Daryl Lindsay and the appreciation of indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne in the 1940’s: ‘No mere collection of interesting curiosities’

Benjamin Thomas

This is no mere collection of interesting curiosities to be stared and wondered at for a few minutes. Many of the exhibits have an inherent grace and sureness of attack that places them in the category of works of art in any country or period of time.2

Darryl Lindsay

In an era when the acceptance of Indigenous art within our national art galleries is assumed confidently as self-evident, it is easy to overlook how such a remarkable transformation occurred almost within the space of a decade. Even more misunderstood is the prominent role Daryl Lindsay played in the early acceptance and legitimisation of Australian indigenous art. Within months of becoming director of the National Gallery of Victoria, Lindsay began preparations for a major exhibition of primitive art, including Australian Indigenous works, an event that became the defining catalyst for a cultural shift towards Indigenous art. In the early 1960s, in the influential role of chair of the Commonwealth Art Advisory Board, Lindsay advocated for the inclusion of ‘Australian Aboriginal art, chosen for aesthetic merit’ as a dedicated collecting stream in the future National Gallery of Australia (NGA). It was a decisive objective, and one that – reiterated in his 1966 report for the future NGA – was a central tenet of his vision for Australian art.3

Yet it is clear that the chronology of growing acceptance encouraged by Lindsay throughout his years as director remains poorly understood within the scope of Australian gallery practice. Even within recent years both academics and NGV staff alike have misattributed later events as being the catalyst for change, either positioning Lindsay as a reactionary late in his term as Director, or placing him outside the formative years of the shift in attitude altogether.

According to Angela Philp of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Islander Studies, it was Eric Westbrook’s 1962 plan for a Gallery of Australian Aboriginal Art in Canberra that illustrated a national acceptance of indigenous art. His plan reveals, she suggested in early 2006, ‘that the Australian art world was beginning to willingly consider Aboriginal art outside the context of anthropology and to accept its place in the world of art on the basis of some

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1 D. Lindsay, foreword, Primitive Art Exhibition, iii.
2 Lindsay, Primitive Art Exhibition, iii.
aesthetic and cultural merit’. It is a statement that sits awkwardly against Lindsay’s own acknowledgement twenty years earlier that indigenous art should be appreciated for ‘its genuine artistic value’. Moreover, it is interesting to observe that – contrary to Lindsay’s example – Westbrook refused to collect aboriginal art for the NGV on the basis that he believed it more appropriately housed within a museum to be contextualised as anthropology, rather than art.

Two prominent events – one at either end of Lindsay’s directorship, and both within the broader sphere of his interaction with Australian indigenous peoples – stand today as devices by which his legacy has been framed. On the one hand, Lindsay’s hosting of the 1943 Primitive Art exhibition at the NGV has been viewed as a reflection of the progressive shift that would distinguish Lindsay’s directorship from that of James MacDonald, who he had succeeded only a year earlier. It suggests Lindsay was willing to move outside the conventional and established model of Australian gallery practice. In so doing, Lindsay exposed the Australian public to what was then a still largely neglected aspect of Australian art. Within Lindsay’s lifetime, Tony Tuckson, former deputy director of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, came to recognise the Primitive Exhibition, ‘more so than anything else’ during the surrounding decades, as being the trigger that ‘aroused the interest of artists and art critics in Aboriginal art. It was only a matter of time before the art galleries in Australia began to form collections of Aboriginal art.’

The second significant event took place almost a decade later, and three years before Lindsay’s retirement as director of the NGV. In February 1952, Lindsay wrote to the Minister for the Interior requesting a selection of twenty-five indigenous bark ‘drawings for loan to the gallery for display. Little correspondence, or archival material of the transaction appears to have survived. A handwritten transcription by a former NGV curator of an earlier, original document relating to the acquisition was located by gallery staff in late 2007 only to be subsequently misplaced, and with it seemingly the only record explaining the eight works’ arrival. Yet Lindsay’s transcribed letter, and the presentation of eight works from the Department of Interior in August that year offer an intriguing insight into the radical shift that had occurred during the course of Lindsay’s directorship in the acceptance of indigenous art. In his letter to the Minister, Lindsay wrote:

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5 Lindsay, Primitive Art Exhibition, iii.
8 The transcription of the original document, made by a former National Gallery of Victoria (NGV) curator and held by the Indigenous Art staff of the NGV, was included in an email from Judith Ryan, senior curator of Indigenous Art, to the author on 24 October 2007. When a photocopy of the original transcription was requested shortly afterwards in late 2007, the document could not be located. The NGV’s Indigenous Art curatorial team are still unable to confirm its present whereabouts.
9 Report of the Trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria with statement of income and expenditure for the year ended 30 June 1953, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 1953, schedule II, presentations and bequests 1952-53. The eight works are: Djeriny’s Bol’ngu, the thunderman (c.1952), Birrrikji Gumana’s The white crane (1952) and Fish-trap at Gangag (1952), David Namirlim Mangiru’s untitled work on bark (c.1952), and Traditional hunting (c.1952), Mathaman Marika’s Sacred goannas in the sandhills (1952), Nanyin Maymuru Fish-trap in the Koolatong River (1952) and The barramundi, Namarnkol (c.1948) by an unknown artist. Details of works provided by Stephen Gilchrist, assistant curator, Indigenous Art, NGV, 2007.
Although in the past the majority of these have been collected by Natural History Museums for ethnographical purposes, it has long been my view that their artistic merit is such that a number of them should be shown in the Art Galleries throughout Australia, and this theory was borne out by the interest they aroused when shown as part of the Jubilee Art Exhibition, for which incidentally this Gallery was responsible for their framing and preservation.\textsuperscript{10}

Despite such clear assertions, Lindsay’s influence remains obscured. Even within the institution itself the significance of his efforts have been downplayed with the acquisition being excluded from the gallery’s history. As recently as 2006, a chronology of significant markers in Australian indigenous art history included in the NGV’s ‘Landmarks’ exhibition catalogue omitted the eight 1952 acquisitions.\textsuperscript{11}

More significant was the failure to include the first purchase of Australian indigenous works by the NGV – two works by Edwin Pareroultja in 1946 – again, an important milestone for the gallery, and an unambiguous statement of Lindsay’s attitude towards indigenous art.\textsuperscript{12} Notably, all ten works were contemporary to their acquisition, the two Pareroultjas being painted in 1946, and the vast majority of the Department of Interior works dating to 1952.\textsuperscript{13}

Despite their omission from the chronology, the two Pareroultja’s and two works from the 1952 acquisition – David Namirlmirl Mangiru’s pigment on bark, Traditional Hunting, and another untitled work on bark\textsuperscript{14} – were included in the ‘Landmarks’ exhibition. Their inclusion is a testament to their significance as the founding blocks on which the subsequent indigenous art collections have been built.\textsuperscript{15} Quoted at the time of the exhibition, the NGV’s senior indigenous curator Judith Ryan suggested that ‘the 1952 decision’ by Lindsay to seek to acquire indigenous art works was a challenge against ‘the practice of indigenous works only being collected by museums’.\textsuperscript{16} Undoubtedly it was; but it was a challenge and a decision that Lindsay had already taken shortly after becoming Director almost a decade earlier with the Primitive Art Exhibition. Curiously, that pivotal exhibition is recorded in the chronology in the ‘Landmarks’ catalogue.

Our understanding of Lindsay’s attitude towards and engagement with Australian indigenous works is central to his present-day portrayal. Does ‘the 1952 decision’ represent a reactionary who only late in his directorship recognised the shifting appreciation of Australian indigenous art? Or rather, should the decision – following other similar instances of the promotion of indigenous art by Lindsay – illustrate a progressive who actively sought out and steered the future direction of indigenous art?

\textsuperscript{10} Daryl Lindsay, letter to the Minister for the Interior, 18 February 1952, copy provided from a handwritten transcription of the missing original to author by Judith Ryan, senior curator, Indigenous Art, NGV, email, 24 October 2007.
\textsuperscript{11} Judith Ryan, Landmarks, chronology, Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 2006, np.
\textsuperscript{12} Report of the Trustees of the National Gallery of Victoria with statement of income and expenditure for the year ended 30 June 1947, NGV, Melbourne, 1947, schedule I, purchases 1946-47.
\textsuperscript{13} At least four of these works – Fish-Trap in the Koolatong River, The white crane (previously The Pied Heron), Namirlmirl Mangiru’s untitled and Traditional hunting were previously dated to 1948, rather than 1952. Judith Ryan, Spirit in Land: Bark Paintings from Arnhem Land in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne: National Gallery of Victoria, 1990, 105, 113.
\textsuperscript{14} Ryan, Landmarks, 22, 135.
A growing appreciation

‘Australian Aboriginal art became art, as far as the European-Australian art world was concerned, in the 1940s’, wrote art historian Daniel Thomas in 1976. It is a position shared by Howard Morphy, director of the ANU’s Centre for Cross-Culture Research, who, among others, has looked beyond the 1952 acquisition to Lindsay’s early years as director. Echoing Thomas, Morphy observes that in the 1940s ‘there began to develop a new perception of Aboriginal artefacts as art’. Both have pointed firstly to the exhibition of Australian Art, including indigenous art that toured the United States and Canada from 1941, followed closely by the 1943 exhibition of Primitive Art. The 1943 Primitive Exhibition held at the NGV, curated by the German-Jewish refugee ethnologist Leonhard Adam, fundamentally re-established the way in which Australian indigenous art, and international indigenous art more broadly, was valued. It was a bold, assertive move for the new director, and illustrates clearly Lindsay’s drive to draw a greater level of scholarship to the gallery’s activities.

The rise of Aboriginal art in the Australian consciousness as a valid artistic expression had followed an almost fifteen-year trajectory from the mid-1920s by the time of the exhibition. It had found early favour amongst progressive modernist Margaret Preston who within the space of only a few years of having ‘discovered’ modernism in 1923 wrote her first article in Art in Australia on Aboriginal Art. Her understanding of Aboriginal art as an extension to the indigenous Australian’s relationship with the land was fundamental to her acceptance of its aesthetic principles. As early as 1925 she had come to see it as ‘only from the art of such people [indigenous Australians] … that a national art can spring.’

That view was sharpened as Deborah Edwards suggests, by Preston’s later experiences viewing bark paintings and ‘the magnificent ‘murals’ at Injalak Hill (Oenpelli) in Western Arnhem Land in mid-1940.

Responding to the mounting interest, the National Museum of Victoria held an exhibition of Aboriginal ‘art’ in 1929. The Museum’s indigenous collections had been built up over the course of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, primarily by active fieldwork by anthropologists, and the amalgamation of earlier collections. In 1899, upon the death of Professor Frederick McCoy, the assortment of indigenous artefacts included in the 1866 Intercolonial Exhibition and which had been retained under McCoy at the University of Melbourne, were added to the National Museum’s collections. In 1912, anthropologist and later trustee of the Public Library, National Gallery and Museums, Baldwin Spencer, founded what would become known as the Spencer bark painting collection with 38 bark paintings. Between 1912-22, he substantially increased the collection with a further 170 bark paintings from

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19 Lindsay’s vision for increased professionalism amongst his staff was reflected only months later by his appointment of another German-Jewish scholar, Dr Ursula Hoff, in August 1943.
Western Arnhem Land. Spencer engaged the services of former buffalo hunter and Oenpelli pastoralist, Paddy Cahill, to commission works ‘entirely to the artist’s choice’ from the local indigenous elders. In so doing, he established the framework that would underpin the commercial market for indigenous artwork that emerged in the early 1930s, itself a response to the heightened public awareness generated by the 1929 Museum exhibition. Nonetheless, Spencer’s collecting of indigenous art remained ethnographic in approach. Despite his avid patronage of Australian artists – among them Lindsay, during the early 1920s – Spencer’s collection of indigenous works was destined for the museum, rather than exhibition at the National Gallery.

Held in the year of Spencer’s death, the 1929 Australian Aboriginal art exhibition at the National Museum proved to be erroneously titled and struggled to shake off the ethnographic mantle under which it had been acquired. When the proposal first surfaced in the press in January, it was reported that it ‘was decided to have made, especially for the exhibition, models of caves or rock-shelters, reproducing the remarkable aboriginal drawings and paintings in their natural Stone Age art galleries.’ A primary attraction for Melbourne’s media when the exhibition opened on the 9 July were two Aboriginals ‘who, until a week ago, lived nakedly and scantily on game and white man’s charity’. They had been found by George Alston, ‘a far northern-cattle breeder’, to build and inhabit a bark mia-mia within the exhibition space for a fortnight. Stan “Big Sandy” Loycurrie, a six-foot-tall former native trooper, and Jack Noorywauka, who had learnt English on a mission station but ‘spent most of his life in the bush’, became ‘one of the features’ of the exhibition, giving demonstrations in the manufacture of native weapons and utensils.

In a photo appearing in the Sun News-Pictorial the day after the exhibition opened, the two men sit ‘daubed and decorated’ in body paint and feathers in front of the mia-mia, while George Alston stands dressed in a suit to their right; an uncomfortable image that epitomises the exhibition’s prevailing overtones of presenting ‘living anthropology’ and otherness, more than indigenous art itself.

In spite of this, imagery of traditional Aboriginal lands – if not the indigenous Australians themselves – was beginning to challenge the long-standing aesthetic of the pastoral landscape identified by the ‘Heidelberg School’. Desert landscapes, such as Hans Heysen’s painting of the Flinders Ranges following a trip there in 1926, were held up to acclaim. Lionel Lindsay championed the new direction, writing:

This mountainous country gives the sensation of an unalterable landscape, old and young as Time – a landscape of fundamentals, austerely Biblical, and yet for us intimately associated with our aboriginal stone age …

25 ‘Aborigines to give displays’, Sun, Sat., 6 July 1929, 10.
26 ‘Cave Drawings at Museum’, Sun, Tues., 9 July 1929, 10; ‘Realism in Native Art’, Sun, Wed., 10 July 1929, 36.
They are his discovery and, I believe, the most important contribution to Australian landscape made in the last decade.²⁷

A genuine shift in perception was apparent a decade later at the end of the 1930s, though still limited to a select core group surrounding Preston’s continuing fierce advocacy. In 1941 Yale University Professor Theodore Sizer came out to Australia as the selector for a planned touring exhibition following the historical development of Australian art for an America audience. The ‘Art of Australia 1788-1941’ exhibition attracted so many contributions from national institutions, as well as individuals, that it had to be divided in two; one half of it touring Canada through the National Gallery of Canada, and the other touring the United States by the Museum of Modern Art.²⁸ Due to the war, both exhibitions did not return to Australia until 1945, by which time they had been widely seen across the two countries. Significantly, it was the first exhibition that framed Aboriginal art within the overall development of Australian art. That it did so was the result of arguably two forces working in tandem. The first of these was Margaret Prestons’ continuing and fierce advocacy that had developed since her first writings on the subject in the mid 1920s. Her visit to Oenpelli the previous year had been influential and it was likely her voice ensured the inclusion of Aboriginal bark paintings in the exhibition. In her short, opening article in the exhibition’s catalogue on Aboriginal Art of Australia she goes beyond the assimilation of indigenous designs that she had previously encouraged in Art in Australia.²⁹ She now observed in indigenous art a challenge to the long-held view that the artists were from ‘the lowest branch of civilization’.³⁰ Her understanding coincided with the increasing American infatuation that had been developing throughout the 1930s for representations of the ‘exotic’. Writing in June 1938, the future co-author of Art of the Australian Aboriginal, Robert H. Croll, observing this phenomenon, stated that,

the wealthy Americans who come to Australia on luxury ships desire to see our “Stone Age Aboriginals”. In this they were hampered due to ‘want of time to reach the Centre (so distant from the coast), and absence of that extravagant comfort which they consider their money entitles them to.

Yale University’s Professor Theodore Sizer, the American selector for the exhibition, introduced the Australian indigenous element to the American audience by noting that while Polynesian art forms were largely familiar to the American public, ‘those of the Australian aborigine, a non-Negroid black man, come as something entirely new.’³²

²⁷ Lionel Lindsay, quoted in Ian McLean, White Aborigines: identity politics in Australian art, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998, 82-83.
³¹ Robert Croll, I Recall: Collections and Recollections, Melbourne: Robertson and Mullens, 1938, 99.
The 1943 Primitive Art Exhibition

When refugee ethnologist Leonhard Adam meet Daryl Lindsay in the early 1940s, he felt confident that he had found another who shared his aesthetic views of primitive art. In 1954, towards the end of Lindsay’s directorship, he wrote to Lindsay ‘in appreciation of the facts … that you have always been interested in true Australian aboriginal art’. Like Ursula Hoff – who would commence her long career at the NGV in the same year as the primitive exhibition – Lindsay’s acceptance towards European intellectuals resulted in a significantly bold curatorial move that offered Adam a high degree of freedom in the shaping of the exhibition. Coming within twelve months of Lindsay’s official appointment as director, the exhibition was a defining step in articulating Lindsay’s approach to both the pragmatic struggle of understaffing during the war years, but equally his openness towards new, dynamic forms of art.

Born in Berlin in 1891, Leonhard Adam was only sixteen-years-old when the socio-religious properties of primitive art captured his interest. His interests were broad enough however that his formal studies straddled ethnology, law and sinology, undertaken at the University and Oriental Seminar of Berlin. His studies of primitive material culture at the Berlin Ethnographical Museum, combined with his later doctorate in law, allowed him to move comfortably into teaching primitive law, both in Europe and later in Australia. In Germany, he was called to the bar, eventually becoming a judge, while acting as editor of the Zeitschrift für vergleichende Rechtswissenschaft (Journal for Comparative Law), a journal on primitive law at the Institute of Foreign Laws, Berlin University. ‘Though Primitive Law and Primitive Art were probably his chief loves’, recalled a later student, ‘no side of his subject was neglected or skimped’.

There seemed no book on the subject that he had not read, no question that he could not answer; yet he could accommodate himself to the ardent amateur and explain, if not in words of one syllable, yet in terms simple and clear enough to solve any difficulty.

Linguistically, Adam was adept. Aside from his native German, he was fluent in French, Italian and English, and proficient in Greek, Hindustani, and Chinese; the latter he would teach to his fellow inmates when interned in Australia during the Second World War.

By 1938, however, under an increasingly tense political environment in Germany targeting those of non-Aryan parentage, Adam was stripped of his official positions, and fled to the apparent safety of London where, through an introduction to Dr. W.B. Mumford, Head of the Colonial Department, he was invited to join the staff of the Institute of Education, University of London. It was while in London...
that he researched the ethnographical collections of the British Museum in preparation for his 1940 publication, *Primitive Art*.

The apparent sanctuary of England was unexpectedly short-lived however. By early 1940, and facing the distinct threat of invasion, anti-German sentiments were dramatically reshaping British policy. The assurances made nine months earlier by the then Secretary of State for the Home Department, Sir John Anderson, advocating for ‘a general desire to avoid treating as enemies those who are friendly to the country which has offered them asylum’ were now waning.37 In late April it was suggested in the House of Commons that the ‘onus is on every person of German or Austrian nationality to show why he should not be interned’.38 In the lead up towards the general internment of all enemy aliens in June, Adam along with his brother Manfred, who had been working in London as his assistant, were arrested on the 16 May 1940 and shipped along with 2000 ‘refugees’ to Australia aboard the *Dunera*.39

By September he found himself designated as No. 35000; one of hundreds of enemy aliens – as they were now defined – held at the Tatura Internment Camp in Victoria’s Goulbourn Valley district. To break the monotony of internment he held small classes for his fellow internees in Chinese and anthropology,40 and returned to his pre-war interest in watercolour painting, producing a series of works that ‘betray both human and artistic tension’ in his depictions of the wooden barracks and the landscape around Tatura.41

His internment was nothing short of a bureaucratic mismanagement of the highest magnitude. When, on 15 October 1941, he replied to a letter from Constance Duncan, the director of the Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council, then attempting to secure his release, he informed her that a recent visitor to the camp, Major Layton, had ‘disclosed that the Home Office had authorized my release.’42 Indeed, if the assertions of the Australian Student Christian Movement, also actively promoting his release, are to be believed, the Home Office had authorized Adam’s release more than a year earlier, following an application from the Society for the Protection of Science and Learning at Cambridge University.43 Adam’s plight soon came to the attention of a small group of University of Melbourne people aligned with the Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council and the Australian Student Christian Movement. They argued that it ‘would be a slur on the intellectual life of Australia if a man of Dr. Adam’s gifts and

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38 Koessler, ‘Enemy Alien Internment’, 104.

39 Leonhard Adam, letter to Ada Constance Duncan, director, Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council, 15 October 1941, Leonhard Adam Papers, 94/60, Box 3, Series 3, UMA.

40 Alan McCulloch, ‘Preserving our dreamtime heritage’, *Herald*, 26 June 1973, newspaper cutting Leonhard Adam Papers, 94/60, Box 3, Series 2, UMA.


42 Leonhard Adam, letter to Ada Constance Duncan, director, Victorian International Refugee Emergency Council, 15 October 1941, Leonhard Adam Papers, 94/60, Box 3, Series 3, UMA.

43 Typed biographical notes accompanying a call for contributions by the Australian Student Christian Movement, Leonhard Adam Papers, UMA.
scholarship should remain behind barbed wire for lack of the comparatively small sum that would be needed to maintain him."44 Through their advocacy, he was found residency at the University’s Queens College, and on the 29 May 1942 was released under the supervision of Professor Max Crawford to commence research on Australia indigenous stone tool production with the National Museum of Victoria.45

Working with the museum’s collections proved a fertile experience for Adam’s professional development in Australia, offering both access to a particularly rich collection as well as introductions to those who were keenly observant to the German ethnologist’s talents. A year before the 1929 Australian Art exhibition, the catalogued items in the museum’s ethnographical collections numbered over 36,000, of which more than 16,000 were Aboriginal stone artefacts.46 Since the fortuitous introduction of Baldwin Spencer to ethnologist, historian and private collector Alfred Kenyon in 1899, the collections had grown almost thirty-fold. This phenomenal growth was largely directed by Kenyon’s personal collecting interests that, as Spencer’s biographers have suggested, ‘proved to be a determining influence on both Museum accessions and Spencer’s concept of stone tool typology.’47 The museum environment allowed Adam to mix with like-minded ethnologists, such as Kenyon and Dr. A.P. Elkin, Professor of Anthropology in the University of Sydney.

Adam was also exposed to other influential figures in Melbourne’s cultural circles however, and in 1942 he was introduced to Daryl Lindsay through the Museum’s director, Daniel J. Mahony.48 The introduction proved to be a profoundly significant meeting in redefining the context in which Australian indigenous art would subsequently be acquired and displayed within Australian museums and galleries.

The foundation of the NGV’s 1943 Primitive Art Exhibition lay with Adam’s ‘special interest’ in primitive art (fig. 1). As he would note fourteen years later: ‘I hit upon the idea of an exhibition of primitive art on a universal scale, including objects from Oceania, America, and Africa’. Yet he readily gave credit to Lindsay’s ‘enthusiasm and active co-operation’ in bringing the exhibition into being.49 It is a remarkable testament to the relationship between the two men that within less than twelve months of their meeting, the NGV held what can be regarded – and certainly was by Adam at the time – as an international milestone in the treatment of primitive art.

44 Typed biographical notes accompanying a call for contributions by the Australian Student Christian, Leonhard Adam Papers, UMA.
46 Rasmussen, A Museum for the People, 141.
48 Leonhard Adam, letter to Daryl Lindsay, 25 January 1956, Leonhard Adam Papers, 94/60, Box 6, Series 1, UMA.
49 Adam, letter to Lindsay, 25 January 1956, Leonhard Adam Papers, UMA.
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From the outset, the intention of the 1943 *Primitive Art Exhibition* was to bring together international works of primitive art – with a particular emphasis on works from Australia, the South Seas, Africa, and North America – drawn together ‘from the purely aesthetic point of view.’[^50] Its uniqueness was due to the fact that, unlike earlier exhibitions that had been narrowly focused on specific regions, the gallery’s exhibition would not only make artistic comparisons between a wide range of indigenous cultural arts, but do so with the significant inclusion of Australia indigenous works. As Adam explained in his exhibition proposal:

![Figure 1 The exhibition catalogue for the Primitive Art Exhibition held at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, in May 1943, barely a year into Lindsay’s directorship.](image)

This is going to be the first universal show of its kind since primitive art exhibitions in other countries in previous years have been confined to single continents, preferably Africa (Berlin; New York; Paris, and London), in our case [Germany], there was an exhibition of ancient American Art (Berlin 1930).\textsuperscript{51}

Adam’s original handwritten draft proposal for the exhibition drawn up in October 1942, only months after his release from Tatura and similarly only months after Lindsay’s appointment as director, provides an invaluable insight into the primary concepts behind the exhibition. Strongest of these was the continually reinforced notion that, in exhibiting items, the overarching principle should be aesthetic, and by no means ethnological. It follows that there must be sufficient space for the onlooker to appreciate the beauty of an object. Thus there should not be too many objects in one room; or, respectively, on a wall or in a glass case.\textsuperscript{52}

Likewise, he recognised that in the majority of cases, while there were examples of individual works of art, primitive art tended to be comprised and identified by ‘types’, a structure that worked well in terms of exhibiting sculpture but one that posed certain limitations as regards graphic art. The arrangement of the galleries ‘should be on aesthetic lines, not according to tribes, or geographical areas’ and, with the exceptions of such items as bowls, vases, and other decorative objects, ‘no implements or other technological specimens should be shown’; a distinction which clearly differentiated the exhibition’s re-aligned focus when compared to the National Museum’s 1929 exhibition.\textsuperscript{53}

Lindsay conveyed Adam’s proposal to Chief Librarian Pitt in a memorandum on the 23 November 1942, highlighting Adam’s ‘world-wide reputation in this field’. In a clear attempt to gain support, Lindsay played on the didactic benefits the experience would afford Melbourne, pointing out that the proposal ‘would make a really interesting and educational exhibition.’ Adam and Kenyon would undertake the selection of objects, in conjunction with Mohany and Lindsay as the two directors of the institutions involved. Lindsay suggested the NGV’s Print Gallery would be the most appropriate venue and sought Pitt’s consent to allow Adam to begin making preliminary arrangements. The recommendation received the approval of the gallery trustees’ at a meeting three days later, and by mid-December 1942 Lindsay noted in the margin of this memorandum: ‘have made all arrangements for Dr Adam to go ahead with Exhibition’.\textsuperscript{54}

As it eventuated, the comprehensive breadth of the exhibition required a larger space than the Print Gallery offered and it was moved to the gallery’s more spacious Latrobe Gallery where – after its walls were ‘stripped of pictures’ – it opened on the 11 May 1943.\textsuperscript{55} Adam had hoped to secure Professor A.P. Elkin of

\textsuperscript{51} Adam, draft exhibition proposal, \textit{Primitive Art Exhibition}, PROV.
\textsuperscript{52} Adam, draft exhibition proposal, \textit{Primitive Art Exhibition}, PROV.
\textsuperscript{53} Adam, draft exhibition proposal, \textit{ Primitive Art Exhibition}, PROV.
\textsuperscript{54} Daryl Lindsay, memorandum to Chief Librarian Ernest Pitt, 23 November 1942, VPRS 805/P4 Inward Registered Correspondence, Unit 5, File J, PROV.
\textsuperscript{55} ‘Primitive Art Exhibition At Latrobe Gallery’, \textit{Age}, Wed., 12 May 1943, 3.
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Sydney University to present the address at the opening, as he ‘seems to me to be particularly qualified as he is a scholar of international reputation and, incidentally, a very good speaker.’ A prior engagement prevented Elkin attending, but he wrote to congratulate ‘all concerned, on the holding of this exhibition.’

I do so not only because of the interest and importance of the subject, but also because it is not a flash in the pan with Melbourne. I remember the 1929 exhibition, and also the exhibition of Anthropology organized by various societies. This was a wonderfully attended function.

From ‘among the countless treasures in the storerooms of the museum’, in addition to a few loan items from interstate, Adam had brought together an exhibition that encompassed, and drew artistic and stylistic comparisons between works as diverse as Australia, New Guinea, the Pacific region, Asia, America, and Africa. ‘There has never before been a universal primitive art exhibition’, Adam observed by way of introducing the exhibition, ‘thus it may well be said that the present one is the first of its kind not only in Australia but even in the world.’

An impressed and proud Lindsay, no doubt feeling vindicated that his confidence in Adam had borne results, admitted that he was ‘deeply interested, and not a little humbled, at the scope and variety of this exhibition’. ‘If we study intelligently’, he suggested, ‘the wood carvings, drawings and other exhibits, it is obvious that these primitive artists and craftsmen could represent adequately and effectively almost any object that took their fancy’,

not so much in a slavish imitation of the object seen, but in their powers of inventing a convention or symbol to explain their object. It is when this power to invent comes into play that real art begins.

Melbourne’s journalists however seemed to grapple with the notion of viewing the exhibition along strictly aesthetic lines. The Age, for instance, noted that many of the items on display had been transferred to the Latrobe Gallery from the children’s section of the National Museum:

it is hard to see why a straightout ethnological character has not been claimed for the whole. With a few exceptions, all that is shown is legitimately the anthropologist’s concern.

With the exception of three sarongs from South-East Asia, the Age found few exhibits they felt warranted consideration as ‘art’. In justifying their view, the newspaper noted that Adam seemed to share their position. He judiciously ‘confined himself to the facts of ethnology’ in his catalogue articles, they noted, and

56 Leonhard Adam, letter to Daryl Lindsay, 8 April 1943, VPRS 805/P4 Inward Registered Correspondence, Unit 5, File J, PROV.
57 Prof. A.P. Elkin, letter to Chief Librarian Ernest Pitt, 4 May 1943, VPRS 805/P4 Inward Registered Correspondence, Unit 5, File J, PROV.
60 Lindsay, foreword, Primitive Art Exhibition, iii.
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‘made no extravagant claims to the artistic eminence of such interesting examples and evidences of primitive culture’.62

However, the Age’s opinion was not borne out by the exhibition’s catalogue, in which Adam strongly argued his original sentiments that the exhibition should primarily engage with the objects at an artistic level. Historically, ‘Negro sculpture’, he noted, was the first of the primitive arts to be viewed artistically, initially in European capitals, followed subsequently by London and New York.63 Yet his highest praise was directed to the culture with which he would dedicate the remainder of his life studying. In terms of ‘their artistic skill, imagination and refined taste in regard to aesthetic arrangements, and decorative designs, the Australian aborigines are infinitely superior to certain still more primitive races’.64 Herald art critic Clive Turnbull thought the exhibition ‘excellent’ and was able to discern the dual themes of ethnology and artistry working in tandem. The latter he felt was of particular relevance to Melbourne artistic community, pointing out that ‘in the early part of this century’,

... the influence of primitive art, African primitive in particular, began to be felt in Europe by the best minds of the day and has had its effect on, among many others, Matisse, Picasso and, conspicuously, Modigliani, both as painter and sculptor.

This richness is yet only partially assimilated: obviously its power will be felt for many years to come.65

Here was an exhibition that engaged with not only the virtue of primitive art in its own right, but exposed visitors to symbolic and abstract forms increasingly familiar in Melbourne in the wake of the 1939 Herald Exhibition. It encouraged them to draw the comparison and view primitive art within the larger narrative of artistic development. It remains an important milestone in Adam’s achievements, and stands as a bold curatorial move on the part of Lindsay so early in his directorship; one that has been largely overlooked in more recent discussion of his directorship.

Legacy and aftermath

The impact of the 1943 Primitive Art Exhibition and Lindsay’s engagement with indigenous art continued to manifest itself throughout the 1940s and 1950s. In the same year as the exhibition, Charles Barrett and R.H. Croll’s Art of the Australian Aboriginal was published, capturing an already attentive market increasingly attuned to aspects of Aboriginal culture. Writing in the book’s foreword for an overtly white Australian culture of the 1940s, A.P. Elkin proposed art as a means through which a level of understanding – if not outright appreciation – between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians could be achieved. ‘It may be that we cannot feel akin to a people whose existence is one of complete dependence on nature’, he wrote.

63 Adam, Primitive Art Exhibition, 1.
64 Adam, Primitive Art Exhibition, 1.
But our attitude is quickly changed when we learn that these same people paint and engrave ... they find pleasure, beauty, and meaning in the result of their artistic efforts. Such a people consists of men and women of like passions as ourselves.66

Progressively, throughout the 1940s, art came to be seen by many anthropologists, artists and gallery staff as the medium through which the indigenous and non-indigenous cultures could move closer together. Fine art had long been viewed as the product of civilised culture, thus if Aboriginal art could attain appropriate recognition as ‘art’ it would play a fundamental role in challenging long-held European notions of Aboriginal inferiority. Extending beyond this line of reasoning was the expectation that those who came to value Aboriginal art would also came to value Aboriginal culture.67 Artists lent their voice to this objective: ‘Personally, I rate very highly the bark drawings of our own Australian natives, who seem to possess a certain delicacy of line all their own’, Lindsay enthused in the foreword of the Primitive catalogue.68 It was high praise indeed, coming as it did from one who, grounded in the Slade tradition, had long advocated for sound draughtsmanship as the basis of all ‘good art’.

Rising wartime nationalism and the fluid nature of Australia’s cultural identity during the war years made it receptive to the inclusion of new forms of representation. The British defeat at Singapore in 1940 and the stationing of American troops in Melbourne two years later hastened already shifting ties away from Australia’s European heritage. When Clem Christensen founded his literary journal Meanjin in Brisbane in 1940, he deliberately adopted an Aboriginal term as the journal’s title, not because the journal would cover Aboriginal culture, but rather, as Ian Mclean has noted, ‘to advertise the Australian-ness of its criticism and writing’.69 More overt resonances of this approach are found in the emergence of another literary movement, the Jindyworobaks, in Adelaide a few years earlier, established with the express purpose of promoting Aboriginal culture and ideas.

Throughout the decade, and into the 1950s, adaptations of traditional, abstract Aboriginal iconography reflecting the new ‘Australian-ness’ became increasingly prominent, if not at times misunderstood. When figures from a rock painting at Oenpelli were used as street decoration in Melbourne to mark the 1956 Olympics, their indigenous origins were overlooked, being instead described as an ‘ultra-modern wire ensemble’.70 Artistic references were supported by a litany of publications, both academic as well as popular, that began appearing in the final years of the war, and continued well into the 1960s. In the years immediately following the Primitive exhibition, Adam posed the question in Angry Penguins, ‘Has Australian Aboriginal art a future?’ As if in answer, a series of publications followed, including Theodore Strehlow’s Aranda phonetics and grammar,71 A.P. Elkin’s Aboriginal men of high degree,72 Art in Arnhem Land, a collaborative effort by

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67 H. Morphy, Aboriginal Art, 29.
68 Lindsay, Primitive Art Exhibition, 8.
69 Mclean, White Aborigines: identity politics in Australian art, 87.
71 Theodore Strehlow, Aranda phonetics and grammar, Sydney: Australian National Research Council, 1944[?].
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Elkin and Ronald and Catherine Berndt in 1950,73 followed closely by Rex Battarbee’s *Modern Australian Aboriginal Art*.74

**Abstraction and imitation**

While the claim as the first Australian gallery to purchase an aboriginal watercolour fell to the Adelaide National Gallery, with their purchase of a painting by Albert Namatjira in 1939, it is hardly surprising that the NGV acquired its first works by Indigenous artists under Lindsay.75 Three years after the success of the Primitive Exhibition, Lindsay purchased two contemporary indigenous watercolours – *Red Wall, Ormiston Gorge* (1946) and *Mt Sonder from Ormiston* (1946) – by the western Arrernte artist, Edwin Pareroultja, who Lindsay had long admired for his freer style and use of colour.

Lindsay continued to encourage the acquisition of indigenous work throughout his directorship, and in the years following, with some dramatic innovations. Like Adam, and many others of his generation, he felt ‘originality’ needed to be retained in indigenous art, as increasingly western styles and techniques began to influence younger Aboriginal artists. Foremost among these were the paintings being produced by a group of Aboriginals at the Lutheran Hermannsburg mission station outside of Alice Springs, under the tuition of their white Australian teacher, Rex Battarbee. Painting in watercolour and following closely the European landscape traditions of their teacher, these works were for a long time viewed ‘as a symbol of assimilation and of the subordination of Aboriginal traditions to introduced forms’, as Howard Morphy has noted.76

Leonhard Adam expressed such concerns to Kenneth Austin in August 1954:

> Is Mr. B[attarbee] going to try and tell the world that he never let [Albert] Namatjira watch him sketching? Have you seen Central Australian watercolours by Battarbee? I have, and they cannot be distinguished from Namatjira’s. ... I am glad the Aranda painters trained by Battarbee are doing well financially, and I wish them well. All I have to point out is that this is entirely European art, never mind the race and colour of those who practise it. It has nothing to do with the aboriginal art, let alone primitive art, and to describe it as aboriginal art is misleading the public.77

Adam was not alone in such views. In March 1937, Pastor Albrecht from the Hermannsburg mission attended the Lutheran Synodical Conference at Nuriootpa, South Australia, taking with him ten of Namatjira’s watercolours for sale. Battarbee had only recently commenced teaching at the mission, and, obviously impressed by the paintings, Albrecht no doubt hoped to promote the mission at the Conference as well as test the appeal of Namatjira’s work. Four were sold, with Albrecht purchasing a further two himself.78 It is likely that the Conference coincided with

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75 J. Batty, *Namatjira: wanderer between two worlds*, 37.
76 Morphy, *Aboriginal Art*, 265.
77 Leonhard Adam, letter to K.A. Austin, 13 August 1954, Leonhard Adam Papers, 94/60, Box 4, Series 1, UMA.
Albrecht’s approach to Adelaide artist Hans Heysen, seeking his opinion as to whether Namatjira should be taken off the mission to visit galleries and further his art education. Although impressed by the paintings, Heysen ‘strongly advised against it’. He considered Namatjira’s art ‘remarkable’, even superior to Battarbee’s, but vulnerable to having its originality stifled by the mounting public gaze directed on the artist’s work. In a letter to his close friend, Lindsay’s brother Lionel, some years later, he explained, ‘I felt that if his work was to hold and retain a truly original outlook, he should work in the surroundings where he was bred and lived.’

Namatjira’s work was gaining recognition, but concerns were ever present that over-exposure might have a detrimental effect on the development of his art. Though said in admiration, the observation by Louis McCubbin, director of the Art Gallery of South Australia, articulated the concerns of many watching the progress of the Hermannsburg artists when he wrote, ‘It is remarkable how this aborigine has grasped so readily the European conception of art’. Even Battarbee, originally intent on bringing Namatjira to Melbourne, changed his mind, and was supported in his decision by Melbourne artist William Rowell. Rowell had visited Hermannsburg and had seen Namatjira at work, but argued that it would be ‘a great pity if Albert is ever allowed to visit the cities. Every means should be taken to see that he does not.’ Rather prophetically, he added:

The white man may gain by the adoption of civilised art by a primitive aborigine, but eventually he will be judged by our standards and outlook, which may place him at a disadvantage.

By the mid 1940s, Heysen already considered his earlier prediction had come to fruition; Namatjira’s success as a ‘facile watercolourist’ had come with a cost: ‘we have lost any further development in his outlook, or contribution to Aus art. It’s a great pity.’

Adam, not unlike Lindsay, viewed direct European influence on indigenous art away from its traditional roots, either by teaching or by example, as detrimental to the future of Australia indigenous art. A certain level of engagement was considered acceptable however, even practical, in so far as the introduction of materials, paper, pigments, ‘and may well be associated with a progressive development of genuine aboriginal art from within.’ The practice was almost certainly being encouraged by the late 1940s when Fr. Ernest Worms, a Pallotine missionary working in the Kimberley region, collected a series of drawings of indigenous subjects drawn in vibrant colours. Worms had been introduced to Adam in 1942, when he had joined Adam and his wife Mary on a field trip to Phillip Island in Victoria to study Aboriginal stone tool sites. During the years that followed, he continued to assist Adam in enlarging his teaching collections at the University of Melbourne. The drawings are striking for their use of colour.

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80 Batt, _Namatjira: wanderer between two worlds_, 34.
81 Hans Heysen, letter to Lionel Lindsay, 22 June 1945, in Thiele, _Heysen of Hahndorf_, 304.
82 Adam, letter Lindsay, 23 April 1954, Leonhard Adam Papers, UMA.
83 R. Sloggett, ‘I have now made a start …’ – Dr. Leonhard Adam’s Ethnographic Collection at the University of Melbourne’, _Open Museums Journal_, 7, November 2005, 10.
crayon sketch, collected by Worms in 1949, depicts two large Wandjinas – Aboriginal rain and cloud spirits – drawn in bright blues and pink. It is annotated in what appears to be Lindsay’s handwriting, stating that it was acquired at Derby and drawn by ‘a member of the Bemba tribe, neighbours of the Worara’.84

Lindsay was clearly aware of, and actively encouraging, the continuance of sacred, abstractionist symbolism in Aboriginal art decades before the appearance of Western Desert style ‘dot painting’ in the early 1970s. As Judith Ryan, senior curator of indigenous art at the NGV, has written on the emergence on the latter style, first produced at Papunya in 1971: ‘Such mythological narrative art would remain hidden until Aboriginal culture was better understood and tolerated. Then, in a different social climate, perhaps the art market would be ready’.85 In April 1954, Leonhard Adam was shown a series of abstract pastel drawings produced by senior children from the Ernabella Mission Station in South Australia by artist and art teacher Leonard French. Differing widely from the work of the Hermannsburg school artists, the drawings were of distinctly ‘abstract linear design, full of rhythm.’ Almost without exception, the children’s use of colour and shades was considered ‘amazingly successful’. Excitedly, Adam wrote to Lindsay, urging him to view the drawings: ‘The most important point is that these abstract designs belong to the same visual universe as the ancient genuine aboriginal art of Central Australia’.86

Adam’s letter reached Lindsay days after George W. Bell, who had accompanied Leonard French to see Adam, had already brought the drawings to Lindsay’s attention. As Bell advised, the Ernabella abstractions were being produced not only in pastels, but also in watercolours, and – as early as the mid 1950s – were already being incorporated into Christmas cards and woven into mats where they were finding a ready market in Melbourne ‘because of their novelty value’.87 A series of drawings were left with Lindsay, who showed them to a few close friends. All admired the abstract quality of the works, which they compared to traditional bark paintings. He noticed however a certain similarity in the colours being used, and assumed that the students were being given boxes of chalk of the same colour to draw with.

I would like to suggest that it would be an interesting experiment to try to give them three of four kinds of different coloured paper to work on, and limit their colours to four of five, similar to the colours used by the aboriginals in their bark drawings i.e. black, yellow ocre, Indian or light red, white – to which blue could possibly be added.88

84 Untitled (Two large blue and pink Wandjinas), c. 1949, crayon on paper, Leonhard Adam collection, University of Melbourne Art Collection, 1960.1726. Inscribed in blue pen on verso in what appears to be Lindsay’s handwriting: ‘Crayon drawings by a member of the Bemba tribe/ neighbours of the Worara). Obtained near Derby, (Kimberly) by Very Rev. Fr. E.A. Worms, S.C.A., 1949.’
86 Adam, letter to Lindsay, 23 April 1954, Leonhard Adam Papers, UMA.
87 George W. Bell, letter to Daryl Lindsay, 20 April 1954, VPRS 12730/P1 Director’s Correspondence, Unit 10, Folder: 1/24, PROV.
88 Daryl Lindsay, letter to George W. Bell, 19 May 1954, VPRS 12730/P1 Director’s Correspondence, Unit 10, Folder: 1/24, PROV.
The suggestion to include blue into the palette of the Ernabella students is unusual, and evokes the vibrant colours Lindsay had seen in the crayon drawings of Wondjina a few years earlier. Overwhelmingly, Lindsay’s support for fostering a continuance of traditional design in Aboriginal art was unequivocally positive: ‘I believe every encouragement should be given to the students to carry on as they are doing.’

Yet despite Lindsay’s ardent and sustained support for the development of traditional Aboriginal art forms, his irreconcilable stance regarding the Hermannsburg school artists has overshadowed his otherwise progressive and influential persistence for the recognition of Aboriginal works as significant art objects in their own right. Today, such views might be understood as a backlash to what Judith Ryan has described as Namatjira’s ‘recognisable ‘Art’, though this would be a simplification of Lindsay’s appreciation. Lindsay had long held that traditional Aboriginal patterns and motifs were an artistic expression to be valued. Such works approached with an open mind, he suggested in 1943, ‘should help us to visualise and understand more clearly lives so far removed from our own, but in which we share the common denominator of art.’

His impassioned attacks on Namatjira, well after the artist’s death in 1959, have done little to correct this image however. When Douglas Lockwood suggested in 1968 that the growing interest in Aboriginal art would soon see Alice Springs became the future centre of Australia art, Lindsay refuted the notion with the cry ‘This is not art!’ ‘It is time the myth of the so-called genius Namatjira is exploded’, he wrote. Acknowledging the ‘phenomenally successful’ Namatjira’s competency with watercolour, he asserted that he lacked artistic talent; that his skill lay in imitation only. ‘His was a camera eye’, Lindsay argued. It was a criticism specific to Namatjira, rather than the entire body of Hermannsburg artists, and the free-flowing, spontaneity of fellow Arrernte artist Edwin Pareroultja marked him, in Lindsay’s opinion, as ‘a much finer artist’.

Nonetheless, in the mid-1950s, by which point Namatjira’s reputation was well established, Lindsay had sought examples of Namatjira’s work for the NGV as well as the Geelong Art Gallery. However, his general resistance to the artist’s style meant that when he raised the issue with Namatjira, in Melbourne in March 1954 for the Royal Tour Exhibition at the Melbourne Town Hall, his prime requirement was ‘that he wanted a painting a little bit cheap’ (fig. 2). Rex Battarbee selected three works, priced at 35, 50 and 75 guineas, only to have all three rejected by the gallery’s trustees once they arrived in Melbourne. Lindsay’s close friend, and Herald Chair of Fine Arts at Melbourne University, Joseph Burke, thought them ‘frightful absolute pot-boilers’. Others on the NGV’s board of trustees felt that not only were they too highly priced but – unlike his earlier works – Namatjira had developed a formula of landscape painting to appeal to a ready market. In the ensuing debate, Battarbee hotly defended Namatjira’s work by stating this his ‘work is equal to the best technique’. It was an argument that would have found little empathy with

89 Lindsay, letter to Bell, 19 May 1954, PROV.
91 Lindsay, Primitive Art Exhibition, iii.
92 Daryl Lindsay, ‘This is not art!’, Herald, Sat., 31 August 1968, 15.
93 Batty, Namatjira: wanderer between two worlds, 83.
94 Batty, Namatjira: wanderer between two worlds, 82.
Lindsay. Decades earlier he has admired the work of friend and artist George Lambert, but felt his great weakness lay in his inability to progress beyond the technical to the artistic. Battarbee was vindicated, however, when weeks later two of the three rejected works sold for £75 and £80 at an exhibition of Aboriginal watercolours at the Athenaeum gallery arranged by the Aranda Arts Council.95

Figure 2 Lindsay and Albert Namatjira discussing Russell Drysdale’s Station blacks, Cape York at an exhibition of Australian art held at the Melbourne Town Hall, 1954.

Lindsay retired as Director of the NGV the following year, 1955, leaving the development of the NGV’s Australian indigenous art collection to later directors. Yet his early influence in encouraging indigenous art would continue to manifest itself in unexpected ways. The ‘glare of publicity’96 directed at Namatjira’s westernised style throughout the 1950s and 1960s from dissenters such as Lindsay provided the very background for the re-emergence of an Aboriginal art form long sought by Lindsay. The appearance of abstractionist Western Desert painting and its exploration of traditional totemic symbolism in the 1970s represented a contemporary form of the traditional Australian indigenous art long championed by Lindsay and Adam.

Lindsay and indigenous Australia

Daryl Lindsay had long held an admiration and respect for indigenous Australians by the time he was appointed Director of the NGV in 1942. These views were grounded during his formative early adult years, working alongside indigenous stockmen on the pastoral stations of northern New South Wales and Queensland in the years before the First World War and carried right throughout his life. For Lindsay, these immediate pre-war years were ‘the happiest of my life’ that ‘left me

95 Age, Wed., 10 November 1954, 2.
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with a romantic love of the outback and its people’. As recounted in chapter one, his earliest contact with indigenous people was while working at Yerabah station near Angledool in New South Wales’ northwest, near the border of Queensland. Jimmy Harper, a friend who worked with Lindsay around 1909 at Yerabah, recalled that it was at Angledool that he made his ‘first acquaintance with Aborigines’. How many Aboriginals there were about Angledool at that time I do not know, but I have no hesitation in stating that they out-numbered the white population by a large majority. They were not the Aboriginals that we know to-day. They were the real thing – I should say about one removed from the Stone Age.

Recalling these years from the early 1970s, Lindsay recalled fondly his time in ‘Nhunggal country’, the area surrounding Angledool anthropologist Norman Tindale had identified thirty years earlier as being the tribal lands of the Ualarai people. Lindsay remembered ‘a full-blooded aboriginal called “Yerabah Billy”, a tracker with incredible abilities who he would often invite to accompany him on his rounds. Once, while out looking for stray cattle with another indigenous tracker, they picked up the tracks of a horse-drawn vehicle that had passed months earlier during the ‘wet’ season. With little physical reminder of the vehicle’s tracks still remaining, Lindsay was astounded at his tracker’s ability to narrate ‘practically everything the man had done - where he camped, where he had taken the wheel off his jinker and had cut a sapling off a tree to mend something, and so it went on for 60 miles.’

On another occasion, while droving cattle through Queensland across to the Northern Territory with indigenous stockmen, he praised their skill in the saddle, remarking that they were ‘all good horsemen.’ An avid horseman throughout his life, Lindsay’s comment is a weighted compliment and a strong reflection of his respect. Travelling some 300 miles, spending months in the saddle, life among stockmen was close, intimate and often in virtual isolation. The remark is not one formed from incidental observance, but made by one who had got to know and appreciate the culture of his indigenous colleagues. For more than two years from 1909 onwards, Lindsay worked alongside indigenous Australians, and ...

I developed a great respect and affection for the aboriginals. The young men were splendid horsemen and good with cattle ... The more I saw of these people the more respect I had for them.

The outbreak of war, and the furtherance of his artistic career in the decades after his return from France, prevented a return to the land.

97 Daryl Lindsay, foreword, A Tribute to the men and horses of the Northern Territory – nine reproductions in full colour.
100 D. Lindsay, ‘They’re way out characters in the outback’, Herald, weekend magazine, Sat., 10 June 1972, 15.
101 Lindsay, ‘They’re way out characters in the outback’, 14-15.
102 Lindsay, ‘They’re way out characters in the outback’, 14.
It was not until his retirement as director in the mid-1950s, that Lindsay had the opportunity to return to the Northern Territory. Now in his late sixties, he set off determined ‘to make a factual record of life on the camps’, conscious that a lifestyle that he so admired was fast disappearing as overland trucking routes dispensed with the need for saddle-bound drovers (fig. 3).  

Figure 3 Daryl Lindsay, The Overlanders, 1960, oil on canvas.

From Alice Springs, Lindsay accompanied Connellan Airways pilot and later Northern Territory federal politician Sam Calder by mail plane to Wave Hill cattle station, and its various outstations. He stayed with his old friend Milton Willox at Wave Hill station on the Victoria River, and spent a month enjoying the simply lifestyle of his youth: accompanying Willox in an old Dodge truck out to the mustering camps, checking on the station’s various bores, and sleeping rough under a few blankets. Many of his subsequent paintings exhibited in Melbourne a few years later document this trip and the people he encountered: Ant Hills, Argyle Downs, Turkey Creek Homestead, The Camp at Catfish, Wave Hill, The King, (Wave Hill).

Like many similar stations across Australia’s regional centre, indigenous workers played a prominent role in the station’s operations, much as they had done fifty years earlier during Lindsay’s years as a jackeroo. At Wave Hill in the late 1950s, alongside twenty-four white Australians, Lindsay estimated the work force to consist of approximately two hundred and forty Aboriginals, eighty-six of them working as stockmen at Wave Hill’s numerous out stations. Many of the women worked around the homestead, or in the kitchen. Travelling across Wave Hill’s expansive run, close to the outstation at Hooker’s Creek near the Western Australian border he found,

103 Lindsay, foreword, A Tribute to the men and horses of the Northern Territory.
104 Daryl Lindsay, The Leafy Tree, Melbourne: F.W. Cheshire, 185.
105 Daryl Lindsay, unpublished autobiographical notes, c. 1972, Daryl Lindsay Papers, MS4864, Box 9, Folder 3: ‘The Back Blocks’, National Library of Australia (NLA), 1.
106 D. Lindsay, unpublished autobiographical notes, c. 1972, Daryl Lindsay Papers, MS4864, Box 9, Folder 1, NLA.
an old aboriginal camping ground on the side of a stream with emus and brolgas strutting about and our aboriginal guides pointed out many things of
great interest to me – I gathered that this place had been used for centuries by
the tribes.\footnote{D. Lindsay, unpublished autobiographical notes, c. 1972, Daryl Lindsay Papers, MS4864, Box 9, Folder 3, *The Back Blocks*, NLA, p. 2.}

Aboriginal stockmen at the station must have noted Lindsay’s interest in such
things, for similar events are scattered across his time at Wave Hill. A few days
later he was taken to an aboriginal encampment sixty miles down the Victoria River
by ‘Peter’, a fine looking black of the Wallbury Tribe who was assistant to the
station’s engineer. Lindsay recalled three tribes sharing the camp as the Wallbury, Wallamulla and Woodburra; tribes we would identify today as the Wandjira, Walpiri and Waramanga.\footnote{For consistency, Lindsay’s original phonetic spelling for these tribes has been retained throughout this chapter. N. Tindale, *Aboriginal tribes of Australia: their terrain, environmental control, distribution, limits and proper names*, vol. II, maps.}

The Wallbury’s were fine – had just come in only a few of them and still had a
bit of paint about them and their hair done up. I took a photo of them.\footnote{D. Lindsay, unpublished autobiographical notes, c. 1972, Daryl Lindsay Papers, MS4864, Box 9, Folder 3, *The Back Blocks*, NLA, p. 6. The whereabouts of this photograph is unknown, despite an extensive search being made among the various Lindsay archival holdings.}

Significantly, Lindsay singled them out from the other tribes, not because of their
fondness for wearing ‘ten-gallon hats and high-heeled boots’ like their white
Australian counterparts,\footnote{Lindsay, *The Leafy Tree*, 187.} but for their seeming disregard for adopting such
western dress: ‘they looked a finer lot than the others – much cleaner with fewer
clothes’.\footnote{D. Lindsay, unpublished autobiographical notes, c. 1972, Daryl Lindsay Papers, MS4864, Box 9, Folder 3: *The Back Blocks*, NLA, p. 7.} For Lindsay, their lack of western attire illustrated a favourable
adherence to their own cultural traditions, an aspect of Aboriginality he respected
both culturally as well as artistically. It was an extension of this same position that
saw Lindsay – and others who shared his view – dismiss the work of Albert
Namatjira as an appropriation of western artistic vision at the expense of his own
indigenous artistic traditions.

Upon his return to Melbourne, Lindsay resumed painting in oil paints after
an almost fifteen-year absence. He worked productively throughout the first half
of 1960, and by mid-year had completed his fourth Northern Territory painting – *Great
Ant Hills at Gordon Downs* (probably *Ant Hills, Argyle Downs*) (Figs. 5 and 6). A
further two major works were planned from his earlier sketches when the
momentum slowed and he found himself unable to move forward. ‘I have
suddenly gone flat’, he explained to Lionel, ‘and can’t think’.\footnote{Daryl Lindsay, letter to Lionel Lindsay, 12 June 1960, Lindsay Family Papers, MS9242, Box 2003, Folder: 1044-1175, State Library of Victoria (SLV).} With his
sketchbooks almost exhausted, he harboured notions of returning to the Territory to
compile more notes:

**I believe the best way to paint was [Henry] Tonk’s method, careful drawing**
and colour notes and then in the studio one can set down and compose a
picture with no distraction of the changing light and not too much copying. Claude, Wilson and Constable must have all used this method – But there is something lively and fluid about the quick sketch when it comes off that can rarely be got in a large considered work.113

Depictions of indigenous stockmen are a reoccurring theme in Lindsay’s paintings from this period. As he worked towards his first major exhibition in almost two decades held at the Australian Galleries in Collingwood, Melbourne, in 1961, he wrote to Lionel. The letter offers an interesting insight into Lindsay’s artistic output, and the subjects that were visibly prominent in his later work:

> I have been painting a lot and seem to get a picture a week and sometimes two done – I’ve got about 8 of the N.T. subjects finished and about 10 small things, Abos and stockmen …114

Central Australian subjects made up more than half of the forty-work exhibition at the Australian Galleries when it opened at the end of May 1961. Aboriginal stockmen and station hands featured prominently among these works. Normally closed on Saturdays, the Australian Galleries made a special exception on 3 June to provide Prime Minister Robert Menzies and his wife an opportunity to view the exhibition, both being close friends of Lindsay’s (fig. 4). When advised by the gallery’s director Tom Purves that in the five days since the show had opened almost all the works were already sold, Menzies replied smiling, “Good for Sir Daryl”. With sales of over 4,000 guineas, the show’s success was a record for a solo exhibition at the Australian Galleries.115

The success of the Australian Galleries exhibition no doubt reflected the broader public interest in depictions of the Australian interior that had been mounting throughout the 1950s. Since the late 1940s, representations of the outback had assumed a prominent role in the works of several Australian artists. Alan McCulloch, reviewing the exhibition for the *Herald* saw echoes of Arthur Boyd’s desert paintings in Lindsay’s depictions of waterholes, and obvious shadows of his close friend Russell Drysdale in his representations of Aboriginals. Even Lindsay’s gnarled, turreted portrayal of Australia’s outback in such works as *Turkey Creek Homestead* (c.1960), or shared titles such as *Central Australia* (c.1960) found parallels with Sydney Nolan’s cratered, red desert series.116 Although McCulloch found Lindsay’s interpretation of the Northern Territory a little ‘too urbane for my tastes’,117 such works nonetheless found a receptive audience ‘falling over themselves to get in on the Northern Territory pictures’.118 Two months before the exhibition, consistent interest in his paintings was such that Lindsay anticipated almost a quarter of the works would most likely be sold by the time the exhibition

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113 Lindsay, letter to Lindsay, 12 June 1960, Lindsay Family Papers, SLV.
114 Daryl Lindsay, letter to Lionel Lindsay, 21 September 1960, Lindsay Family Papers, MS9242, Box 2003, Folder: 1044-1175, SLV. While the current usage of the term ‘Abo’ for indigenous Australians is derogatory, as it was during the mid-twentieth century, it has arguably assumed in recent decades an increased inappropriateness that was not intended, or understood to Lindsay’s generation.
118 Daryl Lindsay, letter to Lionel Lindsay, 28 March 1961, Lindsay Family Papers, MS9242, Box 2003, Folder: 1044-1175, SLV.
opened. One of the largest buyers was Imperial Chemical Industries (ICI), who continued to employ Lindsay as an art adviser on a retainer of £250 per annum – as they had done since mid-1957\textsuperscript{119} – and had already expressed interest in obtaining ‘three of the most important pictures for £600’, among them *500 Miles to go* (fig. 5).\textsuperscript{120}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure4.png}
\caption{Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies being shown Lindsay’s *500 Miles to go* by Australian Galleries director, Tam Purves.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure5.png}
\caption{Daryl Lindsay, *500 Miles to go*, 1960 oil on canvas.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{119} In 1957, Lindsay was commissioned to buy £1000 worth of art works for the collections of the Imperial Chemical Industries of Australian and New Zealand (ICIANZ), and continued in this role for several years. Joan McClelland, of Melbourne’s McClelland Gallery, recalls Lindsay visiting the Gallery after a small oil painting by Charles Conder – *Fisherman’s bridge, Double Bay* – was found in the desk drawer of a former Myer director. The work was displayed directly opposite the door and upon entering the gallery, without turning to look at any other works, Lindsay strode purposefully across the room to the Conder. McClelland recalls that Lindsay “was so in love with the picture” that it took less than two minutes for him to purchase it for the ICI collections in 1961. Kerry Stokes later purchased the ICI collection, including this work by Conder. The work was most recently loaned from the Kerry Stokes collection, Perth, to the NGV for inclusion in its *Australian Impressionists* exhibition. Daryl Lindsay, letter to Lionel Lindsay, 29 June 1957, Lindsay Family Papers, MS9242, Box 2003, Folder: 840-923, SLV. Information provided to the author by Joan McClelland, 11 October 2006.

\textsuperscript{120} Daryl, letter to Lindsay, 28 March 1961, Lindsay Family Papers, SLV. *500 Miles to go* was lent from the ICIANZ collection for inclusion in the *Daryl Lindsay Retrospective Exhibition* held at the McClelland Gallery, Langwarrin, in 1972.
As Australian art’s focus shifted from the bush to the desert – continuing a transition away from the Australian Impressionist school that had began with Heysen’s Flinders Ranges paintings in the late 1920s – attention turned towards the inclusion of indigenous subjects. In November 1953, Russell Drysdale, who as a young artist Lindsay had introduced to George Bell in the early 1930s, held a solo exhibition at Sydney’s Macquarie Galleries, where many of the seventeen works exhibited depicted Aboriginals. Born in England, but having grown up in the Riverina before becoming a jackeroo in Queensland, Drysdale shared an affinity with Lindsay’s own early life experiences, his fondness for the outback, and its people, both indigenous and white Australians. Like Lindsay’s later works, Drysdale’s Two Boys (1953), Man in a Landscape (1953), The Camp (1953), Station blacks, Cape York (1953), and Group of Aborigines (1953), among others, portray their subjects closely, intimately, against the barren outback. They demonstrate the strong empathy both artists felt with their subjects at a time when Aboriginals working in rural stations could expect little remuneration except that which came through food rations, and others goods.

Most visibly apparent in this awakening social landscape were the inter-racial relationships between White and indigenous Australians. In 1963, leading anthropologist on indigenous Australians Norman Tindale observed a ‘problem’ arising from Aboriginals gaining employment on cattle stations, namely that ‘hardly any full-blood aboriginals children are born. The few babies are nearly all half-castes.’

121 Previously ignored in Australian art, such themes emerge strongly in

121 Norman Tindale and H. Lindsay, Aboriginal Australians, Brisbane: Jacaranda Press, 1963, 131.
Arthur Boyd’s *Bride* series at the end of the 1950s, being the dominant theme in such paintings as *Half-caste Wedding* (1955), *Half-caste Child* (1957), and *Persecuted Lovers* (1957-58). Stripped of the allegorical context of Boyd’s work, these themes begin to appear in a direct, almost confrontational, way in Drysdale’s *Halfcaste woman* (1960) and *Tom and Lilah* (1963); works painted almost a decade after his earliest engagement with Aboriginal subjects.

By 1960, such trends were not only manifest in Australian art but becoming increasingly prominent in Australian gallery practice. In 1958, one of the Art Gallery of New South Wales’ benefactors, Stuart Scougall, made an expedition to commission Melville Island grave-posts. He invited Tony Tuckson, a rising figure in Aboriginal and Oceanic art at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and later deputy director, to accompany him. The grave-posts were presented to the gallery the following year. Tuckson was primarily responsible for a major exhibition of Australian Aboriginal art, consisting largely of bark paintings that toured the six Australian capitals in 1960. Indeed, in the resulting *Australian Aboriginal Art*, published by Ure Smith in 1964 to which Tuckson included a chapter titled ‘Aboriginal Art and the Western World’, he credited Lindsay’s 1943 *Primitive Art Exhibition* as being the catalyst for the burgeoning inclusion of Aboriginal art amongst Australian galleries.122

Lindsay’s adoption of Aboriginal subjects thus sits within a well-defined shift in white Australian attitudes towards indigenous Australians. Boyd’s paintings were an emotional response to the conditions in the indigenous shanty towns surrounding Alice Springs and Arltunga in 1951. He had been totally unprepared for the poverty that confronted him and acknowledged ‘it has a serious effect on you, when you are not used to it ... You suddenly come against it after imagining that they are noble savage types living in the bush.’123

Drysdale’s *Station blacks*, *Cape York* was one of the earliest representations, and the first of his new series to be exhibited publicly when it was included in the annual Society of Artists’ exhibition in Sydney in August 1953. Sydney artist and art critic Paul Haefliger praised it as one of the show’s highlights, amongst an otherwise mediocre display of new works. Drysdale ‘introduces us to some charming coloured people, slightly shy and awkward in making our acquaintance’, Haefliger wrote. ‘The meeting is not artificially contrived, but is naturally observed and recorded with tenderness.’124 As Drysdale’s biographer Lou Kelpac wrote later, the November 1953 exhibition was a ‘landmark in Australian painting for the use of the Aboriginal as a serious subject. Today it is hard to understand the novelty of this at the time.’

But in 1953 it was a new idea and one of considerable sociological importance. Aboriginals had never been treated with such objective compassion and understanding by an artist, and it changed the popular view of Aboriginal people hitherto characterized by the unfeeling and insensitive lampoons of the colonial tradition.125

Lindsay and Drysdale shared a close friendship, expressed by Lindsay in the early 1970s when he described Drysdale’s work as the most significant contribution to Australian art, due to his ‘intimate knowledge and understanding of the small settlers, the aboriginals and half castes.’ Not surprisingly, when Station blacks, Cape York was viewed at the Society of Artists’ exhibition, the painting and its sentiment clearly appealed to Lindsay, who purchased it for the NGV directly from the exhibition. Lindsay’s wife Joan, discussing the painting in the gallery’s Quarterly Bulletin the following year, arguably made the observation for both of them when she wrote: ‘There is something monumental about this painting. One feels that it IS a monument … perhaps to a lost and dying race.’ The painting was included in the Fellowship of Australian Artists Royal Tour Exhibition held at the Melbourne Town Hall the year after its purchase, where Lindsay was photographed discussing the work with indigenous artist Albert Namatjira.

Like Boyd, Drysdale found something profoundly moving in his encounters with indigenous Australians. Questioned about the inclusion of Aboriginals in his paintings in 1964, Drysdale replied:

I think it is simply because somehow in a way these people, they not only have to me a peculiar dignity and grace, not the sort of dignity or grace that one thinks of in the Apollo Belvedere, but the way in which a man comports himself in an environment which is his and has been his and his alone, he’s at ease in it.

Though undoubtedly influenced by his friend’s depictions and the sentiment behind them, Lindsay’s portrayal of indigenous stations workers is direct and honest. Unlike Drysdale’s ‘slightly shy and awkward’, silently gazing Aboriginals, Lindsay’s indigenous stockmen on the whole embody a more relaxed, confident self-assuredness. Drysdale often presents his Aboriginals frontally to the viewer, alone in a barren landscape, exposed to the almost exclusively white audience for whom the works are intended. In contrast, Lindsay’s subjects are rarely left alone in the landscape, often situated in their working environment, and lack the staged photo-like placement evident in Drysdale’s series. They are not subjects to be stared at nor do they always meet the gaze of the viewer.

In Waiting their turn (fig. 6), three indigenous stockmen lean back or sit against the wooden post of a cattle yard, the thumb of one tucked casually into his belt. Two face the painter, while one is distracted with something outside the canvas, perhaps his horse, for he holds the reins and bit between his legs. Similar characteristics are also present in Big Bob (fig. 7), a portrait of one of Wave Hill’s overseers. He stands next to his saddled horse, the reins held in one hand with a stock whip dangling loosely from the other. His features, already masked by his

126 Daryl Lindsay, ‘Australian Painting’, unpublished autobiographical manuscript, c. 1972, Joseph Burke Papers, Box 4, UMA.
127 Joan Lindsay, in Quarterly Bulletin of the National Gallery of Victoria, 8: 2, 1954, np.
128 ‘Aboriginal painter see art show’, Sun, Tues., 2 March 1954, p. 5; The Fellowship of Australian Artists Royal Tour Exhibition, exhibition catalogue, Lower Town Hall, Melbourne, 25 February-6 March 1954.
129 Russell Drysdale quote in Dutton, Russell Drysdale, 101.
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darkened skin, are further obscured beneath the shadow of his wide brimmed hat. He was, as Lindsay portrayed him, ‘a most picturesque chap’,

in a blue shirt – a low waist line draped below a fattest belly – tapering off to very small feet in high heeled elastic sides – He’s a grand chap – slow of speech and a brown smiling face weighs about 16 stone and sits down cross-legged without an effort.\textsuperscript{131}

Such paintings as Waiting their turn and Big Bob with their portrait-like intimacy to the subject, present an almost heroic treatment of the indigenous stockmen in a way not afforded to the white stockmen who are often depicted simply as figures within a landscape, rather than the focus of the work.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Daryl_Lindsay_Big_Bob}
\caption{Daryl Lindsay, Big Bob, c.1960 oil on canvas on board}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{131} Daryl Lindsay, unpublished autobiographical notes, c. 1972, Daryl Lindsay Papers, MS4864, Box 9, Folder 3: ‘Wave Hill’, NLA.
Figure 8 Daryl Lindsay, Tony, c.1956, pencil, ink and watercolour on paper.

The central focus of *Big Bob* is repeated in *Tony*, a sketch in ink and watercolour sold from the Foster’s Collection of Australian Art in May 2005 (fig. 8). Dressed in similar fashion, the bright whites of his eyes peering out from underneath the brim of his broad hat, Tony stoops forward slightly, a pipe clenched in his mouth. The
stockman’s essentials of a pair of reins and a haversack hang lightly from either hand.

Figure 9 Daryl Lindsay, The King (Wave Hill), 1960, oil [on canvas on board?].

*The King (Wave Hill)* (fig. 9), however, draws attention to the questionably practice of issuing respected indigenous leaders with ‘king-plates’; metal gorgets worn around the neck as a symbol of their authority, or arguably as a sign of a certain level of favour they had found from the white Australian issuer. Almost obsolete as a practice by the 1930s, the reference in Lindsay’s work is a lingering example that had evidently all but lost its status in the years leading up to the Wave Hill Walk-Off in August 1966. It is likely the wearer in *The King* was ‘King Jainery of the Woodburras’,...
a very old man was rather vain and silly and talked a lot. The younger men being rather amused and I gathered that he did not cut much ice inspite of his brass plate 15 inches with K-J of Wave Hill on it.\textsuperscript{132}

He had emerged from his humpie wearing only a shirt after Lindsay’s presence in the camp was realised, and declared “I the King”, before disappearing back into his humpie to retrieve his trousers and ‘his badge of office, a brass plate round his neck – adding “I very old man. Million years”’.\textsuperscript{133} Lindsay found him to be ‘a very dirty old man’, but, presenting as an interesting subject, took a photograph of him with a few of the others from the outstation, including ‘a grand little boy called Angus’, likely to be the young boy half hidden in the shadow of the central stockmen. Angus entertained the group with his demonstrations of boomerang throwing, and is probably the subject for Lindsay’s \textit{Angus, The King of the Mules} (fig. 10)\textsuperscript{134}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image}
\caption{Daryl Lindsay, Angus, King of the Mules, c.1960 oil on canvas on board}
\end{figure}

\textit{The King} is arguably the most evocative of Lindsay’s depictions of Aboriginals from his Northern Territory series (fig. 9). The King, dressed in western cloths that are many sizes too large and hang of his slim frame, holds a spear and

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{132} D. Lindsay, unpublished autobiographical notes, c. 1972, Daryl Lindsay Papers, MS4864, Box 9, Folder 3: ‘Wave Hill’, NLA.
\bibitem{133} D. Lindsay, unpublished autobiographical notes, c. 1972, Daryl Lindsay Papers, MS4864, Box 9, Folder 1, NLA.
\bibitem{134} D. Lindsay, unpublished autobiographical notes, c. 1972, Daryl Lindsay Papers, MS4864, Box 9, Folder 3, ‘Wave Hill’, NLA.
\end{thebibliography}
wears his King-plate. Almost a head taller, a young Aboriginal stockman stands partly in the King’s shadow, dressed neatly in shirt, pants and hat. Although he is perhaps one of the younger Aboriginals amused by the King’s pretence at the authority vested in the King-plate, he nonetheless stands away from the viewer, bathed partly in the King’s shadow. The young boy, Angus, peers shyly from behind the stockman’s leg, naked except for a loin cloth, and almost completely hidden from the viewer. It is a poignant rendering of three generations of Aboriginals and the impact of western life of their culture; the bedraggled King with his reminder of colonial subjugation, the young stockmen, and the young boy embodying all the promise that both his youth and his nakedness suggest.

There is no overt suggestion of the complexities of white Australian and indigenous Australian relationships, nor any hint at the disparity between living conditions witnessed previously by Boyd in Lindsay’s work. It is more subtle, only hinted at and seen with its strongest clarity in works like The King. Unlike Boyd and Drysdale, both responding to their expeditions north in 1951, Lindsay’s vision is an amalgam of the contemporary and the past. It was, as he had stated, ‘my tribute to the men and horses of the Territory’. As much as Lindsay’s Aboriginals are depictions of real people he encountered at Wave Hill, they also represent a memory – his memory – of a vanished era from his pre-First World War years. Alan McCulloch found this fusion of nostalgia and experience ultimately unsuccessful:

With the paint still fresh on the canvas the past is presented not so much as a recollection as an antidote for the present. The presentation is very agreeable, but it is not a satisfactory antidote.

Daryl Lindsay’s early appreciation of Australian indigenous art remained with him throughout his life. At a time when many white Australians regarded indigenous Australians as culturally inferior, Lindsay’s official ‘sanction’ of their traditional art through the 1943 Primitive Art Exhibition played a defining role in challenging this notion. As Tuckson and others since have recognised, the exhibition was a pivotal moment in the representation of Australian indigenous culture within Australian gallery and museum practice.

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135 Lindsay, foreword, A Tribute to the men and horses of the Northern Territory.