

Beatrice Persson
PhD candidate

Department of Art History
and Visual Studies
Göteborg University
Box 200
405 30 Göteborg
Sweden

E beatrice.persson@arthist.gu.se

M 0405 47 22 05 (Aus)

P +46 31 786 27 82 (Swe)

F +46 31 786 27 90 (Swe)



In-between: Contemporary art in Australia

There is little knowledge on Contemporary Australian Art in Sweden. In order to build a foundation for the Swedish reader, the dissertation is therefore starting with an introduction, looking into the Australian Art History, written in the shape of a short outline of the exhibitions Australia presented in America, Europe and Australia during the bicentenary year of 1988. The dissertation is then continuing into two parallel tracks,

- i) An inquiry into how Aboriginal art fell under the spell of fine art
- ii) An inquiry into the term **Contemporaneity**
Resulting in a final inquiry into,
- iii) **Contemporaneity's effects on the contemporary art scene in Australia**

In Australia Aboriginal art is looked upon as contemporary art and has been for a long time. This is not the case in Sweden, where Aboriginal art often is regarded as ethnographic artefacts, exhibited in ethnographic museums, an issue poorly discussed. In order to understand why this is, the dissertation is conducting an investigation into the history of how Aboriginal art came to be categorised as fine art, looking into the dichotomy: anthropology – art history, and the emergence of a market. In a time when a wide body of theoretical literature have, and still is developing around this topic, such as Howard Morphy's forthcoming book *Becoming Art: Exploring Cross-Cultural Categories*, I find it interesting to look into the progress' that has been made, but also to juxtapose the vast amount of writing that has been done in this field, and to discuss the Western world's notions of the concept art, and why excluding categorisations still are valid.

In order to compare European thoughts on the topic, I travelled to Paris and Musée du quai Branly to do inquiries into how France is dealing with those issues, and to see with my own eyes how the art from Aboriginal Australia is presented. Bringing this knowledge back to Australia, continuing in a discussion of how Australia has experienced their participation in **Musée du quai Branly**.

When the ground is established for an Aboriginal art being contemporary the dissertation is moving towards the second track, and the term **Contemporaneity**. Starting with a deconstruction of the concept, using Terry Smith's writing on the subject, and hopefully the forthcoming book *Antinomies of Art and Culture: Modernity, Postmodernity and Contemporaneity*, (Eds.) Nancy Condee, Okwui Enwezor and Terry Smith, as well as this conference's Session: *Contemporaneity in art and its history across cultures*. Aiming to discuss the concepts of time and place in a cross-cultural world, and **Contemporaneity's** possibility of being forward looking. Continuing with an experiment, inserting Australian contemporary works of art into the concept of **contemporaneity** and finally interpret the outcome.

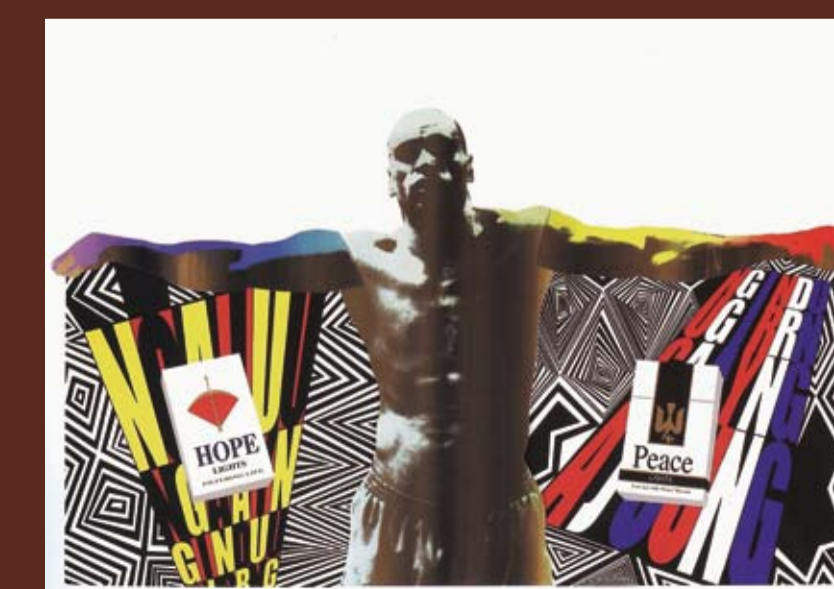
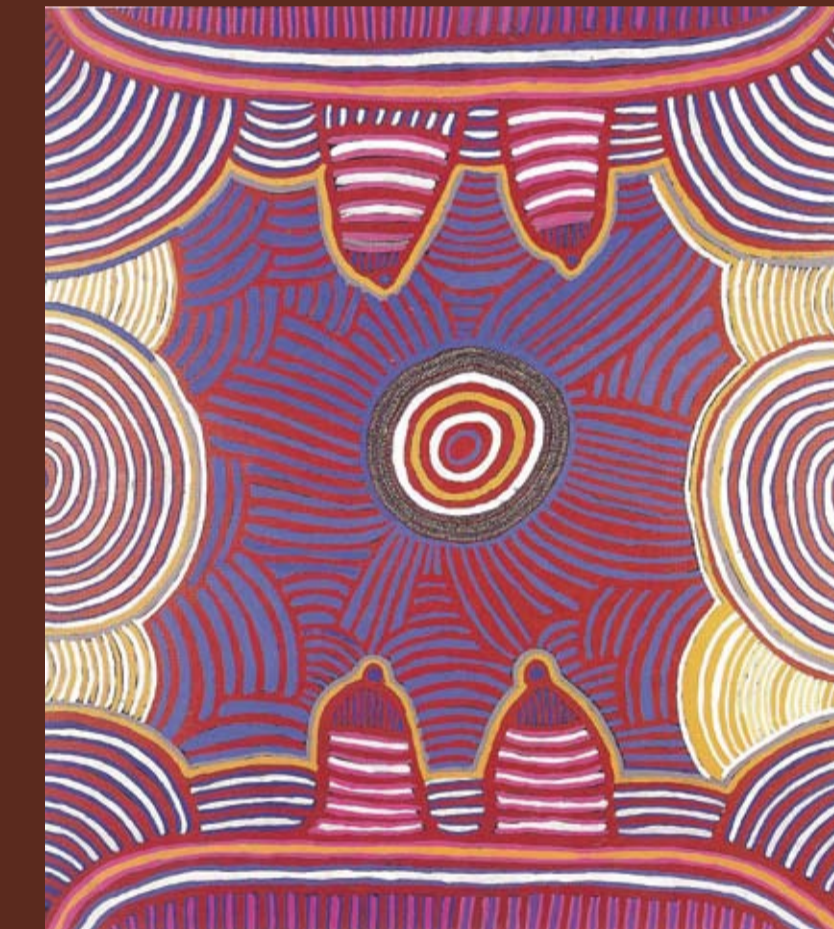


Plate 1. Robert Dale, Lieutenant (1810-1856 England),
Detail of *Panoramic View of King George's Sound,
Part of the Colony of Swan River*, 1834,
Aquatint, hand coloured 18 x 275,5 cm

Plate 2. Ada Bird Petyarre (b. c1930, Language group Anmatyerre, Utopia N.T.),
Aweley for the Mountain Devil Lizard, 1993,
Synthetic polymer paint on polycotton 180 x 205 cm

Plate 3. John Young (b. 1956 in Hong Kong, arrived in Australia 1967),
The Comprador's Mirror #3, Spring 1988,
neco scan and oil on canvas 183 x 223,5 x 3 cm

Plate 4. Brook Andrew, (b. 1970, Sydney),
Peace, The Man and Hope, 2005,
screen-print collage, triptych, 145 x 252 cm