is part of the style of art history in this country which owes its origins to the work of Bernard Smith in the 1940s. It is a positive thing, in my view, because it explodes the illusion of the omniscient expert, and it enables—indeed, obliges—readers to make their own judgements. While its language may seem, at times, elitist, it does, in fact, obey an egalitarian impulse.’¹¹ With a heritage like this, it should be no surprise that what I then named ideological struggle *between* art historians—and the broader battle for truth about culture waged *by* art historians against the social and ethical amnesia promoted by ruling interests and centrist institutions—often takes historiographical form.

From Modern to Contemporary art: World currents

If the debates of the early 1980s have a decidedly historical cast for us now, this is because they are marked with traces of the world-wide shift from modern to contemporary art, one that occurred - and in some places still is occurring - in distinct ways in each of the art-producing centers scattered across the globe. Unreflective intuitions accept this sea-change as a global phenomenon - indeed, as the outcome of economic, cultural and geopolitical globalization, itself seen as the most recent phase of a post-Cold War, all-conquering capitalism (or, less contentiously, a continuing modernity). From this perspective, Contemporary Art is the latest phase in the continuing history of art, the period after Modern Art. For many, it is the current phase of modernism, precisely in its postmodernist style

¹⁰ See Rex Butler and A.S. Donaldson, ‘A Short History of UnAustralian Art,’ in Ian North ed., *Visual Animals: Crossovers, Evolution and New Aesthetics* (Parkside, SA, Australia: The Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia (CACSA), 107-122. A book-length study is forthcoming.

¹¹ Terry Smith, *Transformations in Australian Art*, 11.

(ironic, recursive), and globalist outlook (universalist despite acknowledgement of diversity, and still utopian if somewhat less totalizing).

Since 2000 I have been arguing strongly against these presumptions: to me, they blind us to contemporary art's actual engagements in everyday realities, and its symbolic, imaginative powers, while at the same time prioritizing the values of the market (abstraction, exchange) and the major museums (distraction, spectacle) as they developed during modernity. The main thrust of my current work explores the relationships between contemporary art and its wider settings, within a world picture that I believe is characterized above all by the contemporaneity of difference. This core insight flowed directly from my experience as a practicing art critic and historian of contemporary art in this country during the period - the later 1970s and through the 1980s - when art by Aboriginal peoples, and then other indigenes, burst into view. After many misreadings, one gradually came to see that the continuing strength of much of this art, and above all its ability to replenish itself (at its sources and through its being constantly taken up by new artists), had come to constitute a body of artistic achievement that paralleled that being produced by non-Indigenous Australian artists. Whatever these parallel traditions may share, and for all the interactions between them, I came to see that each is essentially different in kind, and that this was, however fraught and fragile a situation, a good thing for all concerned.¹² During the past decade, I have come to see that, despite multiple complexities but precisely because of the power of particularities of place, this is also the case on a worldwide scale.

As many of you know, I have been on a mission to present these ideas in a series of books and articles aimed at a variety of audiences, from specialists within art history, general readers of books on art and architecture, critical theorists, undergraduate students and graduates.¹³ I will not rehearse these in detail here - not least because we have recently done so, at the symposium 'Contemporaneity and Art' convened by Charles Green and presented under Jaynie Anderson's auspices as an Australian Institute for the History of Art event in July of this year. Instead, I draw on those texts to offer a brief summary, first of our current world condition, one for which the term 'contemporaneity' seems to me to be most fitting, and then of how I see art operating within this situation.

Our current world condition is distinguished from earlier periods by the contemporaneity of lived difference, the coexistence of incommensurable

¹² This is the argument of 'From the Desert: Aboriginal Painting Since 1970,' in Bernard Smith with Terry Smith, *Australian Painting 1788-1990*, 452-556; with Christopher Heathcote, *Australian Painting 1788-2000*, Fourth edition, 2001.

¹³ These begin with the pamphlet *What is Contemporary Art? Contemporary Art, Contemporaneity and Art to Come* (Sydney: Artspace Critical Issues Series, 2001), and include the books *The Architecture of Aftermath* (University of Chicago Press, 2006); *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, postmodernity and contemporaneity* (edited with Nancy Condee and Okwui Enwezor, Duke University Press, 2008); and *What is Contemporary Art?* (University of Chicago Press, 2009), as well as a number of articles and chapters in books. For details see www.terrysmith.net/web.

viewpoints, and the absence of an all-encompassing narrative that will enlist the participation of all. In this sense, contemporaneity itself is the most evident attribute of the current world picture, encompassing its most distinctive qualities, from the interactions between humans and the geosphere, through the multitude of cultures and the ideoscape of global politics to the interiority of individual being. This picture can no longer be adequately characterized by terms such as 'modernity' and 'postmodernity,' not least because it is shaped by friction between antinomies so intense that it resists universal generalization - indeed, it resists even generalization about that resistance. It is, nonetheless, far from shapeless. Within contemporaneity, it seems to me, three sets of forces contend, turning each other incessantly. The first is globalization itself, above all its thirsts for hegemony in the face of increasing cultural differentiation (the multitude that was released by decolonization), for control of time in the face of the proliferation of asynchronous temporalities, and for continuing exploitation of natural and (to a degree not yet imagined) virtual resources against the increasing evidence of the inability of those resources to sustain this exploitation. Most alarmingly, the fact of climate change signals that the implicit ecological contract between human development and the earth's natural evolution might have been broken, that these great currents might now be on divergent paths. Secondly, the inequity between peoples, classes and individuals is now so accelerated that it threatens both the desires for domination entertained by states, ideologies and religions and the persistent dreams of liberation that continue to inspire individuals and peoples. Thirdly, we are all immersed in an infoscape - or, better, a spectacle, an image economy, a regime of representation - capable of the instant and thoroughly mediated communication of all information and any image anywhere. This iconomy—indeed, the entire global communication system - is, at the same time, fissured by the uneasy coexistence of highly specialist, closed knowledge communities, open, volatile subjects and rampant popular fundamentalisms. Globalization, free market economies, centralized states, international organizations and arrangements - none seem capable of keeping these contradictions in productive tension.

Interaction between these antinomies shapes the world today. They appear in art practice in homologous ways, such that three broad currents may be discerned in art, each quite different in character, scale and scope. They have taken distinctive forms since the 1950s, thus patterning the shift from modern to contemporary art that, in my view, is the defining art historical fact of the recent past and the present. The first current prevails in the great metropolitan centers of modernity in Europe and the United States (as well as in societies and subcultures closely related to them) and is a continuation of styles in the history of art, particularly what I call remodernist ones. The second has arisen from movements towards political and economic independence that occurred in former colonies and on the edges of Europe and then spread everywhere. This transnational transition is characterized above all by clashing ideologies and experiences. The result is that artists prioritize

both local and global issues as the urgent content of their work. Meanwhile, artists working within the third current explore concerns about the shapes of time, place, media and mood that they feel personally yet share with others, particularly of their generation, throughout an increasingly networked world. More precisely, they explore the details of what it is to live in times the parts of which seem out of sync yet remain vividly present to each other, they search for a sense of locality within situations of constant disruption, dispersal, displacement, they are fully aware of our immersion in pervasive commercial and official media, and are acutely sensitive about how these pressures affect everyone's sense of selfhood. This awareness leads many of them seek pathways towards improving the situation. Taken together, I suggest, these three currents—distinct at their cores, contemporaneous with each other, yet of course connected on day-to-day levels—constituted the contemporary art of the late twentieth century, and still shape art in the early twenty-first.

Australian art within Contemporary art

These presumptions have shaped my recent publications. *What is Contemporary Art?* presents them as a set of polemical essays directed against views prevailing in studios, museums, markets, critical writing and artworld discourse. The orientation is unabashedly implicated: we might say insider-in, a quality picked up by some reviewers.¹⁴ One of the book's themes is the extent to which historical consciousness, awareness of the contingencies of history, and alertness to the continuing valience of histories of art pervades the practice of contemporary artists. It is one of the primary ways in which their art is *contemporary*—that is, by my definition, embedded in the multiplicity of ways of being in time, always with others, that inform existence these days. The final illustration in the book is a 2006 work by Josephine Meckseper, who works between Berlin and New York, entitled *A Complete History of Postcontemporary Art*. The culminating chapter is an argument against accepting contemporary art on its own terms, rather, it argues for a (revisionist) *art historical* approach to contemporary art. This move replays the pitting of one art discipline against another, and for continuously revising the outcome, that I have been advocating (I now see) since the late 1960s. How successfully I carry off this (dis)balancing act I leave to you. I like to think that Ian, in his own way, might have acknowledged that there was something to it. (He would be more likely to say that there was *too much* in it—at least two currents too many.)

I do not single out Australian art, or Australian artists, in any particular way in the book, preferring to call up artworks as they either enter naturally the flow of argument, or challenge that flow. Place of origin, or the location of an artist's

¹⁴ See, for example, Alexander Dumbadze and Suzanne Hudson, 'Contingency Plans,' *Artforum*, XLVIII, no. 9 (May, 2010): 73-4.

practice, becomes a factor when it is one, not when it is pre-given. Thus I deliberately begin the second of the two chapters that cover the history of the market for contemporary art (as a distinct area, this market is barely thirty years old) with a brief study of the recent history of the market for contemporary Aboriginal art. I do so precisely because it is clear instance of a local as opposed to an internationalizing market, and brings out the EuroAmerican presumptions that pervade the latter, the local qualities of the former, and the aspects shared by both.¹⁵

My current book in progress, *Contemporary Art: World Currents*, does tackle the issue of locality head-on.¹⁶ Indeed, it is organized on the basis of prioritizing locality and regionality within a world (not a global, globalizing or globalist) framework. I argue that contemporary art is- perhaps for the first time in history - truly an art of the world. It comes from the whole world, and frequently tries to imagine the world as a differentiated yet inevitably connected whole. This is the definition of diversity: it is the key characteristic of contemporary art, as it is of contemporary life, in the world today. Following the theory about the contemporaneity of the three currents outlined above, the chapters of the book are arranged in three parts. The first emphasizes artistic developments in EuroAmerica, the second those in much of the rest of the world, while the third treats the work of artists who, although obviously products of particular cultures, see themselves and their work as participating in international artistic exchanges and global culture, and, most important, as contributing to the emerging sense of the world as a diverse yet connected whole, and to an awareness that the health of the planet itself is now our most urgent priority. Organizing the book in this way is the result of some hard choices about how modern and contemporary art relate to recent geopolitical history, the volatility of which has led to incessant conflict between peoples with different world-pictures and distinct senses of their place in the world.

The order of chapters follows the chronology of the shift from modern to contemporary art as it occurred in each region. The introduction's exploration of the rise of contemporary concerns in late modern art covers the 1950s through to the 1970s, stretching from the Situationists to feminist art. Part I begins from a consideration of art in the 1960s in East and West Germany then pursues developments in Europe and North America through to the present. In Part II, each chapter begins with brief reference to artistic traditions dominant in the region, profiles the growth of modern art there, but is mainly devoted to emergence of a variety of kinds of contemporary art in each part of the world. A shared characteristic is the dominance of one or two national cultures in each region (Russia in Central and Eastern Europe, Japan and China in East Asia, Brazil and

¹⁵ *What is Contemporary Art?* chapters 7 and 8.

¹⁶ Terry Smith, *Contemporary Art: World Currents* (London: Laurence King; Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2011).

Argentina in South America, etc.) during the modern period, followed by a lessening of such dominance, or its shifting (China eclipsing Japan, for example), in contemporary conditions. Time frames vary according to local and regional developments.

The contents page shows, at a glance, all of these factors in play.

INTRODUCTION: Contemporary Art in Transition: Late Modern Art to Now

I BECOMING CONTEMPORARY IN EUROAMERICA

1. Late Modern Art becomes Contemporary
2. The Contemporary Art Boom

II TRANSNATIONAL TRANSITIONS

3. Russia and (East of) Europe
4. South and Central America, the Caribbean
5. China and East Asia
6. India, South and Southeast Asia
7. Oceania
8. Africa
9. West Asia

III CONTEMPORARY CONCERNS

10. World Pictures: Making Art Politically
11. Climate Change: Art and Ecology
12. Social Media: Affects of Time
13. Coda: Permanent Transition

Australian art is treated within the chapter on Oceania. It begins with a brief, general description of the Pacific region, notably the islands that constitute it. The first art producing region to be considered is Papua New Guinea, the first illustration is of an Abiara Orere singing group from Bereina Village, Central Province, performing 'Kairuku' at the Goroka Show in 1994. I then move to a consideration of art from Aotearoa/New Zealand, beginning with Maori art, specifically a carving by Clifford Whiting. Len Lye is then celebrated, followed by reference to Gordon Walters' appropriation of Maori imagery and Michael Parekowhai's reverse appropriation of Walters. Works by women artists including Jacqueline Fraser and Lisa Reihana are then discussed. The section ends with a work by et al.

Two thirds of the chapter is devoted to art made on the Australian continent, beginning with Aboriginal and Indigenous art. Bark paintings by Yirawala and John Mawaurndjul are discussed, as are a range of works by Central Desert artists. Koori, Murri and other Aboriginal artists working in the towns and cities are surveyed. I turn to a brief history of modernist art up to the 1970s, and then illustrate major late modern and contemporary works by Mike Parr, Juan Davila,

Susan Norrie and others. The growing interaction between Aboriginal and non-indigenous artists is noted, illustrated by that between Imants Tillers and Gordon Bennett. The reach for reconciliation through affective empathy is shown to be present in the Aboriginal Memorial made by the Ramingining artists in 1988 and in the work of Rod Moss of Alice Springs, while reconciliation via confrontation is shown in the work of Richard Bell. Each of these themes (Aboriginal, non-indigenous, and interaction between them) receives about one third of the total coverage.

These proportions reflect those accorded to a parallel set of themes in the chapter on Africa, and to a similar set in the chapter on India and South and South East Asia. The net outcome is a far greater emphasis on Aboriginal and Indigenous art than in any previous general account. It is shameful to recall that, while Aboriginal art was mentioned in some of the earliest texts on Australian art, and even celebrated in a few, it was not treated in any depth until my chapter 'From the Desert: Australian Painting 1970-1990' in the 1991 edition of Bernard Smith's *Australian Painting*. I make no special claim for that text: it was introductory at best, and has been surpassed, often, since - by Fred Myers, Vivien Johnson, Wally Caruana, Howard Morphy, Andrew Sayers, Hetti Perkins, Ian McLean, Paul Carter and many others. But I do recall thinking, when Bernard asked me to write a chapter that would cover the twenty years just mentioned, that when it came to Aboriginal art all that would be necessary would be to summarize the research and writing that was surely out there. To my initial dismay, but eventual joy, I realized that I had do at least some groundwork myself. Nevertheless, in that book Aboriginal art was covered in just one of its sixteen chapters. In subsequent survey texts this art is more integrated, not least by some of the authors just listed. But in the section of the Oceania chapter in *Contemporary Art: World Currents* devoted to art in Australia, indigenous art claims two thirds of the treatment. In the chapter as a whole, the focus on it almost reverses that in *Australian Painting*.

Such marked changes reflect at least two factors: the rise and rise of Aboriginal and Indigenous art in the region, and the high visibility of that emergence when one takes a worldly perspective. A worldly perspective is not a universal one, nor is it the view from the most powerful place. It is an approach that prioritizes both the singularity and distinctiveness of art production in each region of the world, that notes its parallelism with developments in other regions that have similar or connected cultural and political histories, and that is alert to the potentials for connectedness between the differences that make us who we are - and who we will, one hopes, continue to be.

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include *Making the Modern: Industry, Art and Design in America* (University of Chicago Press, 1993; inaugural Georgia O'Keeffe Museum Book Prize 2009); *Transformations in Australian Art*, volume 1, *The Nineteenth Century: Landscape, Colony and Nation*, volume 2, *The Twentieth Century: Modernism and Aboriginality* (Craftsman House, Sydney, 2002); *The Architecture of Aftermath* (University of Chicago Press, 2006) and *What is Contemporary Art?* (University of Chicago Press, 2009).

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