

The legacies of Bernard Smith

Review of:

Jaynie Anderson, Christopher R. Marshall, and Andrew Yip (eds), *The Legacies of Bernard Smith: Essays on Australian Art, History and Cultural Politics*, Sydney: Power Publications, in association with the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2016. ISBN: 9780994306432

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'A stranger within their gates; a child among them taking notes'.¹

Taken from Bernard Smith's 1984 biography, *The Boy Adeodatus: The Portrait of a Lucky Young Bastard*, the above quotation references Smith's decision to give up painting and become an art historian – the 'first truly Australian art historian' (22) Jaynie Anderson writes in 'The multiple legacies of Bernard Smith'. It captures a number of the recurring themes in this edited volume. One is the sense of Smith being *among them*, so close to and imbricated within different aspects of the Australian cultural landscape that he also helped to develop. The volume is structured to give credence to this, tracking Smith's involvements in art history, the museum, and cultural politics. Oftentimes, the essays reveal his unique understanding of the extent to which these spheres were intertwined – from prominent roles in public museums, to activism on heritage protection in Glebe where he lived, to the multiple ways he promoted the artists he admired (as historian, collector, critic, and biographer) – art was never simply a distant object of study, but an integral part of Australian cultural identities, politics, and culture, demanding not only scholarly attention, but requiring a vast and integrated infrastructure to thrive.² Indeed, at the launch for this book at the Menzies Centre, King's College London, a major discussion point was the idea of 'infrastructural

¹ Bernard Smith, *The Boy Adeodatus: The Portrait of a Lucky Young Bastard*, Melbourne: Penguin Books Australia, 1984, 300.

² This is pointed out in Terry Smith's essay, 'Bernard Smith: the art historian as hero' where he argues that, 'For an individual to pursue a variety of vocations is not, however, exceptional in places where the main task is building an arts infrastructure sufficiently strong, critically alert and diverse enough to encourage specialisation on the part of those to come. This was how it was in the Australian capital cities during Bernard's formative and mature years' in Jaynie Anderson, Christopher R. Marshall, and Andrew Yip, eds., *The Legacies of Bernard Smith: Essays on Australian Art, History and Cultural Politics*, Sydney: Power Publications, 2018, 149.

activism'.³

In *a stranger* it is, in contrast to his embeddedness in cultural activities, the unremitting sense of opposition and apartness that Smith asserted, on a level structural to his thought – his development of an 'Antipodean' conceptual framework and his general Hegelian Marxist dialectics, as well as, sometimes, his intractability in the face of criticism. This volume reveals a persistent tension in Smith's insider-outsider status – his critical engagements with scholars from Britain and America position him as very much their contemporary, while ever asserting an antipodean position against Northern hegemonies,⁴ he battles the elitism of the museum from both within and outside its walls, yet asserts a specialist position for academic curators.⁵ Many of the essays mention the failure of Smith's term the 'Formalesque' to displace 'Modernism', but as Ian MacLean suggests in the concluding essay of the volume, his attempt to take on the history of Modernism and contest cultural imperialism remained Eurocentric (449). This notion is well summarised by Paul Giles who writes:

Since he was committed, as a matter of principle, to the position of underdog, Smith always ran the risk of restraining himself with the manacles of subordination, and indeed this circuit between empowerment and disempowerment might be seen as fundamental to the trajectory of his writing. (213)

Finally, *taking notes* might capture something of the primacy of rigorous and peripatetic research that is the bedrock of Smith's work, a legacy of which is the wealth of foundational scholarship Smith produced on Australian artists and artworks, from three volumes on *The Art of Captain Cook's Voyages to Australian Painting 1788–1960*. A common theme throughout is Smith's commitment to the discipline of art history, though his work had wide-ranging implications for other disciplines – much of Smith's work bordered on, and eventually came to be regarded as visual cultural studies and cultural theory. As Jim Berryman writes: 'Until the very end of his career, and despite the blurring of traditional knowledge boundaries in the postmodern humanities, he defended art history as a sovereign field of enquiry, informed by historical consciousness and disinterested analytical criticism'. (337) The notion that Smith is *foremost* an art historian, indebted to the histories and methods of this discipline, is present throughout this collection of essays.

This volume was put together following a symposia series in 2012 to honour

³ 'Menziess Talk: Bernard Smith Life and Legacy', 17 May 2017, King's College London, panel discussion between Khadija von Zinnenburg Carroll, Anthony Gardner, and Mark Ledbury.

⁴ See for example the essays by Robert Gaston, Simon Pierse, and Terry Smith in *The Legacies of Bernard Smith*.

⁵ See for example the essays by Joanna Mendelsshon, Christopher R. Marshall, and Jim Berryman in *The Legacies of Bernard Smith*.

the life and legacies of Bernard Smith (1916–2011), whose art history career began in the 1940s. The volume covers much of the vast the breadth of his career, re-examining his key involvements in Australian cultural life, and the major topics raised by his writing. For the most part, his legacy is examined through studies of his achievements and ideas in historical context – though a number of pieces more closely examine relevance to contemporary scholarship. In his essay on ‘The Antipodean Manifesto’ fifty years later’, Paul Giles notes the ‘difficulties in properly assessing intellectual legacies so soon after someone’s death’ (204) and later that ‘it may well be that the shape of this legacy will not become clearer until one or two generations have passed’. (215) With notable exceptions (Giles’ as well as Terry Smith’s chapter), the contributions compiled do not take the long-view of intellectual legacies, and the volume at times reads like an episodic intellectual biography, with many essays being close case studies of key periods in Smith’s life, often combining biography, context, and textual analysis. The result is akin to creating a series of overlapping frames for Smith’s life and work. The volume suggests proximity (many of the contributors – former students, colleagues, and two biographers – are close to Smith personally and intellectually), rather than assert critical distance. The results are detailed, close-up, nuanced studies, but less that comes at a right-angle, or that deeply interrogates Smith’s work from outside of broadly similar intellectual lineages. Thus we encounter a complex yet well-known Smith, never the stranger.

Encountering Australia: *European Vision and the South Pacific*

The first section of the book examines Smith’s seminal *European Vision and the South Pacific* (1960), on the work of artists on ‘voyages of discovery’ in the Pacific and early Australian colonial art, which traces how these European interpretations of the Pacific shaped European thought. As Robert Gaston describes it, ‘Smith’s argument was that Europe’s envisioning of the South Pacific changed Europe’s understanding of its own visual history and lived visuality’. (66) Not only its visual history, but Smith argues for these practices as also imbricated in the development of scientific theories (particularly evolution). The volume rightly dedicates its first section to this single text, because, although only Smith’s second publication, it has arguably created his most enduring legacies, and ones that might be of renewed relevance in an art historical field now re-investing in material object and art histories of colonialism. Nicholas Thomas mentions, for example, how Smith’s works were referenced at a November 2015 conference on the Tate Britain’s exhibition *Artist and Empire*, as ‘key precursors for the consideration of art in the colonial and imperial context’. (101)

Andrew Sayer’s opening essay begins by running through some of Smith’s own disappointments with how his work had been received (a running theme in the volume). Most particularly, Sayer’s essay is concerned with the late reception of *European Vision* which as Sayer convincingly argues, the discipline of art history has

'moved towards, not away from' (50); as it has grown more cross-cultural in its concerns, and merged with the anthropology of images. In the Australian context in particular, Sayer points to the way 'cultural frontiers' have become a central occupation of art history. In tracing Smith's legacies, Sayer points to a key 1996 conference in Canberra,⁶ that took *European Visions* as a point of departure for scholarship on the culture of voyages, colonial encounters, but gave greater attention and agency to Indigenous visual cultural production largely missing from Smith's work, as well as to the fact that so much of the material in *European Vision* has been subject to further academic attention. As Sayer writes: 'He created an orthodoxy against which all subsequent attempts to make sense of these beginnings have been set'. (58)

Robert Gaston's piece follows, less on the topic of legacy than Smith's intellectual development, and the influence of the Warburg Institute academics, when he visited in 1948 and '49 while developing *European Vision*. Noting the difficulty and complexity of determining influences, Gaston is careful not to assume direct affinities, instead weaving his way through overlaps and counterpoints, sometimes too quickly to flesh out complexities, although the discussion of Smith's relationship to Ernst Gombrich, who were both of the 'auteur variety of scholar' (73), is well drawn.

Nicholas Thomas' essay picks up on some of Sayers's concerns, while taking a stronger position on how Smith's work might be departed from, and what new paradigms might replace his 'superb maps of the European understanding of Pacific history and culture'. (87) Rather than interrogate Smith's oeuvre, Thomas offers his own series of brief interlacing histories of Pacific and European interactions to demonstrate where the occlusions both of *European Vision* as well as contemporary scholarship and museum practice might lie. His point is not so much that only one side of the colonial encounter was portrayed (as Thomas points out, 'impact' histories of colonialism have long been replaced by those that emphasized Islander agency), but that there is a problem with 'the "both sides" rhetoric' (89) itself. As Thomas writes: 'There is a cultural condition that we rarely attribute to native people at all, and never at this early stage of their interactions with the colonial world — that of cosmopolitanism'. (89) In this way, he suggests a legacy for Smith that goes beyond the need to account for the 'other side' of his historical story.

Shifting back towards the context of Smith's scholarship, Rüdiger Joppien's essay details Smith's fierce commitment to telling that historical story – Joppien and Smith worked together for over thirty-eight years on three volumes of *The Art of*

⁶ The conference, *Re-imagining the Pacific: A Conference on Art History and Anthropology in honour of Bernard Smith*, was held in August 1996 at the Australian National University, Canberra, and led to the publication Nicholas Thomas and Diane Losche (eds), *Double Vision: Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

Captain Cook's Voyages, detailing all the known drawing and paintings made during Captain Cook's three voyages of discovery. One of the more personal contributions (based on correspondence between 1997 to 2010), while its focus is less on the research itself, the essay gives interesting insights into the multiple contingencies of research collaborations. Kathleen Davidson's essay responds to Smith's peripheral examination of photography in *European Vision*, seeing a missed opportunity in Smith's otherwise complex understanding of images and knowledge production. 'Photography', she argues, 'was not just a new form of illustration or authentication, as Smith posits, but...part of a broader cultural process that was transforming the natural sciences—structurally as well as philosophically'. (137)

While Gaston and Joppien's contributions provide historical context for the production of *European Vision*, exploring intellectual affinities (in Joppien's case, his own), Thomas and Davidson stake out their own positions, departing from Smith's work. What feels missing, and only partly accounted for in Sayer's essay, is a broader historical overview of the impact of *European Vision* and its many receptions, throughout re-editions in the 1980s, to Smith's 1992 follow-up *Imagining the Pacific*, and the years that lead up to Thomas' 1996 conference, that might map its rise alongside and intertwined with emerging post-colonial theory. Nor are there attempts to grapple much with the text itself, such that it rests undisturbed – a kind of bedrock for further scholarship. Interestingly, a piece that might be read as more of a re-examination of the legacy of *European Vision*, is the volume's cover image, Chris Pease's *Target* (2005), which shows three concentric red circles overlaying Louis Auguste de Sainsons' *Vue du Port du Roi Georges* (1833), which depicts interactions between 'explorers' and Indigenous people at a campsite at King George Sound in Western Australia. Precisely the kind of image Smith explored in *European Vision* (made by an artist during a 'voyage of discovery' on board the *Astrolabe*), Pease's image compresses several historical viewpoints at once, with the 'target' as a floating signifier (suggestive of European invasion, akin to Nyungar markings, and a possible allusion to Jasper Johns). Instead of the two-sided encounter suggested by a contemporary re-working of a colonial image – the image suggests rings of relations, overlapping, obscuring, exposing. What, then, might we make of Smith's vision of Australia, or his Australian vision? The next section, on Smith's formative role in shaping Australian art histories, does more to examine this, and contains greater textual analysis.

Defining Australian art

Terry Smith's essay 'Bernard Smith: the art historian as hero', provides one of the volume's few broader overviews of the developments in Smith's thought, posing a central question that leads on well from the section on *European Vision* – 'How might we assess the character and the quality of Bernard Smith's contributions as a historian of art, one who, throughout his career, saw himself as studying art in the broader field of the history of cultures?' (150) Terry Smith argues for Smith as a

theoretician who didn't so much have a system, as an evolving framework, one that progressed from 'Marxist critic and antipodean cultural historian', to in the 1990s, the dual position of 'conservative art-historical scholar and reactionary aesthetician' and 'revolutionary theorist of comparative visual cultures and the speculative art historiographer' (157), positions both present in *Modernism's History* (1998), where, as Smith argues, there is something radical in again arguing for 'the agency of the peripheries in precipitating change in the centres' (159), yet conservative in the missed opportunity to, in the words of Ian Maclean (cited in Smith's essay), 'develop a historiography adequate to the post-imperial world'.⁷ As with *European Vision*, Bernard disrupted a paradigm very much from within its armature. Like Nicholas Thomas earlier in the volume, (Terry) Smith ends by acknowledging indebtedness to Smith's 'Antipodean consciousness' but calls for new approaches to complex interconnectedness, 'from a perspective that is not only global, but also planetary in compass'. (169)

Following this, Peter Beilharz whose 1997 intellectual biography of Smith, *Imagining the Antipodes*, argues for the significance of his work as social theory, instead focuses on Smith's writing style. But this examination of Smith the wordsmith is also revealing of modes of thinking, from the precision of his historical writing, his 'Time, Manner and Place' (175) as Beilharz calls it, through to the historical distance he achieves in his autobiography and then to the avuncular voice of his public lectures. He concludes in his own rather literary way: 'A stubborn presence. A stranger within their gates; a child among them taking notes. An older man, having spoken his piece, looking to outlive other bastards. A presence among us, now'. (184) Convinced of the powerful *voicing* that takes place through Smith's crafted prose, this essay made me wish that closer textual analysis of his writing featured more heavily in this volume.

Catherine Speck's piece on Smith's writing on expatriate art delves deeper into his methodologies as a writer of Australian art histories. Weaving together work from across his career, Speck considers Smith's direct statements on expatriate artists, while also drawing upon his writing on place and on an antipodeal relationship as a broader conceptual framework that might be used to understand offshore work, for although Smith had drawn a geographical boundary for Australian art in *Place, Taste and Tradition* (1945), Speck looks to other work as applying a dialectics to Europe and the antipodes that bound them in a more continuous set of relations. Speck's is one of the few essays in the volume to compare and trace the recent development of an area of scholarship (on expatriate artists), from Smith's work to more recent 'borderless and inclusive histories'. (199) While many of the contributions nod towards Smith's legacies, Speck firmly makes a case for his work providing 'intellectual underpinnings' (199) for an area of

⁷ Ian McLean, 'Reverse Perspective: Bernard Smith's Worldview and the Cosmopolitan Imagination', *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 4, June 2011: 9, 17.

contemporary discourse.

Further investigation of Smith's dialectical approach to art history comes in Paul Giles essay, which explores the legacies of Smith's 'The Antipodean Manifesto' (1959) – a declaration by Smith and seven artists in reaction to the success of an authoritative survey of American abstract expressionism – and which 'became synecdochic of Smith's critical method more broadly'. (206) Giles argues Smith's antipodean position, rather than a nationalist position, or a rejection of European and American art, was 'a relational notion, one organised around questions of alterity and the problematic affinities between local and global, province and centre'. (207) Further to this Giles argues for how Smith's antipodean perspective broadens out into a conceptual framework – an understanding of how power is unequally structured across different spatial and geographic configurations (Europe to the South Pacific, the city to the suburbs, white society to Indigenous culture, the cultural imperialism of Modernism). The essay benefits from its opening conceit of taking a 'longer view' (204) – able to explore a central concept of Smith's as it developed and re-formed across decades.

Simon Pierse's piece on Smith's relationships to big name critics, Kenneth Clark, Bryan Robertson, Clement Greenberg and Peter Fuller, adds further historical texture and analysis to Smith's own essay on these critics' dealings with Australian art, 'Some Northern Critics of Southern Art'. Each of these relationships appears as both personal encounter and intellectual alliance and/or disagreement, such that Smith appears very much amongst them, defending his own particular version of Australian art from these outsiders' incursions. In the final piece of the section, John Clark uses Smith's autobiography, *The Boy Adeodatus: The Portrait of a Lucky Young Bastard* (1984), and his 1993 biography of Australian social realist painter Noel Counihan, as a means to 'understand the complexities of Australian art history from the 1920s to the 1960s'. (236) Finding both possibilities and short-comings in these texts, while comparing them to a larger genre of Australian artist biography, Clark elicits interesting thoughts on the practice of biography writing and its relationship to art history, but seems to assume its relevance to a particular kind of art historical research never really defined.

The longest of the volume, this section tackles the central aspect of Smith's career, as Australian art historian. Containing broad overviews of his intellectual development it feels the least episodic, allowing for a more comprehensive picture of Smith's thinking to emerge. Terry Smith's opening essay provides an overarching critical frame-work, while the sequence of essays by Speck, Giles and Pierse together form a multi-perspectival view on Smith's forceful critical and instrumental use of an antipodean position. Terry Smith's essay closes: 'Contemporary antipodeans are deeply indebted to Bernard's lifelong enterprise, even as we continue to contest it. He was always ready for a contest, and enjoyed every battle'. (169) These essays don't shy away from criticism (Smith's is more interrogative than the others), but no-one quite does battle. Unfolded across the next two sections though – on the museum, and cultural politics – we see more of Smith's own thirst for debate.

Bernard Smith and the art museum

Steven Miller's essay makes a fitting opener, for although a focused case study, it suggests the expansive role that Smith adopted as an art historian within museum contexts. The essay concerns Smith's work for the National Art Gallery of New South Wales (NAGNSW) between 1944 and 1948, where he was involved in the Travelling Art Scheme that saw twenty art exhibitions toured to 100 venues throughout rural New South Wales, and involved Smith in a wide variety of capacities. Though the article opens with the frame of contingency, to explain Smith making the best of institutional constraints, the essay arguably paints a portrait of Smith as very much charting his own course amidst some internal politics (which Miller says were arguably sometimes exaggerated by Smith). (269) Joanna Mendelsohn's contribution also traverses Smith's time at the NAGNSW but provides a fuller picture of Smith's envisioning of a relationship between academic scholarship and the museum, and indeed the university and the museum. Given the well-entrenched professionalisation of the art curator, it is fascinating to think back to a time when, as Mendelsohn highlights, that after enrolling in part-time university study in 1945 while still at the NAGNSW, he was at 'at that time the only member of the gallery staff with any form of university education'. (285) Mendelsohn covers a lot of ground from here – from Smith's encouragement of university graduates to take up museum careers, setting up the first museum studies diploma in 1976, to his scholarly work in the museum compiling the catalogue of Australian oil paintings during a second stint at the NAGNSW, and which included extensive primary research. As Mendelsohn concludes, Smith 'saw the nexus between art in the studio, art in the museum and art history as taught by the university', and as demonstrated in both Miller and Mendelsohn's essays, his adept negotiation and mobility between these spaces belied an integrated understanding of public education and art historical research.

Christopher Marshall's piece extends an image of Smith's position against the exclusionary status of museums, but branches into a new territory of engagement – that of Smith's critical campaigns against two museum redevelopment initiatives. The first in 1961, against a proposed design for a floating balcony in the new National Gallery of Victoria, saw Smith successfully wield professional alliances and powerful public rhetoric that leveraged an image of an elitist museum speaking down to its publics. Marshall contrasts this to a second unsuccessful campaign over thirty years later against a new building for the Museum of Victoria, which saw Smith encountering a very different cultural landscape and less able to leverage his position as consummate museum world insider. The case studies are well chosen for elucidating something of the waning power, and indeed contradiction, in Smith's strident Marxist anti-elitism, wielded through a claim to his own form of specialist power. This idea is further developed in Jim Berryman's piece on the intersections between academia and curatorship.

Berryman explores how Smith was formative in the professionalisation of museum curators and championed the fall of connoisseurship models, yet was also critical of new trends in curatorship which he saw linked to the ascendancy of Modernism. Smith had championed one model of curatorship – the academic curator who made long-term intellectual investments into the permanent collections of the museum they stewarded – being quickly eclipsed by curators more interested in new acquisitions and temporary exhibitions and who kept up with, and even led, new art world trends. Berryman's essay also links Smith's understandings of curatorship to broader intellectual positions, exploring how they related to his views on art history as a discipline and were crucial to his historiography of modernism, *Modernism's History*.

Ann Stephens essay turns to Smith's collecting for the Power Collection during 1968, as newly appointed Power Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Sydney, and is one of few accounts where one senses a Smith slightly out of his element. Painting a picture of 'Smith's Grand Tour' of Europe (where he visited the Venice Biennale, documenta, Paris, and London, during the '68 student protests), the essay weaves together political context, Smith's thoughts on art, politics, and modernism, and his rather eclectic choices; showing, for example, a preference for works that saw themselves in dialogue with earlier art historical periods as well as for highly-crafted objects, something that Stephens suggests, clashed with the reality that 'much art of the late 1960s disavowed the very idea of quality and the refined eye of a spectator, in favour of participation, critical scrutiny or dialogue'. (361)

Full of tight, temporally-bounded case studies, this section gives a striking portrait of Smith's understanding of the role of the academic in the museum. There is, however, less of a detailed plotting of the intersection between these institutional involvements and his own thought (except for Berryman's piece), and little on his place within a broader timeline of developments in the field of museum and exhibition histories, though each hints at these broader contexts. Once again, though, one gets the sense of Smith propelling certain courses in the Australian cultural landscape forward (the multiple implications of the Travelling Art Scheme); and then missing the course of history at others (the fairly conservative collecting of 1968).

Cultural politics

It is fitting that the chapter on the museum is followed by one on Bernard's broader involvements in cultural politics – where we again see him envisaging a role for the art historian that broadens out into different social and political spheres. Max Solling's piece is the only to directly depict Smith as a social activist – outlining his role as President of the Glebe Society in the early 1970s, and the fight to maintain the character and social cohesion of the inner Sydney suburb of Glebe. Crucial to the efforts were to link the suburb to a sense of cultural history and heritage (such as

Bernard and Kate Smith's 1973 book, the *Architectural Character of Glebe*, which became evidence for the National Trust to list it as a conservation area in 1974). Kate Challis' following chapter on her grandparents (Bernard and Kate Smith) and their collecting practices is similarly filled with a nostalgia for the past social role of left-wing academics, in the unlikely arena of art collecting. Far from the figure of the contemporary art collector as market speculator (Challis begins the piece saying how 'One of the first theories I recall my grandfather teaching me was that of 'speculative consumption' (386)), Challis suggests more altruistic aims, often to help out struggling artist friends, and then later, the liquidation of the collection by Smith to start an Indigenous art prize, the Kate Challis Ruth Adeney Koori Award (RAKA). From Marxist collector to Marxist art historian, Sheridan Palmer's essay returns us to Smith's art historical writing, but to investigate how they might be a form of surrogate politics, she looks at his work on a shelved biography of Gustave Courbet and a later biography of Noel Counihan. The latter, Palmer argues, was perhaps to 'redress his own political history' (414), as Smith's politics had diverged from his friend Counihan's as he entered the conservative culture of the NAGNSW.

The final two essays of the book concern Smith's position on Indigenous politics in Australia. Given that this was a major blindspot, as Ian Maclean names it, in Smith's art historical writing, these essays, along with Chris Pease's cover image, and Nicholas Thomas' essay on Pacific encounters – together point to this lack, and partly compensate for it in this volume. But there are notably no essay contributions by Indigenous academics, and only MacLean's serves as a direct critical interrogation of Smith's politics in this regard. Catherine de Lorenzo's essay seems too eager an attempt to glean a productive position for art history from Smith's own writing, namely, his 1980 lecture *The Spectre of Truganini* which she argues 'acted as a clarion call to those curators and art historians who sought to consider Aboriginal art as more than just an inspiration to settler modernism, or as solely grounded in issues of cultural and experiential knowledge'. (419) Given that Smith admitted late in life to have 'said virtually nothing about Aboriginal art'⁸ during his eminent career, it seems a stretch to claim this lecture as an intervention in art history specifically. The lecture, as De Lorenzo describes it, explores Australia's "'mechanisms of forgetfulness'" on the one hand, and the possibility of "cultural convergence" on the other'. (422) It is in the latter she finds a possible call to new forms of art historical understanding, and what follows in her piece are descriptions of the different forms of 'convergence' that have occurred in art and art history since. But without evidence of direct lineage from Smith's lecture, nor reference to how his own settler forgetfulness was operative, De Lorenzo perhaps risks placing too much weight on *The Spectre of Truganini*.

Ian Maclean's essay frames Smith's blindspot as an intellectual conundrum,

⁸ Bernard Smith, 'Introduction: A Bibliographical Memoir', in John Spencer and Peter Wright (eds), *The Writings of Bernard Smith: Bibliography 1938– 1998*, Power Institute: Foundation for Art and Visual Culture, Sydney: Power Publications, 2000, 12.

effected by his understanding of Modernism and cosmopolitanism. Foremost, Smith was suspicious of the uses to which Aboriginal art was being put as a form of national primitivism, used both by conservatives and modernists. For Maclean, then, Smith is not opposed to Indigenous art but, 'Aboriginal art was collateral damage in Bernard's larger project of writing a cosmopolitan history of Australian art'. (443) Maclean follows the development of Smith's position, covering the Boyer lectures in the 1980s, and his belief around this time that 'the emergence of the Papunya Tula movement in 1971 was the pivotal moment when Aboriginal art entered the story of Australian art'. (446) That Smith doesn't directly re-visit his own scholarship stems from another position he held; against historical anachronism and the belief 'that retrospectively revealing what had been repressed would create another blindness'. (445) Recompense comes in the form of the RAKA award and his authorising two updates to *Australian Painting* by Terry Smith and Christopher Heathcote. But in another way, Maclean argues, Smith remained dedicated to his own blindspot – Maclean finishes with his positions from *Modernism's History* and after, where he argues he 'devoted more time to fireproofing his history of Australian art from the advent of Aboriginal art' (447) by asserting an old distinction between applied and fine arts (which Smith had himself questioned at an earlier time). Maclean's closing comment on Smith's resistance to 'any easy redeeming of the blind spot' makes for a fitting closure to the volume: 'This is why he did not revise his story; that would be the duty of future generations'. (449) Legacies are not, and perhaps are primarily not, found in future adoptions and minor adaptations of a person's scholarship, but are often marked by the oppositions and compensations they set in motion.

Other visions

As discussed at the outset of this review, there is a closeness to Smith in these essays – contributions for the most part assume some knowledge of his work on the part of the reader. Close textual interrogation is largely missing, and while there is critique of Smith's ideas, none take the form of a counter-argument. This makes for a set of intellectually-intimate essays that traverse a wide range of Smith's work and cultural activities. It would have been interesting to encounter positions more antagonistic, or unexpected. An obvious area for further examination would be Smith's blindspot in regard to female artists, and gender politics more broadly. This is hinted at in a number of asides – Steven Miller notes that he 'he undervalued the contribution of women' (292), Terry Smith lists 'much art by women' as one of his work's omissions (168), and Ann Stephen's notes of the artists he collected in 1968 all 'were European, of his generation or older, and all but two were men' (364) – but is never tackled directly. Juliette Peers has argued that an underestimation of scholarship prior to Smith 'relates to a persistent trait of mid twentieth century art history writing in Australia: alternative and minority positions are overlooked such as women artists, queer artists, artists outside the nationalist/landscape themes,

talented but conservative artists, the often Eurocentric interests of design, applied arts and architecture'.⁹

Christopher R. Marshall and Mark Ledbury write in their Foreword to this volume, 'Perhaps we have moved beyond the problem of having to constantly identify with the 'periphery/centrist' divide, given that so much contemporary art practice and theory operates in the expanded field of global art history'. (20) Smith's periphery created peripheries in turn; but there is much that his mode of thinking through spatial power difference and the complex of relations that material objects can reveal, that is relevant to contemporary scholarship – perhaps particularly for positions that are not directly in the 'neo-Smith' canon (as Juliette Peers names the longstanding reliance on Smith's work by subsequent art historians)¹⁰ or along a clear intellectual lineage. A strong follow-up to this volume, would be one that invited strangers inside the gates.

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⁹ Juliette Peers, 'Women artists as drivers of early art historical activities and alternative art historical narratives in Australia', *Journal of Art Historiography*, Number 4, June 2011, 2.

¹⁰ Juliette Peers, 'Remembering Bernard Smith', *Artlink*, accessed 21 November 2017, available at <https://www.artlink.com.au/articles/3728/remembering-bernard-smith/>.