AMERICAN MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL ART

A thesis submitted
To Kent State University in partial
Fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts

By
Gina Cirino
August 2015
© Copyright
All rights reserved
Except for previously published materials
Thesis written by
Gina Cirino
B.A., Ohio University, 2000
M.A., Kent State University, 2015

Approved by

______________________________
Richard Feinberg, Ph.D., Department of Anthropology, Masters Advisor

______________________________
Richard S. Meindl, Ph.D., Chair, Department of Anthropology

______________________________
James L. Blank, Ph.D., Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE OF CONTENTS</th>
<th>iv</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHAPTER

I. RELEVANCE OF THIS STUDY ................................................................. 1
   Introduction ......................................................................................... 1
   Objectives of thesis ................................................................. 2
   Contents of thesis ........................................................................ 4
   Persecution of Aboriginal groups ......................................................... 5
      Deception of the Australian Government ........................................ 7
      Systemic discrimination and structural Violence ............................... 9
      Correlations between poverty and health ......................................... 13
   Human Development Index (HDI) ....................................................... 14
   Growing responsibilities of anthropologists .......................................... 17

II. OVERVIEW OF ABORIGINAL ART ............................................................ 20
   Artworld Definitions .......................................................................... 20
   The development of the Aboriginal art movement ................................. 21
   The meanings of Aboriginal art ......................................................... 27
      Country, the Dreaming, and the creation period .............................. 28
      Political aspirations of Aboriginal art ........................................... 29
      Art as an expression of corporate identity .................................... 30
   Factors influencing the efficacy of the Aboriginal art movement .......... 32
      Hegemonic forces and Western interpretations ............................... 32
      Americans and the idea of “ownership” .................................... 34
      Categorization of Aboriginal art .................................................. 37
   Impact of prior exposure to Aboriginal people and art ...................... 38

III. THE KLUGE-RUHE: OBJECTIVES AND ART ............................................ 41
   Objectives of the Kluge-Ruhe reflect its founders ................................ 41
   Art on Display at the Kluge-Ruhe .................................................... 44
   Arnhem Land ..................................................................................... 45
      Western Arnhem Land ................................................................. 47
      Eastern Arnhem Land ................................................................. 47
      Central Arnhem Land ................................................................. 49
      Arnhem Land Summary .............................................................. 54
   Central and Western Desert ............................................................ 56
      Sand drawings and the unifying nature of haptics ......................... 57
      The interconnection of art, land, body, and skin ........................... 59
   Tiwi Islands ....................................................................................... 63
Conclusion……………………………………………………………………………………………………..66
IV. KLUGE-RUHE PATRONS……………………………………………………………………………….67
   Demographics of Kluge-Ruhe Patrons……………………………………………………………67
   Aesthetic vs. Ethnographic…………………………………………….72
   Other Western Categorizations……………………………………………………………………77
      Visual similarities lead to the fallacy of isomorphism……………………………………77
   Descriptions of Aboriginal People and Cultures…………………………………………………81
      Aboriginal art is viewed as “primitive”……………………………………………………84
   Comments on future learning……………………………………………………………………88
      Comments about why it is important to have a museum dedicated to Australian
      Aboriginal art………………………………………………………………………………………89
   Summary……………………………………………………………………………………………92

V. ANALYSES: DATA CORRELATIONS AND OMISSIONS………………………………………………94
   Education correlations………………………………………………………………………………95
   Importance of Having an Aboriginal Art Museum in the United States…………………..96
   Travel correlations…………………………………………………………………………………98
   Entering Identity correlations…………………………………………………………………….100
   Omissions from patrons’ comments…………………………………………………………….104
      Corporate identity through shared stylistic elements……………………………………105
      Diffusion and syncretism……………………………………………………………………106
      The tradition of art-making…………………………………………………………………108
      Haptic responses……………………………………………………………………………..110
      How commercialization changed the art and people………………………………….111
      General changes………………………………………………………………………………114
      Negative social changes……………………………………………………………………115
      Positive social changes……………………………………………………………………117
   Conclusion………………………………………………………………………………………120

VI. THE REFLECTION OF AMERICANISM ON PATRON RESPONSES………………………………121
   Systemic discrimination and White Privilege…………………………………………………122
   Class trends……………………………………………………………………………………125
   The Perfect Storm: Hungry businesses and absent minded consumers…………………..127
   Museum curation and protection from reality………………………………………………129
   Aboriginal art as a way to increase status…………………………………………………130
   Impact of geography……………………………………………………………………………132

VII. CONCLUSIONS……………………………………………………………………………………137
   Paradoxes and resolutions………………………………………………………………………138
      Aesthetics only view………………………………………………………………………..139
      Postmodern considerations………………………………………………………………139
   Renewing humanism in anthropology………………………………………………………141
   Grass-roots advocacy in action………………………………………………………………145
   Museum visitor experience and meaning development………………………………….147
      Role of anthropologists……………………………………………………………………148
Phenomenological touch………………………………………………………………….149
Potential benefits of increased Aboriginal contribution…………………………152

APPENDIXES
A. APPENDIX A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ......................................................154
B. APPENDIX B. PAPER AND ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS ......................155

REFERENCES………………………………………………………………………………157

ENDNOTES …………………………………………………………………………………174
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.  *Australian languages* (Olegzima 2007)……………………………………………………4

Figure 2.  Charlie Egalie Tjapaltjarri, *Wallaby Dreaming*, 1973……………………………………29

Figure 3.  *States and Territories of Australia June 12 1931 to Present* (Golbez 2006)……43

Figure 4.  *Aboriginal Regions* (NordNordWest 2009)…………………………………………44

Figure 5.  *Australia climate map* (Nobletripe 2012)……………………………………………45

Figure 6.  Anchor Gulunba, *Anteater (Echidna)*, 1972………………………………………………48

Figure 7.  Lipundja, *Wagilak Sisters*, 1960s………………………………………………………50

Figure 8.  Wandjuk Marika, *Wagilag Ceremony*, 1962-1964…………………………………52

Figure 9.  Paddy Dhathangu, *Witiy (Olive Python) with Eggs*, 1988-1990……………………53

Figure 10.  Namiyal Bopirri Liyagalawumirr and Tony Djikulu Gupapuyngu, *Itchy Caterpillars*, 1990………………………………………………………………………………………………54

Figure 11.  Attributed to Paddy Dhathangu, *Dhapalany (Itchy Caterpillars)*, 1972……55

Figure 12.  Dini Campbell Tjampitjinpa, *Tingari Dreaming at Tjpurritjarra (Jupiter Well)*, 1993………………………………………………………………………………………………60

Figure 13.  Women’s Ceremony- Photo by Bill Bachman………………………………………………61

Figure 14.  Sarah Napanangka, *Kimayi, near Lappi Lappi in the Tanami Desert*, 1997……62

Figure 15.  *Australia Melville Island* (Edkins 2006) (Tiwi Islands) ……………………..64

Figure 16.  Pedro Wonaeamirri, *PWOJA-PUKUMANI BODY PAINT DESIGN*, 2005……64

Figure 17.  *Pwoja*……………………………………………………………………………………….65

Figure 18.  Timothy Cook, *KULAMA CEREMONY*, 2010………………………………………66

Figure 19.  *The Art-Culture System* (Clifford 1988)…………………………………………73

Figure 20.  Conrad Tipungwuti, *KULAMA CEREMONY*, 2012………………………………78

Figure 21.  *Fgjkfllee* (Bleumeziani 2010)……………………………………………………………78
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Levels of education for Kluge-Ruhe patrons……………………………………68
Table 2. Number of countries visited …………………………………………………………….69
Table 3. The importance of having a museum dedicated to Australian Aboriginal art in the United States, categories A-F…………………………………………………………91
Table 4. Education levels - category B………………………………………………………….96
Table 5. Education levels - category F………………………………………………………….97
Table 6. Correlations between level of education and number of countries visited……….99
Table 7. Correlations between number of countries visited and categories B and F………100
Table 8. Comparison between “Explorers,” “Hobbyists,” and everyone interviewed…..101
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection and Dr. Margo Smith, who graciously allowed me to conduct research there and who provided accommodations for the duration of my data collection. I would like to acknowledge the Kluge-Ruhe’s superb staff for helping me to be as efficient and effective as possible. Thank you to Lauren Maupin for many months of correspondence and planning, and for her leadership and direction during the research. Thanks to Nicole Wade for taking the time to teach me about the entire collection and painstaking measures the Kluge-Ruhe makes for its preservation; and Megan Plant for her feedback and suggestions. I would also like to thank the interns at the Kluge-Ruhe for helping to recruit interviewees; and all the patrons that I interviewed or surveyed who took time out of their day to participate in this study.

A special thanks goes to the Department of Anthropology at Kent State University and to my thesis committee. Dr. Spurlock has been an inspiration, a teacher, a mentor, and a friend. She has provided me with countless recommendations, enthusiasm, and encouragement throughout graduate school and through writing my thesis. Also to Dr. Fotiou for agreeing to be on my thesis committee on short notice, and for providing feedback that significantly enhanced the content and the argument of my thesis. I would like to acknowledge Caroline Tannert for her constant patience, thorough explanations, and assistance throughout graduate school. Being a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology has been an extraordinary experience because of the exceptional staff and faculty.
I am grateful to my family for their love and support throughout this process; and I am especially beholden to my mother who offered many hours to be my “home thesis advisor.” Most of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Dr. Feinberg for his hard work, patience, knowledge, wisdom, vision, and guidance throughout writing my thesis and throughout graduate school. He has provided me with an invaluable education, and a transformational graduate school experience. He has helped me to become a better writer, scholar, and person.

Finally, I am honored to have had the chance to learn about Aboriginal art, and am humbled by the “artists” who communicated their values through designs and stories.
CHAPTER I
RELEVANCE OF THIS STUDY

“The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.” Aristotle

Introduction

In the last thirty years Australian Aboriginal art has become established on the world market. Aboriginal art is Australia’s largest visual art industry and outsells non-indigenous Australian artists three to one (McLean 2011). Aboriginal art is or was in the collections of famous Westerners such as Michael Jackson, Mick Jagger, the Queen of Denmark, and Yoko Ono. This study examines a unique group of Americans who visited the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art collection in Charlottesville, Virginia between May 30th and June 8th, 2014. Many of the visitors had been to the Kluge-Ruhe several times before and study Aboriginal art as a hobby. This thesis attempts to show how ethnocentrism, systemic discrimination, and other Western tendencies obscure American interpretations of Aboriginal art. Although much of the artwork is
created as religious documents, maps, histories, ancestral stories, and title deeds to land, many patrons focused simply on outward appearances, such as color, form and pattern.

**Objectives of this thesis**

Visitors at the Kluge Ruhe are no doubt very advanced in terms of their understanding of Aboriginal art compared to the general public. But, they are only grasping part of the message, and I fear that they are on the wrong track moving forward. Kluge-Ruhe patrons appreciate Aboriginal connections to their land (to a certain extent), the importance of their ceremonies, traditions, kinship, and the Dreaming. However, based on my surveys and interviews, I argue that most patrons are not connecting these values to the underlying political messages of the art. This thesis will attempt to explain this trend. It will also explore why there are epidemic levels of persecution foisted upon Aboriginal people on the basis of colonialism, systematic oppression, White Privilege and ethnocentrism. It will argue that these and other factors such as hegemonic forces, Western labeling, the fallacy of isomorphism, and the impact of prior misinformation affect the efficacy of the Aboriginal art movement.

Colonialism is the act of one society dominating another. It usually involves dispossessing of land, exploitation of resources, and forcing lifestyle changes upon the oppressed and over time evolves into systematic oppression. The data that I collected show that although many of the Kluge-Ruhe patrons are regular visitors to the museum and know a lot about the Aboriginal art, their interpretations are clouded by hegemonic mentalities of the United States and Australia. As a result, they are not recognizing one of the main objectives of Aboriginal art, which is to promote social justice for Aboriginal groups.

The preservation of Aboriginal societies and their emotional well-being are inextricably tied to the land, and they are losing this land to the Australian government. Through the
commercialization of their work, Aboriginal artists plead for social change by inviting the West to develop an understanding about the reverence they have for their land and rituals. After studying and researching the impact of Aboriginal art on Aboriginal people for several decades, Willis and Fry (2011) hold that it has not triggered political progress for Aboriginal people in any way, nor has it paved a more autonomous future for them. They believe that that the position of Aboriginal people in Australia is the same as if not worse than it was before the Aboriginal art boom.

Professor Mick Dodson, member of the Yawuru people in the Kimberly region of Western Australia, says Aboriginal people have not seen social changes (2011). Dodson is a professor at the Australian National University College of Law, the Director of the National Centre for Indigenous Studies at ANU, and the Social Justice Commissioner for Aborigines and Torres Strait Islander People.¹ He indicates that the income generated from the art is just money; and that “It may feed the bellies, but it won’t save the source” (Dodson 2011). He asks Westerners to not only appreciate the beauty of Aboriginal art, but to see the works in a political, social and economic context. He explains that continued dispossession of ancestral lands means more to the Aboriginal people than financial hardship and ill health. Dispossession of the land means the annihilation of Aboriginal cultures; and once they are gone, they will never return (Dodson 2011).

There has been much debate over how Aboriginal art should be viewed and interpreted. Ian McLean, Fred Myers, and many other scholars, curators and art critics have discussed at length whether Aboriginal art should be viewed for its ethnographic value or for its aesthetic appeal. These endless considerations about its taxonomy do nothing to address Aboriginal
subjugation and rights. Underneath the dots, bark, myths, stories, ancestors and concentric circles lay messages of social despair and appeals for support.

Figure 1.
*Australian languages* (Olegzima 2007)

**Contents of thesis**

The first chapter will examine the relevance of this study by explaining the current ways in which Aboriginal people are being persecuted in Australia, the deception of the Australian government, systemic discrimination and structural violence, correlations between poverty and health, and the Human Development Index. It ends with how the responsibilities of anthropologists are increasing due to these things. The second chapter gives a brief background about the development of the Aboriginal art movement, it discusses the meanings of Aboriginal art, and attempts to explain some of the central aspects of it. It will also focus on a few of the main factors that have stifled the goals of the Movement. The third chapter gives an
overview of the art that was on display at the Kluge-Ruhe during my research, and the regions from which they came. Chapter four gives a brief background of the Kluge-Ruhe and its founders, and a statistical profile of the patrons. The second half of the chapter explores some of the main themes that were discussed by patrons, and why they thought it was important to have a museum dedicated to Aboriginal art in the United States. In the fifth chapter, correlations of the data are made with respect to education, travel, and “Entering Identity.” It discusses omissions from patrons’ comments, and how these relate to their limited interpretations. Chapter six looks at American values, and how they reflect on patrons’ responses. Finally, chapter seven concludes with discussing a few paradoxes that are inherent in the infiltration of Aboriginal art into the world art market, and how anthropologists can help to resolve some of these resulting problems.

**Persecution of Aboriginal groups**

Australian Aboriginal people reached the continent forty to sixty thousand years ago. They have three to four hundred distinct languages and cultures, but the number is diminishing with each passing decade. Figure 1 is a map that shows the outline of Aboriginal communities, and each color indicates a language group. The political and social antagonism between Aboriginal people and White Australians has been severe, and the two groups have vastly disparate degrees of power and wealth. Aboriginal people are a tiny minority in Australia. They retain a distinct identity and range of cultures in a society dominated by Western traditions (Sutton and Anderson 2011). Aboriginal people face a tug of war between tradition and modernity, but their main objective is to gain recognition and respect from hegemonic forces.

In 1901 the first prime minister of Australia, Edmund Barton drew up the White Australia Policy. This was a doctrine about the equality of man, but was never intended to apply to those who were not light-skinned. At the time Barton's concern was the Chinese, and his doctrine made
no mention of the Australian Aboriginal people (Pilger 2013). The natives were not mentioned because the government did not consider them a threat; therefore, it had little interest in or concern about them. Instead of fearing them, Australian colonizers were determined to exterminate them. As settlers called for Aboriginal extinction, the state of Queensland became a slaughterhouse. There were more Native Australians killed than Native Americans and Native Maoris in New Zealand (Pilger 2013). It is widely believed that the cattle industry prospered in Australia because of the use of indigenous slave labor; and the mining industry today makes billions of dollars in profits per week on what many Aboriginal advocates consider to be stolen land (Pilger 2013).

Although not written into national law, some people view the current atmosphere in Australia as reminiscent of apartheid in South Africa thirty years ago. Pilger (2013) reports the striking similarity of white supremacy and wrote in The Guardian about what he and others consider Australian apartheid. Marc Newhouse, chair at Watch Committee in Western Australia, grew up under apartheid South Africa and worked with former black African prisoners. He too noted disturbing social parallels between South Africa thirty years ago and contemporary Australia (Loewenstein 2013).

Loewenstein (2013) considers the situation in Australia as a “living and breathing example of codified bigotry.” But the biggest difference between apartheid in South Africa and Australia today is that there have been no international censures or boycotts on behalf of native Australians, as there were for native Africans. Editors and media think the public is not interested, or are tired of hearing about Aboriginal disadvantages. Shamefully, the bulk of press coverage features stereotyping that reinforce images of indigenous dysfunction (Loewenstein 2013).
According to critics, one of the reasons for slow social progress for Aboriginal groups is that the Australian government deceitfully dresses up its recognition of Aboriginal people as compassion for them (Loewenstein 2013). John Pilger (2013) recollects how he was told repeatedly how proud politicians were about what they had done for the indigenous population. But when Pilger asked a direct question to Warren Snowdon, Minister for Indigenous Health from 2009-2013, in the Labor government, Snowdon’s compassion was painfully absent. Pilger (2013) had asked why, after almost a quarter of a century representing the poorest, sickest Australians, he had not come up with a solution to help them. Snowdon replied, "What a stupid question. What a puerile question." John Pilger has made several documentaries about systemic racism against Aboriginal people including The Secret Country: The First Australians Fight Back in 1985 and Utopia in 2013.³

Aboriginal activist groups contend that mistreatment by the Australian government has reinforced the systematic bigotry against Aboriginal people. Professor James Anaya is a respected United Nations reporter on the rights of indigenous people. In 2009 he declared that the Australian nation is in a racist state of emergency. He recounted how the Australian government stripped indigenous communities of their rights and services on the pretext that pedophile gangs were rampant. This claim has been proven to be false and was dismissed by police and by the Australian Crime Commission. Tony Abbott, who at the time was the opposition spokesman on Indigenous Affairs, and is now the Prime Minister of Australia, told Anaya to “get a life" and sarcastically remarked "just listen to the old victim brigade" (Pilger 2013).
Bigotry manifests visually too. Above the shiny floors and glaring white corridors of the Australian parliament building hang the cartoon portraits of past prime ministers. Ostentatiously, there are also rows and rows of Aboriginal paintings, suspended on white walls. Pilger (2013) says that although Aboriginal people are recognized in the parliament “their blood and tears are invisible.” Sometimes the bigotry is more blatant, as they are at the National War Memorial, where indigenous faces are depicted as stone gargoyles alongside kangaroos, reptiles, birds, and other wildlife. Until prejudice ends and conditions improve for the Aboriginal population, Loewenstein believes that Australia has no right to call itself a civilized democracy (Loewenstein 2013).

In November 2014, the West Australian government announced plans to close between 100-150 indigenous communities, and the inhabitants will be once again pushed off of their land (Wahlquist 2015). The number of people who will be displaced has not been released, but these closures will be extremely threatening, and potentially devastating to those affected. These communities are viewed by the government to be “unviable moving forward” due to their high rates of suicide, poor education, and poor health. This is why Premier Colin Barnett plans to withdraw power, water, and services from these communities. These utilities will be controlled by the state starting in July of 2015.

These actions dismiss the right of Aboriginal people to live in and on their traditional country, for which they have ancient and deep responsibilities. Additionally, forcing people out of their communities and relocating them would likely intensify their problems with education, poverty, health, and unemployment. In March 2015, The Guardian Australia reporter Calla Wahlquist interviewed the chairman of the Kimberley Land Council, Anthony Watson. Watson and his father founded a community called Jarlmadangah Burru in 1987 under a Whitlam
government policy that allowed Aboriginal people to move back on to their homelands.

Jarlmadangah Burru is one of the many Aboriginal communities in Western Australia that will be assessed by the government to determine whether it is worth keeping. Per Watson,

We followed the government dream when they gave us all these promises about living back on country. It was promises that never went far, but to have these services be cut, to have people removed again, it just takes us back to all of those problems. Families would rather live out in the bush with no power than go into town.

Wahlquist cites the closure of nearby Aboriginal community Oombulgurri and the repercussions that followed. Like the events that will occur in 2015, residents were evicted and their services were shut off. The influx of displaced residents resulted in high levels of violence, suicide, and sexual assault. The transition was traumatizing, and some residents still do not have suitable housing, or are homeless. “We don’t want another Oombulgari,” Watson says.

Wahlquist also interviewed Annie Milgin, an Aboriginal nurse of 35 years who runs a health clinic in Jarlmadangah. She says that when the youth live in the community they are strong and healthy. She is extremely concerned for their well-being when they are forced to go into towns. Wahlquist reports, “That’s backed up by a 2011 report on Aboriginal homelands by Amnesty International that found that living on homelands was connected to better health outcomes and drug rehabilitation” (Wahlquist 2015). Helen Davidson, another Guardian Australia reporter stated that David Cole, chairman of the Darwin-based youth suicide prevention program anticipates devastating consequences for the communities that will be affected in 2015. He told the Guardian Australia that “It’s genocide, it’s land dispossession” (Davidson 2014).

Systemic discrimination and structural violence

Government and corporate institutions are responsible for much of the vulnerability in the world. In colonized countries, discrimination against indigenous people is a common occurrence.
It is easily reinforced within colonized locations due the minority standing of natives, their seemingly peculiar lifeways, and their lack of public and political influence. It was not until 1979 that a small group of anthropologists began a major effort to expose the actual characteristics of the Yanomami in the Amazon rainforest after Napoleon Chagnon famously and destructively declared them as "the fierce people" (Wright 1988). Like the Australian Aboriginal people, their land was being taken away by the hegemonic forces of highway and mining development. Also like the Australian Aboriginal societies of today, they were being destroyed by diseases, and their societies were disappearing. This is where the similarities end. It took a major effort of advocates worldwide to deconstruct the distorted image that had been created about the Yanomami. Significant actions were necessary to only slightly redirect public attention to the Yanomami’s struggle for land and cultural rights (Wright 1988). One of the advocates is an organization called Survival International whose only goal is to stop the assault of the Brazilian government on indigenous rights (Survival International). Sadly, there is no international outcry in defense of Australian Aboriginal people.

Structural violence refers to systematic ways in which social structures of the dominant forces hinder the well-being of disadvantaged peoples. It is prevalent in locations with extreme poverty and acute grades of social inequality. Structural violence is a social machinery of oppression that is enforced by everyone who belongs to the most powerful social order (Farmer 2004). Paul Farmer, Professor of Medical Anthropology in the Department of Social Medicine of Harvard Medical School, described the severity of structural violence in Haiti. Structural violence there continues to affect the daily lives and deaths of impoverished parts of the population. I found that the situation in Haiti, as described by Farmer in “An Anthropology of Structural Violence” mirrors Australian social structure in many ways. Likewise, the adverse
effects associated with structural violence that Farmer described in Haiti, such as diseases, subjugation, stigmatization, and psychological illness also echo the effects that Aboriginal people endure in Australia (Farmer 2004). Structural violence is often characterized as being subtle, and even invisible. While the dictatorships in Haiti and the colonists in Australia may be gone, the political and economic structures that they created are still in place and still inflicting harm. With the absence of tangible force, structural violence lacks identification of culpability. This ambiguity generates uneasiness to a moral economy that is fixated on placing blame (Farmer 2004).

One such political structure that lingers from colonial Australia is the incarceration rate of Aboriginal people. These levels have never been higher, and statistics indicate that the rate of Aboriginal imprisonment is worse per capita than it was for the black population during apartheid South Africa. A quarter of the Australian prison population is Aboriginal (Loewenstein 2013), yet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account only 2.5% of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011b). In Western Australia, the rate of imprisoned Aboriginal adults is over forty percent. “In May, The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) released a study that found a doubling of Aboriginal Australians in jail and a rise in deaths in custody in the last five years” (Loewenstein 2013). The police are well known to explicitly target Aboriginal men and women for minor infractions. For example they will go to Aboriginal funerals to impound cars, citing legal breaches. Aboriginality is criminalized and this lack of justice is due to the discriminatory acts of the government and media, which are driven by structural violence. Loewenstein (2013) thinks this unfair treatment is arguably Australia’s greatest outrage, and contradicts Australia’s projected global image as an egalitarian state (2013).
Although not usually addressed as “structural violence,” unfair treatment of ethnic minorities is currently a leading topic of discussion in the United States. Many people have accused American police officers of habitually using “police brutality,” that is the use of unnecessary and excessive force, primarily against African American males. This type of structural violence is illustrated by four widely publicized killings of unarmed African American men by police officers in the last year alone. Recognizing structural violence, many Americans have shown their dissent by holding protests in New York City for the killing on July 17, 2014 of Eric Garner; in Ferguson, Missouri for the killing of Michael Brown on August 9, 2014; in Cleveland, Ohio for the killing of 12 year old Tamir Rice on November 22, 2014; and most recently in Baltimore, Maryland for the killing of Freddie Gray on April 12, 2015. In Ferguson and Baltimore, some protesters overstepped boundaries and the demonstrations became outright riots, which were highly publicized in the media. Because of this, their efforts to end structural violence will likely backfire and lead to exacerbation of it.

Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes proposed conceptualizing structural violence on a continuum that begins with direct physical assault and ends with historically embedded structural violence that is obscured by globalized hegemonies (Bourgois and Scheper-Hughes 2004). According to this model impoverished Haitians and Aboriginal Australians are currently enduring the last stages of structural violence. I fear that if left unaddressed, structural violence could escalate to graver human rights violations and genocide.

It could be argued that the system of structural violence is more powerful and convincing now than it ever was before (Farmer 2004). Regular, everyday people are indeed part of the machinery that runs it. This is why it is imperative that anthropology and other disciplines seek to illuminate and eradicate the machinery of oppression.
Correlations between poverty and health

As an attending physician in infectious diseases and chief of the Division of Social Medicine and Health Inequalities at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston, Farmer examines the strong association between social inequalities and health in Haiti. Likewise social and financial disparities in Australia continue to cause physical and mental health issues for many Aboriginal people. The living conditions for many Aboriginal people are dire, and their physical health is greatly affected. The outback indigenous communities are teeming with small dilapidated houses that accommodate as many as twenty five people. These tin shacks often have no reliable power and water, and residents have been known to wait years for proper utilities (Pilger 2013). Dr. Janelle Trees is a general practitioner in Wilcannia, whose patients are mostly indigenous. She indicates that the government does not care that many Aboriginal homes are laden with asbestos, which causes them to develop mesothelioma. She is also shocked that nothing is done about children having chronic infections, renal disease, and rheumatic heart disease. She reports that malnutrition is common, and many people die from infections that would be preventable if living conditions were better. For example, she gave a patient anti-inflammatory medication for an infection, but the patient was unable to digest the tablets because she did not have enough food to eat. Disgracefully, these patients in Wilcannia live within a few miles of resorts in Uluru (Ayers Rock) that charge $1,000 per night (Pilger 2013).

Senator Nova Peris and mental health advocate Jeff Kennett began a campaign called beyondblue to detect and combat depression and racism that is experienced by indigenous people. They conducted a survey of more than 1,000 non-indigenous Australians and the data showed that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders continue to face widespread racism. Kennett
indicated that "This research shows that racism in Australia is still common and that many people engage in racist behavior" (Australian Associated Press July 28, 2014).

Georgie Haram, the chief executive of beyondblue, indicated that most non-native Australians do not realize when they are discriminating and do not understand the damaging effect it could have on indigenous people. The survey found that one third of non-native Australians thought indigenous Australians were "sometimes a bit lazy." Almost one third also believed that indigenous citizens should behave more like non-native Australians. More than 40% of non-native Australians believed that Aboriginal people receive unfair advantages from the government. The results also showed that twenty percent of non-native Australians would move away if an indigenous Australian sat nearby, and ten percent admitted that they would tell a joke making fun of indigenous people.

The findings of beyondblue are compatible with Farmer’s model (2004) of structural violence which indicates that violent acts are not necessarily deviant. Prejudice has a detrimental effect on the well-being of Aboriginal people. It makes them feel distressed, which leads to depression and anxiety. Recent data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics show that Aboriginal Australians are almost three times as likely to experience psychological distress and are twice as likely as non-indigenous Australians to commit suicide (Australian Associated Press July 28, 2014).

**Human Development Index (HDI)**

Decades of systemic discrimination, structural violence, poverty and ill health have contributed to the Australian Aboriginal’s low quality of living. Published by the United Nations Development Programme, the Human Development Index (HDI) combines life expectancy, educational attainment, and income indices in order to determine the level of human
development for a society. Between the years 1991 and 2001, researchers conducted a comparative analysis of social discrepancies in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States. They published their findings in the article “Aboriginal Well-being in Four Countries: An Application of the UNDP’s Human Development Index to Aboriginal People in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United States.” The main goal of their research was to determine whether social gaps between native and non-native people in these countries declined during this twenty year period. Aboriginal populations examined were Australian Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, native Alaskans, New Zealand Maori, and American Indians.

Upon European arrival, similar approaches were taken toward the natives of these territories. For instance, Europeans in each case attempted to eradicate traditional ways of life and assimilate aboriginal people into the pioneer cultures. Additionally, policies were enforced upon natives in the guise of “protection.” As a result of similar colonial histories, today the hegemonic forces of these countries have comparable social relations with their native populations. Compared to non-natives, natives suffer from higher rates of crime, violence, and mortality, and lower levels of academic achievement, income, and health. But the disparities differ for each country. In each case, the dynamics between the native population and the dominant society is the result of political history. Over decades, political policies have had a great impact on the health and well-being of native people and their ability to mobilize state resources through political engagement.

According to the statistics from the article mentioned above, Australia had the widest social gap for all of the categories studied. As mentioned, this is likely due to the lack of political policies that affected Aboriginal people. For example, Australia stands out as the only one of the four countries in which there were no treaties signed between the colonizers and Aboriginal
peoples. As in North America, Aboriginal Australians were subject to military domination and were treated as wards of the Crown. More recently in 2005, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) was formally abolished. The ATSIC was a governing body that involved Aboriginal Australians and Torres Strait Islanders in the governing process. As of 2005, many of the functions of ATSIC that aided Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders were transferred to mainstream agencies (Cooke et al.:2013).

The results showed that Australia had the widest gap in life expectancy between native and non-natives. From 1991 to 2001, the life expectancy gap increased from 20.6 years to 23.2 years; in Canada it declined from 7.3 years to 5.8 years; in New Zealand it dropped from 8.7 years to 8.5 years and in the United States it increased from 5.2 years to 6.0 years. The estimated life expectancy at birth for Aboriginals in Australia in 1991 was 59.6 years and did not increase over the course of the ten year study, holding at 59.6 years in 2001. But the life expectancy for non-Aboriginal Australians increased from 80.2 years to almost 83 years (Cooke et al.:2013).

The Aboriginal life expectancy for the population born between 2010 and 2012 was also posted on the Australian government’s website for “Authoritative information and statistics to promote better health and wellbeing.” Although a decade later, the statistics are curious. The website indicates that at birth Aboriginal males could expect to live to 69.1 years, and females to 73.7 years. Also according to this website, non-indigenous males are expected to live 79.7 years and non-indigenous females are expected to live 83.1 years. These numbers create only a 10.6 year gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal males and 9.5 year gap for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal females (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare N.d.). In order for these numbers to connect with Cooke et al. (2013), the life expectancy for Aboriginal people in Australia would have to have risen 9.5 years for males and 14.1 years for females between 2001 and 2011. This is
unlikely considering the data from Cook et al. (2013) show that the life expectancy from 1991-2001 in Australia was unchanged. Between 1991 and 2001, life expectancy increased by only 1.5 years in Canada; 3.4 years in New Zealand; and by .4 years in the United States (Cooke et al.:2013).

Life expectancy, educational attainment, and income indices were calculated and combined into an overall Human Development Index Score. Again the statistics for Australian Aboriginals were abysmal. Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders not only scored the lowest, they were also the only native group to have a reduced HDI Score between 1991 and 2001. Their Score decreased from .675 to .674, while Canadian natives improved from .786 to .815, Maori improved from .650 to .728 and the American Indians improved from .785 to .811. Australia also had the widest gap in HDI Score between natives and non-natives. In 2001 the gap in Australia was .184; in Canada it was .085; in New Zealand it was .139; and in the United States it was only .061. Researchers noted that the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia may currently be growing wider, but did not provide reasons (Cooke et al.:2013).

The researchers disclosed that this is only a comparison of national averages, and does not factor any degree of heterogeneity within native populations. But the HDI does reveal insight about the conditions in which people live. These statistics can be useful for monitoring the progress (or in the case of Australia, regression) toward overcoming disparity (Cooke et al.:2013). Robin Wright, cultural anthropologist at the University of Florida, Gainesville, asserts that due to the genocide and exploitation that plagues our current world, social scientists must become unrelenting advocates for communities that have been under imperial assault (1988).

Growing responsibilities of anthropologists
Nineteenth-century evolutionism portrayed native people as "savages," which legitimized the military conquest of tribes in places such as North American and Australia, setting the tone for decades of systemic racism. The anthropologist's role was often as a practical specialist in the colonial process, and passing judgment about policies towards native peoples was considered to be unscientific.

Since the 1950s, debate about the repercussions of Western expansion had been important in the social sciences. Much of the conversation had been directed by evolutionist models, as evidenced by "modernization" studies or "directed culture change" projects. It was not until the 1960s that the legacy of anthropology came seriously into question. This is when anthropological journals and annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association began to raise questions about the social responsibility of anthropology, and the relationships among anthropologists, indigenous communities, and governments (Wright 1988). The protection from ethnocide due to forced acculturation and Western "progress" was addressed in 1968 when an international committee on genocide and forced acculturation was appointed by the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES) (Wright 1988).

Emerging around this time was the concept of the “Fourth World,” which refers to sub-populations that reside in industrialized countries. These societies live in “First World” countries, but have “Third World” standards of living (Wright 1988). At the first Barbados Symposium social scientists agreed to provide indigenous peoples with active collaboration and technical assistance for their fight for liberation. By the Second Barbados Symposium in 1977, over half of the participants represented indigenous organizations. This time the discussions concentrated on the wishes of indigenous communities, not on the diagnoses of their situations. They evaluated possible strategies such as alliances with other ethnic groups, classes, and political organizations.
The struggle for indigenous rights is intrinsically a form of class struggle and success requires some infiltration of non-indigenous ideologies. To limit this infiltration, the need was to uphold specifically indigenous identities as a strategy for liberation. This included ideas such as indigenous societies becoming agents of their own destiny and guiding their own development. For this to happen, indigenous people would have to force nation-states to recognize their fundamental right to political self-determination. Incidentally, outside of these events, the action and response of the North American anthropological community was limited (Wright 1988). Anthropologists began to be called upon to provide testimony regarding human rights violations and have been successful in influencing United States policies towards governments accused or suspected of such violations (Wright 1988).

Today, anthropology has the potential to help reverse inhumane systematic thinking and enhance the human spirit. For this to come to fruition, anthropologists must work to dissolve colonialist ideologies and critique fundamental tenets of the Western world (Wright 1988). Such tenets include the domination of nature, materialism, and universal progressivism, which is the notion that all societies can improve by the advancement of science, technology and social organization. This thesis serves as a minute contribution to the exposure and critique of such ideologies.
CHAPTER II
OVERVIEW OF ABORIGINAL ART

Artworld Definitions

A number of technical terms will be referred to throughout this thesis, and a general understanding of them will help with comprehension. “Primitivism” is a Western movement that signifies art of non-Western peoples. This term is often used in opposition to “Modernism.” In art, the words “Modern” and “contemporary” are used differently to describe both temporal and stylistic differences. Generally, Modern Art refers to a style, while “contemporary art” refers to a time period. There are various definitions of these words, but some themes are consistent. Modern Art began in the West around 1880, shortly after the Impressionist movement when artists broke free from strict imitative representations. Early Modern artists were concerned with finding their unique styles, hence the emergence of cubism and surrealism, which can be illustrated by the works of Pablo Picasso and Salvador Dalí, respectively. The Modern Art movement favors experimentation and values new ideas and innovative ways of expression. It focuses on the importance of aesthetics and aesthetic guidelines and standards. Some Fine Art can be considered Modern Art. Fine Art is valued strictly for its aesthetic qualities, and judged for its beauty. This is why ethnographic signage about Fine Art is omitted. Modernism is a multi-disciplinary philosophy that supports social and technological progress in hopes of moving toward a better world. Late Modernist principles lauded artists who met and furthered what is
considered “proper” aesthetic criteria. By doing this, Modern Art became increasingly restrictive and standardized, which ironically limited creative production and experimentation. Most commentators concur that Modern Art ended in the 1970s, when the artworld became critical of the fundamental laws of this movement; hence, the emergence of Postmodern Art. Postmodern Art aims to counter Modern Art and its aesthetic standards. It views all previous movements as unstable, insincere and easily challenged. Consequently, Postmodernism embraces characteristics that cannot be disputed, such as irony, parody, and humor, which are the building blocks of Postmodern Art.

There are more inconsistencies about the idea of “contemporary art” than about Modern Art. Some definitions indicate that “contemporary art” refers to art produced since 1945; some say it is art that emerged in the 1960s, or alternately that it emerged in the 1970s. More simply, “contemporary art” is art that has been created during our lifetimes, it is contemporary to people living now, and it includes the works of artists who are presently living. (The word “our” is not defined). Abstract Art does not attempt to represent external reality. In Abstract Art, the visual language of shapes, forms, lines and colors are used to interpret a subject-matter, usually without a visual reference point. Abstract Art aims to differ with art that portrays a literal and accurate representation of subjects and to communicate a “reality” to the viewer.

The development of the Aboriginal art movement

The notion that Aboriginal art could be considered “contemporary art” and bought and sold on the world market was not common in the artworld until the 1980s (McLean 2011). Myers attributes much of this to the financial support for overseas exhibitions from the Australian government. But the government’s motivation was “increasing tourism (making Australia a distinctive, interesting destination), of increasing economic income (industry), but also in
establishing some sort of *national distinction* as a country identified with recognizable and geographically specific forms of cultural value” (italics in original) (Myers 2013:157). This illustrates that from the beginning of the movement, the motives of the Australian government and the Aboriginal people were different. The motivations of Aboriginal people were to gain respect within Australia and to achieve social equality, and land rights, while the government aimed to portray Australia as accepting of its natives and as having moved past colonialism and toward a unified country (Myers 2013).

In addition to government support, McLean detailed the factors that steered the art industry of the 1980s to accept Aboriginal art into the contemporary artworld within Australia. The process had endured a series of political successes and setbacks for five decades. The effort began in 1929 when the first exhibit of Aboriginal art showed at the National Museum in Melbourne. To the credit of anthropologists, it was they who first systematically collected and studied Aboriginal art and who organized this exhibition. Again in 1942, anthropologists Ronald and Catherein Berndt established a government organization and movement to help market Aboriginal art as an attempt to promote Aboriginal people’s economic independence (McLean 2011).

There was a post-World War II movement in Australia that was designed to unify the country and promote nationalism. With this momentum, Rex Battarbee wrote a book in 1951 called *Modern Australian Aboriginal Art*, which had great insight and attempted to merge Aboriginal art with Modern Art (the term “contemporary art” was not yet used). Unfortunately, it was regarded as fiction because of what was perceived as an oxymoronic title. However this book likely contributed to the progress made during the 1950s. This decade brought growing
acceptance of Aboriginal art into state art galleries, particularly the bark-art produced in Arnhem Land. But this approval was for the art to be seen only as “primitive” creations (McLean 2011).

From 1960 to 1961, there was an exhibition prepared by the state art galleries of Australia entitled Australian Aboriginal art that featured bark paintings, carved figures, and sacred and secular objects. For the first time Aboriginal art was presented with minimal cultural and ethnographic context and signage (McLean 2011), and was considered as Fine Art. This exhibit prepared the Australian artworld for the major paradigm shift that was to happen in the 1980s. During this time politically, the Australian government led the “Assimilation” movement. The goals of this 1960s movement were to integrate Aboriginal people into “Western” culture and to dissolve native cultures. This was done primarily through education and was resisted by many Aboriginal people. As part of Assimilation, the government moved several groups, including Walpiri, Pintupi, Aranda and Arrernte to the Papunya region in the Western Desert. The Papunya settlement was created because the government deemed these Aboriginal groups to be ill-equipped to join Western society and they needed supervised transition training. It was a place where Aboriginal people were systematically humiliated by the European authorities. The living conditions were dismal for the Aboriginal people (but not for the Europeans) and many Aboriginals died of treatable diseases (Allan 2001).

After a governmental study of Australian tourism in 1965, Aboriginal art caught the attention of both the Commonwealth of Australia and of the artworld for its economic potential. Still this attention did not involve Aboriginal art being considered in the contemporary context. But, with the backing of the Reserve Bank, Aboriginal activist Nugget Coombs established two art councils in 1968. One was the government’s Australian Council for the Arts (ACA) and the other was the Australian Council for Aboriginal Affairs (ACAA). Both were chaired by Coombs. The
following year the Aboriginal Art’s Advisory Committee (AAAC) was founded. Incidentally, the United States had its first contemporary Australian art exhibit in 25 years during the late 1960s entitled “The Australian Painters 1964-1966.” It did not include any Aboriginal art (McLean 2011).

The efficacy of the ACA, ACAA and AAAC started out slowly in the 1970s. There were still strong Eurocentric leanings in Australia’s artworld, and critics held tight to the “primitiveness” of Aboriginal art. The Australian government made a progressive step from the “Assimilation” movement of the 1960s to the “Integration” movement of the 1970s. For instance, the Australia Council for the Arts included a board entitled “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts,” along with dance, literature, performing arts, music, theater and visual arts. The 1970s was the decade when Aboriginal people began to participate directly in the government’s art boards. This provided Aborigines with the funds and expertise to promote the production, exhibition and marketing of Aboriginal art (McLean 2011:30).

The Australian Whitlam Labor Party had a pivotal role in shaping the mindset of Australians and in increasing the hope of equal treatment for Aboriginal people (McLean 2011, Myers 2013). This Party represented the professional-managerial class in the 1970s and 1980s. One of their goals was to resuscitate Australia’s non-European landscape. Their nationalistic and post-colonial drive away from Britain and the United States, Myers claims, played a major role in altering Australian mindsets with respect to indigenous art (Myers 2013). They instituted a “vigorous policy of self-determination in Aboriginal affairs and the funds to support it” (McLean 2011:32). In 1973, the Whitlam Labor Party established the Aboriginal Arts Board (AAB) whose members consist solely of Aboriginal Australians. This Board conveyed the voice of Aboriginal artists and focused on organizing touring exhibitions of Aboriginal art throughout Australia and
The most significant impact of the AAB was the establishment of art centers, which served as a research base for writers, anthropologists and visiting curators (McLean 2011). In 1976, the AAB created the Aboriginal Artists’ Agency (AAA) which was designed to coordinate copyright issues and to promote Aboriginal art at “contemporary art” events (McLean 2011).

According to McLean, these advocates were still fighting an uphill battle in the 1970s, due to the well-established Modernist paradigm that strictly separated “primitive” and “contemporary art,” with Aboriginal art stuck on the “primitive” side. The Director of the National Gallery of Victoria in Australia, Eric Rowlison, indicated that Aboriginal art was easier to ignore than to understand (McLean 2011).

James Mollison and Wally Caruana played a crucial role in Australia’s transition. In the 1970s, Mollison was Director of the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) and became an advocate for recognizing Aboriginal art as “contemporary art.” Caruana was the curator of the NGA and created the Department of Aboriginal Art. He was dedicated to showing the artworld the originality and scope of Aboriginal art through a series of exhibitions. His enthusiasm caught the attention of state art galleries and the commercial art sector (McLean 2011).

In 1971 Geoffrey Bardon, a teacher in the Papunya settlement, encouraged Pintupi men to paint a mural on the school wall using the traditional styles of body and sand ceremonial art. Next they started using different pigments on pieces of fiber board, wood, and eventually on canvas. This transition helped the Papunya painting movement to grow immensely (Smith Boles 1999), and by 1981 three Aboriginal artists, Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri and Charlie Tjapangati showcased three canvases in the exhibit called Australian Perspecta. This exhibit was considered to be revolutionary in the history of “contemporary” Australian art and became known as Papunya Tula.
When Mollison saw *Papunya Tula*, he decided that the NGA was going to “embark on a systematic buying program of Aboriginal contemporary art” (McLean 2011:35). *Papunya Tula* prompted the creation of a new department in state art galleries and new courses in academia. *Papunya Tula* acrylic paintings broke free from an anthropological frame, triggering a fundamental repositioning of Aboriginal art from “primitive” to “contemporary” (McLean 2011).

But Aboriginal people, anthropologists and some art critics feared that as the artworld gained appreciation for Aboriginal art’s aesthetic beauty, the cultural value would be lost. And indeed, as the pendulum swung from “primitive” to “contemporary” Aboriginal art went from being perceived primarily as “artifacts” to mainly as Fine Art. This shift was not reflected in Australian art journals until the late 1980s, when there was an influx of special issues dedicated to Aboriginal art. The success of the *Papunya Tula*, and the acceptance of Aboriginal art as Modern Art played a role in the collapse of the Modern Art movement. This was because Aboriginal art did not fit into the increasingly restrictive and standardized aesthetic qualities that had developed in the Modern Art movement. Aboriginal art therefore contradicted Modern Art paradigms. Anti-modern sentiments which value irony, parody, and humor became pervasive throughout 1980s, and the Postmodern Art movement emerged.

With recognition as “contemporary artists” came unwanted demands to change in order to remain relevant. Since creating art is one of the main ways Aboriginal people maintain their sense of identity and express their heritage, they became tormented by these modifications. The paradox is that the Aboriginal art movement, according to many Aboriginal people, was initiated as an effort to maintain traditions and identities by gaining social respect. According to anthropologists Sutton and Anderson, they fought hard against these changes, but Western
expectations overpowered their voices and they were forced to comply in order to continue receiving compensation (Sutton and Anderson 2011).

By the 1990s, Aboriginal people and advocates formed an opposition to the Postmodernization of Aboriginal art. So called “Postcolonial theorists” demanded greater attention to indigenous voices at the curatorial level. Aboriginal artists, critics and curators began to challenge the Eurocentric bias they associated with Postmodernism. They emphasized the importance of the authenticity and spirituality of their art, in addition to its pedagogical and political intentions.

Willis and Fry say that colonialism in Australia is pervasive, structural, and ongoing. Even from the beginning of the movement, Aboriginal demands for land rights and cultural rights had to be translated into the colonizers’ terms. Some so-called promoters of Aboriginal art erroneously embellished their intentions in order to gain recognition for helping Aboriginal political struggles. This recognition, they say, did little more than demonstrate the power of art institutions (Willis and Fry 2011). They maintain that the Australian government still perpetuates the “assimilation” movement from the 1960s, which aimed at imposing new practices on Aboriginal people, and the displacement of Aboriginal cultural systems.

The meanings of Aboriginal art

Margo Smith, the director and curator of the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, wrote that Aboriginal art is a tool that provides Aboriginal people with a link between a world that is inhabited by humans, animals, and plants to a world in the spiritual dimension. It is also a way for them to connect their past with their present and their future (Smith Boles 1999). Aboriginal artist Djon Mundine, analogizes Aboriginal art with cultures and traditions, describing it as neither ancient, nor futuristic, but consistently contemporary (Mundine 1999).
Mundine was one of the co-authors with Margo Smith Boles for the book *Art from the Land: Dialogues with the Kluge-Ruhe Collection of Australian Aboriginal Art* (1999).

**Country, the Dreaming, and the creation period**

Although Aboriginal communities are diverse, the main theme that ties them together is the responsibility they have for what is referred to as “country.” Country includes the land, sea, and sky and everything contained therein. Artists often represent features of the landscape to communicate their past, present, and future relationship to country. Like a family member, each person nurtures a unique connection to country. In the words of Nici Cumpston, Aboriginal artist, curator, writer and educator, “Country is spoken about in the same way non-Aboriginal people may talk about their living human relatives. Aboriginal people cry about country, they worry about country, they listen to country, they visit country and long for country” (Placard at Kluge-Ruhe 2014). Many artists create work to raise awareness about the dispossession of country as a result of colonization. They consider themselves as traditional owners of country, which includes the land and sea, and use their art practice to assert their rights (Placard at Kluge-Ruhe 2014).

Another binding concept among Aboriginal people is the Dreaming, which refers to supernatural beings and supernatural events of the creation period. The creation period is thought to be a time when ancestral beings emerged from the earth and created all things. Per Mundine, the Dreaming is the reality of the spirit world, and like Aboriginal art, it exists in the beginning of time, in the present and in the future (Mundine 1998). Dreaming stories are deeply intertwined with notions of country, family, ceremony, and design. According to Jeannie Herbert Nungarrayl, a Warlpiri teacher, the Dreaming is “an all-embracing concept that provides rules
for living, a moral code, as well as rules for interacting with the natural environment…. [it]

After a season of abundant rainfall in 1973, the lush growth of local plants reminded Walpiri artist Charlie Egalie Tjapaltjarri of a similarly bountiful season in the Dreaming, when wallabies flourished. Inspired by this memory, Tjapaltjarri painted *Wallaby Dreaming* shown in Figure 2. This acrylic on masonite piece was exhibited at the Kluge-Ruhe during my research.

Figure 2. Charlie Egalie Tjapaltjarri
*Wallaby Dreaming*, 1973

provides for a total, integrated way of life” (Placard at Kluge-Ruhe 2014).

After a season of abundant rainfall in 1973, the lush growth of local plants reminded Walpiri artist Charlie Egalie Tjapaltjarri of a similarly bountiful season in the Dreaming, when wallabies flourished. Inspired by this memory, Tjapaltjarri painted *Wallaby Dreaming* shown in Figure 2. This acrylic on masonite piece was exhibited at the Kluge-Ruhe during my research.

*Political aspirations of Aboriginal art*
Since every Aboriginal person inherits rights to a specific homeland and all the Dreaming stories that are associated with it, the Aboriginal art movement attempts to show hegemonic forces the interconnectedness of the Dreaming, ceremonies, and their homelands. This is why a majority of Aboriginal images represent aspects of the Dreaming and particularly how it connects them with the land and its sacred history. The use of art as a tool to convey Aboriginal cultural values and political aspirations has generated public awareness of Aboriginal art since World War II (Smith Boles 1999).

Lance Bennett, as authorized by members of the Warlpiri tribe in the Central and Western Desert, says that international showings of the art were never intended to invoke praise or honor; they were aimed at generating respect for Aboriginal people and communities. The ceremonial function of the art means is deeply associated with local and wider social politics (Bennett 2011). Cultural activists Hetti Perkins and Victoria Lynn maintain that Aboriginal art was supposed to be an agent of social justice, and that making art and selling it globally is just as much of a political statement as dramatic demonstrations and protest marches (Perkins and Lynn 2011). In theory, awareness about Aboriginal values would prevent more land from being stolen, and with possible restitution for past atrocities. They hoped that newfound respect for Aboriginal people through art would allow them to: gain political traction, obtain equality, gain land rights, have better living conditions, improve health, and ultimately to prevent the dissolution of their cultures (Fry and Willis 2011).

Art as an expression of corporate identity

Aboriginal art was also commercialized to show hegemonic forces how significantly Aboriginal land and traditions are tied to their identities. “Both within and outside of Australia, their ‘art’ — usually along with their spiritual tie to the landscape — came to be the
representation of Aboriginal culture itself, of Aboriginal identity” (Gibson 2008:69). Aboriginal artists from various regions create different types of art, but the art universally communicates corporate and individual identities. Per Gibson (2008), there have been assertions by Aboriginal artists in Wilcannia, a region in New South Wales, that their art both expresses and is their culture. Elizabeth Burns Coleman’s book entitled *Aboriginal Art, Identity and Appropriation*, as reviewed by Dr. Doctor Christiane Keller (2007), illustrates the connection between Aboriginal identity and art by showing the relationship between images and identity. Her book explains how Aboriginal art reflects their identity so much that several natives are requesting stronger copyright laws to protect their artistic styles as collectively owned property. Some Aboriginal people believe that since certain stylistic images and designs portray sacred stories, the designs themselves should be guarded to protect their identity, existence and future (Keller 2007). Coleman compares Aboriginal designs to insignia on a coat of arms. Like the insignia, the designs are collectively owned, handed down from generation to generation and used to show identity to the land and group. Further, different insignia on coat of arms have various meanings, as do different Aboriginal styles (Keller 2007).

Aboriginal people communicate who they are through art more than through writing. Consequently, the art becomes both the language and the written culture. In fact, many Aboriginal paintings are currently employed as substitutes for print literacy. The Yapa Aboriginal people call the traces produced and left behind by ancestral Jukurrpa beings, *Kuruwarri* signs. These signs provide a type of “reading” for this group. The *Kuruwarri* signs often replace and facilitate knowledge of country and the Dreaming to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. This “reading” is often found alongside and in place of print writing in vernacular school books and texts, in Bible translations, church services, Land claims, and even
health clinics (Biddle 1996). Since recreating artistic styles and designs is akin to writing for some Aboriginal people, viewing Aboriginal art can be as enlightening as reading books about Aboriginal people.

Factors influencing the efficacy of the Aboriginal art movement

This section will discuss some of the factors that have hindered efforts to achieve the collective Aboriginal goal of attaining higher political and social standing through their art. Causes discussed will include the embedded influence of hegemonic forces, partial interpretations by Westerners, differences in the meaning of “ownership,” the commoditization of the art, and the impact that prior exposure of Aboriginal people and art have on Western interpretations.

Hegemonic forces and Western interpretations

The representation of native cultures and traditions is often shaped by colonial domination (Keesing 1989). Groups “invent” traditions because it has meaning to them in the current situation. The commercialization of Aboriginal art began as an anti-colonial movement after World War II. It was the result of dismal living conditions and social, economic, and cultural desperation.

According to Postmodern theory, people interpret things through their own personal lens. This can be illustrated by a comment from one of the Kluge-Ruhe patrons who is a student of Systems Engineering.

The one painting that looks kinda’ like a traffic map with two inputs on the right side and one on top of each bottom and then one on the side, this is from an engineering side, but it made me think of an algorithm with various nodes and paths between each node that have constrains and capacities for each road. It’s very interesting the way it was designed. It’s two rows that are mostly straight, almost symmetrical, then a smaller road comes in then leaves, then it juts into the next road below it, and it’s kind of crooked. It’s interesting, it’s very similar to the algorithm and the optimization class that I’ve taken.
But subjective interpretations are only one factor that prevents Aboriginal art from being accurately understood.

Culture does not randomly materialize, nor is it biologically transmitted. Anthropologists have called attention to how a population’s behavior emerges from adaptive social processes underlying the interaction between that population and its environment and history. According to Cerroni-Long (2008:198), culture characterizes human behavior and “is an open system of behavioral constraints, constituted by environmental, historical and social factors, shaping the behavior of people born and raised in a particular society.” In “Dangerous Assumptions of American Culture” anthropologist Mark Nathan Cohen explains:

Culture defines the values people hold, their goals and motivations, the permitted means to achieving those goals, the roles people play and how they play them, their form of leadership and government, the styles people accept, their modes of exchange, their cosmology (how they believe their world works), the form of their supernatural beliefs, how they train their members in their culture, and even what they see and hear (Cohen 2008: 207).

People satisfy cultural needs in implicit and even unconscious manners. Being born and raised in a particular cultural milieu causes people to consider their behaviors as normal and remain unaware of the cultural specificity of these behaviors. These tendencies are rooted in peoples’ lack of self-perception and failure to examine their own culture from the point of view of outsiders (Cohen 2008). This thesis will later focus on how American culture influences assumptions that precede decision making, ideologies, and actions (Cohen 2008). It will look at the role these ideologies play as they pertain to why Kluge-Ruhe patrons avoid empathizing with the native people of Australia and elsewhere.

There is a vast gulf between ideologies of Native Australians and the West. For instance, Aboriginal ideologies are not progressivist, as they are for Westerners, which automatically
creates fundamental ontological gaps. The way the Earth and sky are viewed is also profoundly different. Unlike Western thought, traditional Aboriginal beliefs have no central dichotomy between the spiritual and material, the sacred and secular, or the natural and supernatural. The Judeo-Christian tradition holds that people have an obligation to exploit the natural world to satisfy human needs; that they have dominion over it. Conversely, Aboriginal Australians learn from birth that they are participants in nature. As participants, they must obey its rules and fit themselves into its natural cycles.

Art historian Roger Benjamin calls into question the Western notion that some art can be universally “great,” and can appeal to people across cultures. He says this is a humanist and Eurocentric projection and that recent cultural theory has doubted any such commonality (Benjamin 2011). Aboriginal people do not frame their traditions or art within the confines of Western standards and categories. Non-Aboriginal people are also bounded by languages that fail to express central Aboriginal concepts that are necessary in order to interpret, understand and write about their art (Mc Clean 2011). Concepts such as “The Dreaming,” “creation period” and “ancestral lands” are all simplified.

*Americans and the idea of “ownership”*

As with many other indigenous concepts, the Aboriginal concept of “ownership” is difficult to translate into Westerner terms. Many Aboriginal art collectors in the West fail to examine how their own concept of “ownership” differs from others. The following story is an example of how cultural assumptions and the lack of awareness of wealthy art collectors almost ruined the chance for an Aboriginal art exhibit to show in the United States. It also illustrates how the collectors focused on the outward appearance of the exhibit, and not on its inward significance. It exemplifies American reliance on commercialization and consumerism and shows the propensity
for Americans to perceive the art as “primitive” despite the deliberate actions to deter that impression.

Myers (2013) told the story of John and Barbara Wilkerson’s “journey of understanding” to explain a typical scenario of Western ignorance. The Wilkersons are wealthy art collectors who purchased 50 Papunya acrylic paintings, which were painted mostly in the 1970s and had been commissioned for a show in 2009 entitled, “Icons of the Desert: Early Aboriginal Paintings from Papunya.” In order to observe the structure and effects of Aboriginal art’s placement in the United States, Myers followed the show from Cornell University to UCLA’s Fowler Museum of Cultural History and NYU’s Grey Art Gallery. He looked at the differences in the way Aboriginal art is portrayed between the Australian and international fields (Myers 2013).

The “Icons” exhibition in New York City intended to challenge the “primitive” categorization of Aboriginal art and was a great opportunity to be a catalyst for a paradigmatic change in the United States (Myers 2013). Sydney art historian Roger Benjamin was hired as the show’s curator. His aim was for “Icons” to be presented as Fine Art rather than as an ethnographic specimen. In addition to a myriad of other curatorial strategies, he installed the paintings on an aesthetic basis by hanging few wall labels. But Myers was concerned about the sacrifices made to attain this goal; he worried that the cultural content and meanings would be suppressed and disregarded (2013).

Aboriginal artists transposed their inherited knowledge of ritual, place, and body with acrylic paint onto permanent surfaces of masonite and other materials to create “Icons.” Yet, the Wilkersons narrated their discovery of the paintings in explorer-like terms, therefore, insinuating “primitiveness” about the exhibit and the people. They were apathetic with respect to Aboriginal politics and naïve about indigeneity (Myers 2013). Myers doubted that they even knew a single
native Australian. They did not appear to be interested in Aboriginal contemporary lives, the makers of the art, their intentions, or messages.

As Boulanger observed about Americans, the Wilkersons lacked self-perception and failed to examine their idea of “ownership” from an alternate viewpoint. Because they purchased the images, they assumed they had carte blanche to do as they pleased with them. They proceeded to treat the Aboriginal designs and traditional works as commodities. For instance, in an effort to generate hype and attention for “Icons,” the Wilkersons “branded” the phrase “Icons of the Desert” onto fleece vests, bags, notepads, and other items.

During the installation, Myers learned that several paintings that were being prepared for hanging were suddenly considered unsuitable for public exhibition, by the request of numerous descendants of the artists. Some of these paintings had even been exhibited in previous shows, but the relatives of the painters changed their minds, because the display would involve secret ritual matters. When Myers and other key players were preparing to withdraw from the project, which would have been detrimental to the exhibit, the Wilkersons agreed to consult with the descendants to determine how to proceed.

As discussed, Aboriginal art conveys the relationship between images and identity. Artistic styles are seen as collectively-owned property, handed down from generation to generation. The images also express connection to the land and to the group (Keller 2007). Once the Wilkersons became acquainted with the descendants of the original painters, and learned about the significance of these styles with respect to their identity and land, they entered what Myers called a “journey of understanding” (Myers 2013). They were enlightened about what “ownership” means in the minds of Aboriginal people and realized that owning these images is
similar to owning the insignia on a family coat of arms. It was only with this new information that the Wilkersons accepted the limitations of their ownership.

The compromise was that the installation would adhere to indigenous protocols by placing nine paintings in a room downstairs from the main exhibit hall. These paintings were labeled as “restricted” and signs were posted cautioning indigenous women and children to refrain from viewing them. These nine paintings contained secret ritual knowledge that only initiated men should know. To ignore these requests would be to ignore a fundamental character of the paintings and threaten indigenous survival. Myers posits that many other Western private collectors never go through a “journey of understanding” and therefore disregard such protocols and heritage laws.

The goal of curator Roger Benjamin for “Icons” to be perceived as Fine Art, and for the exhibit to be a catalyst for a paradigmatic change in the United States, was not achieved. At the close of the “Icons” show, a reporter from the Wall Street Journal wrote the following statement.

Imagine that you could travel back in time to meet a Stone Age hunter-gatherer, that you could hand him a paintbrush and ask him to paint something on a board or canvas – not warpaint on his body or daubings on a cave, but a proper picture, one that gave us a glimpse of his inner landscape and his aesthetic universe. This is precisely what happened at Papunya in 1972 near the remote outpost of Alice Springs in the heart of the Australian outback. The products of that early encounter gave rise to the internationally celebrated phenomenon of Aboriginal art, an ecole of sorts, that we all recognize today … (Kaylan 2009).

Categorization of Aboriginal art

As a result of hegemonic forces, systematic oppression, ethnocentrism, and ontological gaps, the Aboriginal objectives for their art movement never came to fruition. Instead, the art captured the ethnocentric imagination of the West, and the Aboriginal art movement slowly morphed into a colonial arrangement (Montgomery 1983-1984). “Despite the world having been subject to unprecedented cross-cultural traffic for several hundred years, art museums in the U.S.
and Europe remain extremely Eurocentric” (McLean 2011:21). Instead of trying to better understand Aboriginal worldviews, Westerners continue to view Aboriginal people as a typical “Other” (McLean 2011).

In many colonized locations, Whites considered it acceptable for colonized people to be remade in their image, which is a symptom of structural violence. The dominant group selectively recognizes elements of the invaded people that do not challenge the ways in which they make sense of the world. As colonized nations, there is an ethnocentric legacy of Western positioning in Australia and the United States. Westerners refurbish what they know about Aboriginal cultures in order to fit it into their own worldview. Prolific Aboriginal artist, Richard Bell points out that Westerners tend to create a pre-ordained path to analyze and categorize everything (Bell 2011). Aboriginal anthropologist and geographer Marcia Langton (Yiman descendent) explains that both Modern and Postmodern curators constructed “genres” and “styles” of Aboriginal art in order to fit into Western categories (Langton 2011). Other categorizations that the West has imposed onto Aboriginal art include “Abstract,” “primitivism,” and “spirituality.” Incorporating these unsuitable terms into Aboriginal art discourse leads to misinterpretations and misconceptions about the art, its objectives, and Aboriginal people. The West’s preoccupation with categorization hinders any advocacy and effort to improve social status for the Aboriginal people. The West has reduced Aboriginal religions into a commodity, and their cultures into a scale version of our own (Jones 2011). Aboriginal artists are pursued by greedy Western art collectors who only superficially value their work. As a result, Westerners, including some patrons of the Kluge-Ruhe simply view and interpret Aboriginal art as an expression of a romanticized 40,000 year old culture.

*Impact of prior exposure to Aboriginal people and art*
Learning is rarely linear or instantaneous, instead people learn from continuous accumulation of experiences across their lives. Over time, these experiences impact the whole community and society (Falk and Dierking 2013). My survey showed that 73% of patrons answered “yes” when asked if they knew anything about Aboriginal art prior to visiting the museum, and 53% of patrons had already visited the Kluge-Ruhe at least once. In the interviews, when asked how much they knew about Australian Aboriginal art and culture before visiting the Kluge-Ruhe that day, 8% indicated “a significant amount, 26% indicated “a moderate amount,” 52% indicated “a little,” 13% indicated “none,” and no one self-identified as an “expert.” This shows that 86% of people interviewed had preconceived notions about Aboriginal people prior to the day of the visit.

What people remembered having learned is usually an extension of something they somewhat already knew about, rather than from brand new material (Korn 1994). There are no data to show exactly what patrons discovered at the Kluge-Ruhe versus what they learned elsewhere. But misleading information is often communicated by seemingly “authoritative” sources under the guise of “objectivity.” For example, the train ride at the “Australian Adventure” at the Cleveland Metroparks Zoo plays a recording every time the train rides around the “Australian Adventure.” On June 20, 2014 (and presumably all summer) the recording said the following:

On your right, you’ll see Aboriginal paintings. Found throughout Australia, these paintings show scenes of Aboriginal life and use colored pigments found in nature. Like Native Americans, the Australian Aborigines live in close harmony with the environment. But they are nomadic hunters, wandering the bush in search of food.

This recording is heard by thousands of Clevelanders per day. Additionally, the Guinness Book of World Records described the Aboriginal people as having the simplest material culture of any people on earth (Myers 2011a).
A total of 93% of patrons surveyed indicated that their knowledge increased as a result of this visit to the Kluge-Ruhe. Forty one percent indicated by “a little,” 28% indicated “a moderate amount,” 24% indicated “a significant amount,” and 7% said “none.” Considering Korn’s observation, this indicates that 93% of patrons surveyed expanded on their preconceived so-called “knowledge” from prior exposures. These prior exposures likely did not involve Aboriginal advocacy, land confiscation, and social inequalities.
CHAPTER III
THE KLUGE-RUHE: OBJECTIVES AND ART

Objectives of the Kluge-Ruhe reflect its founders

In 1997 the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection was established, thanks to a gift to the University of Virginia from John W. Kluge (1914-2010) who owned one of the most extensive private collections of Australian Aboriginal art in the world. Kluge had been accumulating Aboriginal art since 1988, and in 1993 he significantly increased the breadth of his collection by purchasing the Aboriginal works of Professor Edward L. Ruhe (Smith Boles 1999). “Kluge and Ruhe sought to educate the American public about Aboriginal art by exhibiting works from their collections in the United States” (Smith Boles 1999:2).

Today, the Kluge-Ruhe collection possesses more than 1,600 objects of Aboriginal art and material culture, representing many regions of Australia and a variety of artistic forms. The beginning of this chapter will expand on the motivations of John Kluge and Edward Ruhe, which illuminate the goals of the museum today (Smith Boles 1999). In addition to general Western tendencies discussed earlier, I argue that the objectives of the Kluge-Ruhe Collection, and of its founders guide the limited interpretations of patrons.

The Kluge-Ruhe website states the following mission:

Our mission is to advance knowledge and understanding of Australia’s Indigenous people and their art and culture worldwide. Working with living artists, international scholars and arts professionals, we provide a wide range of learning experiences to the University community and the public through exhibition, research and educational programs (Accessed May 1, 2015).
There could be a variety of reasons that the notions of political activism, equal rights, and systemic violence are not mentioned. One reason could be that the original owners, Kluge and Ruhe, left a legacy that avoided the political messages of Aboriginal art.

John Kluge was a millionaire tycoon, who at one time was one of the richest people in the United States. His goal was to create a body of work that represented a variety of Aboriginal art, and to create a “complete” collection. To do this, he commissioned artists to create works that filled the gaps of his collection, which I argue distorted the meaning. In order to attain ample breadth and depth of representation in terms of style, history, and geography, he hired Aboriginal artist Howard Morphy to be the advisor of his collection. Morphy was paid to provide guidance based on the specific objectives of his employer, John Kluge, and not objectives of Aboriginal people (Smith Boles 1999). Director of the museum, Professor Smith Boles, noted “As a collector, one of Mr. Kluge’s prime motivations was to achieve comprehensive and well-rounded collections, each with a distinct focus” (Smith Boles 1999:10). Although this goal is commendable, it is also a bit shortsighted considering the dire needs of Aboriginal communities.

Professor Edward L. Ruhe was “a life-long collector of interesting objects” (Smith Boles 1999:6), such as his assortment of World War I artifacts. He had bark paintings and Aboriginal objects all over his house. He even kept objects intended for men only locked in a cabinet in his bedroom. He invited friends over to teach them about their significance and their relationship to sacred locations. He was moved by the works and believed sorcery objects had power over him, and at one point he thought he was cursed by them. Although it seems he embraced the art as exotic and mysterious, Smith Boles (1999) contends that he was serious about the art, and did not consider it to be “primitive.”
From my understanding neither Kluge nor Ruhe acknowledged the terrible treatment of Aboriginal people, or the systemic violence that affects their well-being. As with monetary wealth, Kluge had a clear goal of accumulation when it came to Aboriginal art, and Ruhe academically approached his collection by keeping detailed notes, and writing about his research. When Kluge donated his collection to the University of Virginia, it was intended to be used for exhibition, research, and education (Smith Boles 1999).

The collection aims to provide an entry point about Aboriginal art for an audience unfamiliar with its history (Smith Boles 1999). But due to the hard work and persistence of the staff at the Kluge-Ruhe, there are now groups of patrons in Charlottesville, Virginia who know the art very well, and are even familiar with the portfolio of many Aboriginal artists. For them, the museum is no longer an “entry point.” Considering this patron loyalty, and the potent political messages of the artwork, the Kluge-Ruhe Collection has the faculty and the opportunity

Figure 3. *States and Territories of Australia June 12 1931 to Present* (Golbez 2006)
to develop a strong movement for the rights that Aboriginal communities desperately need. The next section discusses the demographics of the patrons and identifies those who frequent the museum. Unfortunately, they remain fairly unaware, or apathetic about the political messages of the art.

**Art on Display at the Kluge-Ruhe**

The art displayed during the days of my research mainly represented three regions of Australia. Most of the artists were from Arnhem Land, Central and Western Deserts, and the Tiwi Islands. Although each region is culturally diverse, there are similarities found within each Aboriginal region, which are reflected in the art. These regions are different from the political states and territories of Australia, as shown in Figure 3. The six states of Australia are New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia; and the

![Map of Australia](image)

*Figure 4. Aboriginal Regions* (NordNordWest 2009)
two self-governing internal territories are the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory, which is tiny and located within New South Wales.

Arnhem Land and the Tiwi Islands are located at the top of the Northern Territory;

![Australia climate map](image)

Figure 5. *Australia climate map* (Nobletripe 2012)

Central and Western Deserts are located toward the middle of the continent and overlap with the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia as shown in Figure 4. Figure 5 illustrates that Arnhem Land is tropical with wet and dry seasons, while the Central Desert is hot and dry.

**Arnhem Land**

There is cultural variability within Arnhem Land, and regions within it are referred as “Western Arnhem Land,” “Eastern Arnhem Land,” and “Central Arnhem Land.” Aboriginal
people in Arnhem Land are knowns as Yolngu, which means “human being” (Mundine 1999). They are recognized primarily for their bark and landscape paintings. They have been recording and venerating the country through artistic expression for centuries. Bark painting is created by removing the inner bark of the eucalyptus, flattening it out to create a smooth side for drawing, and applying a coat of red ocher to prepare the surface (Mundine 1999).

Colonization was slower here than in the western and southern parts of Australia due to its unrelenting wet season and to Aboriginal resistance. In 1883 J.A. McCarthy established a cattle station in North Central Arnhem Land, which caused extreme friction with the indigenous people and resulted in ethnic cleansing by the cattlemen. Because of the violent reaction to the cattlemen’s actions against them, the natives were stereotyped as fierce and brutal people (Mundine 1999). Throughout the 20th century, mission and government stations were established across the region. Through these events, native Yolngu communities maintained close relationships with their land by frequently visiting their “country” and continuing to hunt and gather much of their food.

Yolngu have had centuries of contact with non-Aboriginal people prior to European colonization (Morphy 1999). From at least 1720 (and probably much earlier) Macassan traders (people from what is now Indonesia) have been visiting Arnhem Land to trade, and Yolngu have used bark painting as a standard of exchange and negotiation with them (Mundine 1999). In the 1930s Yolngu sold their bark paintings to Methodist missionaries in order to purchase supplies. More importantly, they used bark paintings to demonstrate to missionaries the value of their cultures (Morphy 1999). In the 1950s bauxite was discovered in Arnhem Land by White Australians, and mining companies were granted leases over much of Yolngu’s land, without consultation with Aboriginal people. It was not until then that Yolngu became aware of the threat
posed by European colonizers (Morphy 1999). By the 1960s Yolngu bark art was on the forefront of commissioned Aboriginal paintings. Although artists enjoyed the recognition of their art, they were more concerned with the power it could potentially have on their ability to reclaim their land. In 1963 the Yolngu pleaded with the Commonwealth Government in Canberra by sending a petition attached to a bark painting. Eventually in 1976, the Aboriginal Land Rights Act (Northern Territory) granted inhabitants of Arnhem Land title to some of their land. Yolngu returned to small clan communities, and these places are now referred to as “outstations.” As a result, bark art became a powerful symbol for Aboriginal land rights (Morphy 1999). Yolngu continue to use their art as a negotiation tool with the West to gain political rights (Mundine 1999).

*Western Arnhem Land*

Western Arnhem Land bark paintings tend to focus on continuity of their designs. Art from this region is commonly represented by the “x-ray” style of painting. This style dates back over 3,000 years and depicts internal organs and skeletal features (Placard at Kluge Ruhe 2014). X-ray style images typically depict food animals such as kangaroos, lizards, fish, or anteaters, as shown in Figure 6. This piece, consisting of natural pigments on eucalyptus bark, is an example of *rarrk*, another important component of Western Arnhem Land paintings. *Rarrk* is a geometric cross-hatching design that reflects the presence and spiritual power of the Dreaming ancestors. When x-ray style is combined with *rarrk* the animal no longer simply represents food, but becomes an ancestral being. The art of this region is less steered by social organization than art from Eastern Arnhem Land.

*Eastern Arnhem Land*
Yolngu artists of Eastern Arnhem Land are known for landscape paintings, which differ drastically from the “naturalistic” style of some European landscape paintings. Landscape

depictions reflect Yolngu kin-based organizations and religious practices. Morphy (1999) describes this art as being like a checkerboard pattern of clan designs that reflect social divisions, such as moieties, and it associates people with ancestral beings and land. These paintings highlight features of Yolngu lives and express religious thinking that connect people to place (Placard at Kluge-Ruhe 2014).

Each clan owns certain designs that belong to its country (Morphy 1999). The designs consist of complex geometric patterns that are associated with ancestral beings that incarnate in the land. “Each area of land is associated with a particular design or set of designs and each design can be traced outward, marking the routes that ancestral beings took across the land. The
paintings are part of the sacred endowment of the clans: they are de facto signs of place and the right to produce them is closely guarded” (Morphy 1999:66). The designs of each clan vary slightly. For example fire might be represented by connecting diamonds in one clan, but by a chain of elongated diamonds for another clan (Morphy 1999).

**Central Arnhem Land**

The main exhibit at the Kluge-Ruhe during my research was displayed in its own room. The exhibit was entitled “The Wagilag Sisters Story,” which describes the origin of Yolngu law, designs, ceremonies and customs, particularly in the Central Arnhem Land region. Initially, the Wagilag Sisters story belonged to three clans of Central Arnhem Land, Wagilag, Liyagalawumirr, and Mandhalpuy. Around 1918 the men of Mandhalpuy taught the story and its ceremonies to a senior Rirratjingu man from Northeast Arnhem Land. The sharing of this ancestral narrative demonstrates the close relationships among Yolngu clans. It is still one of the most important ancestral narratives in Central and Eastern Arnhem Land (Caruana 1999).

The story of the Wagilag Sisters takes place during the ancestral creation time. It begins when the two Sisters (one pregnant) from the Wagilag clan leave their homeland to travel through Arnhem Land. While travelling, they sang songs and named animals and plants, which brought them into being. These actions transformed the country. When they were tired they decided to camp at Mirarrmina waterhole. The Sisters were unaware that the waterhole was the sacred home of Wititj, the giant Olive Python. While camping, the younger sister gave birth which angered Wititj. Wititj sucked up water from the waterhole, and spit it into the sky, creating a rain cloud. The Sisters tried to sing the rain away while they played the didgeridoo and hit the ground with digging sticks. Infuriated, Wititj emerged out of the waterhole and swallowed the Sisters, causing a massive flood. Wititj then vomited the Sisters and their children, which created
a dry wind that caused the flood waters to recede. The sting of itchy caterpillars brought the Sisters back to life momentarily, until *Witij* swallowed them again and spit them up again. The Sisters transformed into two rocks that can still be seen at Mirarrmina waterhole. In the dreams of their kinsmen, the Wagilag Sisters appeared and taught them the songs and dances that stop the rain. The kinsmen were instructed by the Sisters to take these ceremonies back to their homeland (Placard at the Kluge-Ruhe 2014).

The story contains a range of meanings for the Yolngu. It describes the creation of natural species of animals and plants, the coming of the first monsoon (which was likely to have occurred toward the end of the last Ice Age), and the establishment of ritual activity and laws of social behavior. For instance, *Witij* threw up the Sisters because they belonged to her own

Figure 7. Lipundja, *Wagilak Sisters*, 1960s
moiety, but he did not throw up the child because he belonged to the opposite moiety (Caruana 1999). “Australia is covered by an intricate web of Dreaming tracks taken by creator ancestors such as the Wagilak and the Djang’kawu, and they traversed the land, imbuing it with their spiritual powers which continue to invigorate and sustain ritual life” (Caruana 1999:125). There are multiple spellings of the word Wagilag, including the way Caruana spelled it, Wagilak.

There is an archetypal image of the story developed by Dawidi Djulwadak (1921-1970). Djulwadak inherited the role of ritual leader of the Liyagalawumirr clan in Central Arnhem Land. His painting, Wagilag Sisters illustrates many parts of the story, and became a template for other artists to follow. The bottom center shows when the Wagilag Sisters camped at Mirarrmina waterhole. The center shows Witiij coiled around the Sisters, representing when she swallowed them. On the left is the shape of an upside down triangle. This triangle impression represents ceremonial ground, or mollk, and was created by Witiij after she fell to the ground. The bottom right shows the kinsmen of the Wagilag Sisters learning ceremonies. Figure 7, entitled Wagilak Sisters was on display at the Kluge-Ruhe during my visit. Using the same template, it is a rendition of Djulwadak’s piece.

Ritual leader Mawalan Marika (1908-1967) was a very active defender of Aboriginal cultural practices and sought to create an atmosphere of mutual understanding between Yolngu and non-indigenous. He was a well-known advocate and negotiator and believed that the survival of indigenous people depended on their proper expression in public domains (Caruana 1999). In the 1940s he, his brother, and sons produced bark paintings to express their cosmology, history, and social practices. These paintings were some of the first Aboriginal bark art for sale. Mawalan’s son, brother and niece continued to create images that represented rituals that are associated with the Wagilag Sisters. In their paintings, they all used similar compositional
structures such as: a ceremony in progress; initiates located in the center of the painting, inside the ceremonial oval; ritual participants carrying spears; and freshwater streams flowing into the waterhole. The placement of the clan waterhole in the center of the paintings represents individual and collective identity among Yolngu (Caruana 1999). A work by Wandjuk Marika, who is the son of Mawalan Marika, was displayed while I was at the Kluge-Ruhe, and is shown in Figure 8. It shows clan members performing ceremonies that they learned from the Wagilag Sisters. It displays many of the signature features of Marika’s style such as a ceremony in progress, initiates in the center, and the presence of ritual participants carrying spears.

Figure 8. Wandjuk Marika, *Wagilag Ceremony*, 1962-64
Like *Wagilag Ceremony*, most other paintings about the Sisters portray particular episodes in the story, such as *Wititj (Olive Python) with Eggs* by Paddy Dhathangu in Figure 9. Because Olive pythons are commonly portrayed as female, with eggs, associated with fertility, this image of *Wititj* is a conventional depiction of her (Caruana 1999). Another important episode in the story was when the Wagilag Sisters were brought back to life by itchy caterpillars; and the exhibit at the Kluge-Ruhe displayed two different renditions of this event. The first was *Itchy Caterpillars* as shown in Figure 10. The image tells the story of when the Wagilag Sisters were regurgitated for the first time by *Wititj*. It shows four tracks leading to a central waterhole, which is where the itchy caterpillars stung the Sisters in order to bring them back to life.
Swallowing and regurgitation symbolizes the rite of passage from one ritual state to another (Caruana 1999). Figure 11 shows another rendition of the same episode is attributed to artists Paddy Dhathangu entitled *Dhapalany (Itchy Caterpillars)*. It also portrays the event when the stinging itchy caterpillars brought the Sisters back to life, and the four tracks that lead to a central waterhole. The series of the Wagilag Sisters paintings is designed to provide insight to Westerners about the complexities of Yolngu’s cultural, ritual, and artistic traditions. It is meant to show the West the endurance of their traditions by displaying the transmission of knowledge from generation to generation. It shows the importance of Yolngu’s connection to their country in the past, and that that connection is equally important in the present and in the future.

*Arnhem Land Summary*
Yolngu look to the inside and to the outside to understand the world. To find the origin of things, they look to the inside. This helps them to find the organizing patterns of life, and the permanence of relationship between ancestral beings and land. As they have for hundreds of years, they look to the outside through exchange, engagement and communication with others (Morphy 1999).

“By giving outsiders access to their art Yolngu hope to draw them some way towards the inside, to encourage them to develop an understanding of Yolngu values and to respect their continuing right to exist on their land and in their culture” (Morphy 1999:83).

Art throughout Arnhem Land shows a historical perspective and significance of Yolngu stories, land, and ceremonial grounds. It is through this historical perspective that Western viewers can develop an understanding of contemporary Yolngu culture. They believe that the locations of present day ceremonial grounds are the same grounds where the ancestors first

Figure 11. Attributed to Paddy Dhathangu
Dhapalany (Itchy Caterpillars), 1972
constructed them. Ceremonial grounds represent places that transfer ancestral power from one generation to the next. Ancestral power is essential for the well-being and fertility of people and land; therefore it is fundamental for the continuation of Yolngu existence (Morphy 1999).

**Central and Western Desert**

The other main region in mainland Australia that was represented during my research was the Central and Western Desert. This region was the last to be colonized and includes communities such as Balgo, Yuendumu, Warrabri, Warlpiri, Papunya, Pintupi, Luritja, Arrernte, and Anmatyerre and many others. The art is similar to Eastern Arnhem Land art in several ways including: using underlying templates, reflecting kinship organization, and recognizing rights to the land and to designs. Composition and symmetry are major components of visual organization in Central and Western Desert paintings and ceremonies are the key focus. Tension between symmetry and asymmetry is a central force in its aesthetics (Myers 1999). Despite these regional commonalities, art from Central and Western Desert is diverse. “Differences between the art styles associated with different desert communities reflect the dynamism and diversity of the indigenous artistic system and its potential to develop in different ways in different contexts” (Smith Boles 1999:160).

Contemporary art in this region is known for its acrylic on canvas paintings which echo the physical practices of marking the ground in sand drawings and paintings on the body. Originally, rock art, sand designs, and some body designs were intended to be temporary motifs. Since these media cannot travel to exhibits around the world, Aboriginal artists switched to more permanent and mobile media such as acrylics on canvas. That switch was the impetus for the famous and transforming *Papunya Tula* exhibition as discussed in Chapter Two. The introduction of stories in the public eye also caused a separation of public stories from their esoteric meanings. In
around 1972, artists of the Central and Western Desert started to use “dots” in their paintings in order to mask secret stories and rituals. Detailed depictions of human figures and naturalistic elements became less frequent, and ceremonial paraphernalia were either removed or disguised. Instead, narratives began to be expressed through symbols, concentric circles and dots. Artists also began to fill-in the background, as opposed to a traditional stark background, as a way to camouflage meaning, and to appeal to Western preferences. Newly in the public eye, there became an inevitable focus on aesthetic formal effects. All of these major transformations are reflection of colonial conquest (Myers 1999).

The Kutjungka of Balgo see walya, meaning earth, dirt, land, or ground, as alive and embodied with ancestral beings. The land is also saturated with symbols of the bodies, power, songs and fluids of ancestral relatives. Waste matter from the bodies of ancestral beings is thought to infuse the land with power. For example, the white ochre in the area west of Lake Mackay is thought to have been formed from the vomit of an ancestral dingo. Some locations are physically charged with the bodies and the power of ancestors, while other places are neutral and suitable for hunting. Still other locations have dangerous power because of negative ancestral actions that took place in the Dreamtime. Contemporary Kutjungka spend time sitting and lying on the land in order to form communion with it; at times they also refrain from wearing shoes in order to be open to sensory contact with the land when walking and ceremonial dancing. Lines formed by dancers’ feet on the ground can be made into designs on dancers’ bodies (Watson 1999).

**Sand drawings and the unifying nature of haptics**

Acrylic paintings can simultaneously echo sand art and body paintings. Typically the designs are done first on the ground or sand, then on the body, and finally on canvas. Apprentice artists
practice on the land prior to graduating to another form. Sand drawings are created by hollowing out lines in the sand with a finger or a stick, which creates an indentation and a raised edge to form a ridge.

The term haptic relates to tactile sensations or the sense of touch. Through haptic senses, Aboriginals unify with nature and the land. Many artists try to retain the haptic qualities of ground, sand, rock, and body art on their canvas reiterations. Since ground drawings are an active process of poking the surface layer of the ground, artists poke the canvas with their brush, fingers, or sticks. This action allows the artists to retell stories in the same fashion they did on the ground or on the body, and to create a three dimensionality that is similar to art that is created on the ground, sand, rock and body (Watson 1999). The action of drawing in the sand is often accompanied with singing. “Fortunately or unfortunately it is hard for European Australians and others born of the West to recognise canvases which have been sung over to imbue them with the power of the ancestors” (Watson 1999:170).

Secular sand drawings are referred to as walkala. These are created by either piercing the ground or by creating mounds of earth. For the Kutjungka, mounds of earth made by ants, plants, trees, rocks, creeks and hills can be either male or female depending on the specific structure of it and its involvement with ancestors. Walkala (secular sand drawings) are traditionally done by women in order to connect the land with the skin of their bodies while telling stories. Prior to making the sand designs, women press the drawing stick onto to their bodies in order to ritually connect their skin to the sand and the land. While drawing, they teach lessons to children about how to hunt and gather, how to cook bush food, and how to behave in social situations. To adults they tell stories about everyday lives, plans, and memories (Watson 1999).
Sand drawings that possess ancestral power are called *kuruwarri*. Like *walkala*, the ground is pierced and raised, but bodies are also often painted for a *kuruwarri* ceremony. These drawings communicate restricted information for each gender and are intended to be erased quickly after creation. The drawings tell stories of ancestors, and actively radiate their potency. As discussed, Arnhem Land artists express the power of their ancestors through *rarrk*, a crosshatching technique, while Balgo artists emphasize ancestral power by dotting and outlining (Watson 1999).

For Aboriginals the idea of touch includes the sound of tapping and beating with their hands, feet or sticks on the ground. It also includes sound vibrations from the ground that are created while dancing. The sound vibrations are thought to be the names and songs of ancestors. To Watson (1999), the motion of dancers’ feet during ceremonies seemed to invoke a blissful love for the ceremony, their ancestors, the Dreaming, and for the land. Aboriginal artists attempt to recreate these concepts by dabbing paint on canvas with sticks and fingers (Watson 1999).

Because the idea of touch covers a wide range of sensory input, it seems Aboriginal artists touch their artistic creations in more profound ways than most Western artists do. This concept is likely lost on Western viewers because they may not realize how the action of painting represents deep ancestral connections to ancestors and to land.

*The interconnection of art, land, body, and skin*

Human touch is such an integral part of Kutjungka society that Watson felt a void around her when she finished her fieldwork in Balgo, because she was no longer in constant physical contact with the women. Because skin is open to the elements, the Kutjungka and Warlpiri people believe it is able to receive sensory information from the environment. The surface of the land is
likened to human skin because they see the body as a geographical structure, and skin is the structure’s surface, and therefore a place where designs can be made (Watson 1999).

Kutjungk and Warlpiri people compare various structures on the land to the human body. For example the land is considered to be the mother of people living in and on it. It is the final destinations of all ancestral beings and relatives who died. Trees with curved foliage are called ngarpulu, which is also the word for breasts. The word for cave, pirnki is also the word for womb. To them wind is the breath of the Dreamtime and it nourishes the breath and spirit of people as it penetrates their bodies (Watson 1999).

The human body is a place of identity and emotion because relatives are represented by places within or on the body. Different gestures pointing to parts of the body represent different relatives. People can indicate their grandparents by moving their hands from the top of their head to their forehead. They can indicate their mothers by cupping their hands around real or imaginary breasts (Watson 1999).
Contemporary Aboriginal artists in Balgo attempt to portray their land through their art. To do this, they use grainy textures to capture the look of sand or stone. Conversely, the fluidity of painted lines can represent the softness of the surface of the land. The use of spacing can also evoke the three-dimensionality of sand drawings. A gentle or pale pigment can represent the soft and loving communion between humans and the land (Watson 1999).

Figure 12 is a painting by Pintupi artist Dini Campbell Tjampitjinpa. Now created with acrylic on canvas, the pattern of circles and lines represent ground designs that were made for ceremonies. The circles are connected by the lines and show the tracks of ancestral men who travelled to sacred sites throughout the Western Desert. The placard at the Kluge-Ruhe indicates that the artists did not reveal any further information about this work because much of the story is reserved for initiated men (Kluge-Ruhe placard 2014).

Since body art is related to telling stories, wearing body paint helps to relate to ancestral beings in the Dreaming, and allows ceremonial participants to embody their ancestors (Watson 1999). Colors on the body are brightened by applying a layer of fat or oil under the ochers. The
vibrant colors and glowing reflection of light on skin expresses the potency of the Dreaming ancestors. On canvas, Central and Western Desert artists use banded rows of dots or compounded round figures to symbolize shimmering skin (Watson 1999). As seen in Figure 13, women paint their chests with curved parallel lines for a women’s ceremony. A woman with lines running down her breasts to her nipples is usually a representation of lines leading to a watering hole (Watson 1999). Comparing this image with Figure 14 illustrates how body art is transposed onto canvas. Napanangka’s painting depicts a women’s ceremony at Kimayi, and the red and black U-shaped lines represent women carrying digging sticks and nulla nulla which are fighting sticks.

Aboriginal people also associate cicatrisation with sand drawing and telling stories. Cicatrisation is a permanent marking system on skin made by the scar that forms when a wound heals. Prior to healing, the wound is pulled apart and animal fat, charcoal, sand, and other
substances are put inside in order to raise the scar. This forms the same type of three-dimensional ridge that is created when sand is hollowed-out. Among other things, scars can indicate the ceremonial status of person, or can represent the death of loved ones. When a relative dies, men and women make “sorry cuts” on their heads (Watson 1999). For Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders, “sorry cuts” are often ceremonially inflicted as a sign of grief for the loss of a family member (Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet 2011).

Aboriginal artists vary in the degree to which they utilize haptics (Bardon 2011). Bardon indicates that the level of contact with Europeans can be detected in the art of Papunya artists. For example, the art of the least Europeanized Aboriginal people remains universally haptic, while artists with more exposure to European cultures use flat patterns with some perspective and some symmetrical order. And the most Europeanized Aboriginal artists are primarily visual painters, use realistic illustration, and use very few to no haptic qualities.

Tiwi Islands

The traveling exhibit, “WE ARE TIWI” was on display at the Kluge-Ruhe during the days of my research. The Tiwi islands are located just north of the Northern Territory as shown in Figure 15. Tiwi identify as a separate indigenous group from mainland Aboriginals, but they have many cultural and artistic similarities. Like mainland Aboriginals they express their culture, history and traditions through art. They also use ocher and natural pigments to honor and perpetuate traditions. Their use of geometric patterns, colors, and body paintings or jilamara for important ceremonies is comparable to mainland artwork. But the themes of Tiwi art differ from Yolngu and Central and Western Desert images, and they also paint on poles, paper, fabric and pottery. Tiwi paintings do not tell stories and are not figurative; instead, they relate to specific ceremonies.
Figure 15. *Australia Melville Island* (Edkins 2006) (Tiwi Islands)

Figure 16. Pedro Wonaemirri

*PWOJA-PUKUMANI BODY PAINT DESIGN, 2005*
The two main ceremonies that Tiwi art portrays are the Pukumani and Kulama. Pukumani is a funeral ceremony that is intended to guide the spirit of the dead from the living world into the spirit world. Prior to the Pukumani ceremony, relatives paint and carve ironwood poles, which are then placed around the burial site (Kluge-Ruhe placard). Figure 16 is a canvas painting by Pedro Wonaemirri and depicts the body paint designs used during the Pukumani ceremony, and is entitled PWOJA-PUKUMANI BODY PAINT DESIGN. Figure 17 is a pwoja, which is a comb made of ironwood that Tiwi use as a tool to create straight lines and dots. It is used on canvas, body, poles, linen, and other media. The word pwoja comes from the word yirrakpwoja, which means ceremonial body paint design (Harvey 2014).

The Kulama ceremony occurs at the end of the rainy season and is a celebration of life. During Kulama young men are initiated into adulthood. This ceremony involves three days and nights of ritual body painting, singing and dancing (Kluge-Ruhe placard 2014). Timothy Cook’s acrylic on linen painting called KULAMA CEREMONY as shown in Figure 18 illustrates
another typical Tiwi style. Instead of organized and uniform like Wonaemirri’s work, Cook’s painting is asymmetric and free flowing.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the ways Aboriginal people from Arnhem Land, Western and Central Deserts, and the Tiwi Islands relate, interact, and show reverence to the Earth. It also illustrates how these values manifests in their art. The sacred elements of Aboriginal paintings cannot be explained in terms of Western experience, and so are readily overlooked by Western viewers (Watson 1999).
CHAPTER IV

KLUGE-RUHE PATRONS

Demographics of Kluge-Ruhe Patrons

Michael Alt and Stephen Griggs stated that an understanding of how people respond to exhibits requires an understanding of the people, more than of the exhibit (Korn 1994). So it is essential to identify visitors of the Kluge-Ruhe in order to analyze how they interpreted the art. The subject population consisted of people age 18 and over who visited the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection between the dates of May 30th - June 8th, 2014. Upon entering the museum, I asked the visitors if they would like to participate in an academic research project about their thoughts on Australian Aboriginal people and art. I used qualitative research methods by interviewing participants and quantitative methods by providing surveys. Because I was the only interviewer, those who were unable to be interviewed filled out a survey. Participants had the choice of either completing an online survey on a portable tablet, or on paper. Prior to the interviews, I reiterated the purpose of the interview and had the participants sign and date a consent form which was approved by the Institutional Review Board at Kent State University. Each participant received a blank copy of the consent form. All interviews and surveys were conducted in the library of the Kluge-Ruhe and were voluntary and confidential.
The size of this small study is not representative of the United States population, but it can shed light on those who visited the Kluge-Ruhe during the days of research. In total, there were twenty three interviews completed by Americans, two interviews completed by non-Americans, and 30 surveys completed by Americans. Since this is a study about American perceptions, the non-American interviews were excluded. The demographics for this niche group comprise a very small percentage of the American population. Generally the group was well educated, affluent, Caucasian, and consisted of regular visitors to the Kluge-Ruhe. These factors likely affected the way in which patrons approach the artwork. The age of the patrons was asked only in the survey, and not in the interviews. The largest age group was “65 years of age or older” at 40% of those surveyed. The next largest age groups was “50-64” at 27%, and after that was “35-49” years of age at 13% and finally both age groups “22-34” and “18-21” were 10% each.

The remainder of the demographic information was asked in both the interviews and in the surveys. These data include, gender, religious affiliation, level of education, profession, countries

![Table 1. Levels of education](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelors</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school/current college</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
traveled and ethnicity. Only 25% of patrons were male, while 75% were female. There were only three religions reported among all 53 people. Christians were by far the largest religious group with 60%, followed by “Atheist/Agnostic/none” with 29%, and those who identified as “Spiritual” were 10%. In terms of level of education completed, Table 1 shows that the largest group was those who completed an undergraduate degree at 32%, followed closely by those who finished a master’s degree at 30%. There were 19% of people who either: finished high school, were current college students, or had an associate’s degree, and 19% received a PhD. These data show that 81% of patrons interviewed or surveyed had at least an undergraduate degree. When asked about their profession, the largest group of patrons, 31%, indicated that they were retired. The next largest group was educators at 19%, followed by those in the healthcare industry at 13%. The bottom 10% comprised twelve professions ranging from professional artist to government to sales and marketing. Of those who were retired, 25% indicated that their former professions were in education; those who were formerly in government and in healthcare tied for
second with 17% a piece. The bottom 10% had various professions that ranged from journalism to history.

By asking how many countries patrons had visited, I was trying to get an idea of their level of affluence and worldliness. Generally, those with ample resources or cultural curiosity would have traveled more. The number of countries to which patrons travelled was divided into five categories: “four or fewer,” “five to nine,” “10 to 14,” “15 to 20” and “over 30.” The most common range for the number of countries traveled was “5-9” at 26%, followed by “10-14” at 24%. Twenty two percent traveled to “four or fewer” countries, 9% traveled to “15-20,” and no one reported having traveled between 21-30 countries. The most significant statistic is that almost 17% of those interviewed and surveyed reported that they visited “over 30” countries.

When asked the open ended question, “With which ethnicity do you most identify?” I identified four categories. The most common response of 86% fell into the “European American” category, followed by the answer “none” at 6%, and finally there was a tie between “Asian American” and “Jewish,” both at 4%. I purposely did not ask for “national origin” or “race,” but asked specifically for “ethnicity.” I wanted to know, with which, if any, ethnic or cultural background they identify. Of those who answered “European American,” 26% responded with specific ethnicities such as German, Italian, Polish and Irish. I was surprised to find that of the “European Americans,” 74% simply indicated they were either “White,” “Caucasian,” “Anglo,” or “WASP.” With these responses I pried one step further and asked if the patron had any specific ethnic origins, but the usual reply was “no.”

As noted in Chapter 2, many patrons are not first time visitors to the Kluge-Ruhe. The survey indicated that 53% of visitors had been to the museum at least once before. The survey also showed that 73% of patrons answered “yes” when asked if they knew anything about
Aboriginal art prior to visiting the museum. In the interviews, when asked how much they knew about Australian aboriginal art and culture before visiting the Kluge-Ruhe that day, 52% indicated “a little,” 26% indicated “a moderate amount,” 13% indicated “none,” 9% indicated “a significant amount,” and no one indicated “expert.”

The “Entering Identity,” or the motivation for one’s visit is the most significant variable and most predictive of what people remember. Museum visitors arrive at the museum already equipped with their own agendas, interests, expectations, resources, and identities. Falk and Dierking recognized seven Entering Identities. By comparing these descriptions with my analysis of the interviews, I categorized each patron with one of the following identities (Falk and Dierking 2013).

1. Explorers. Explorers are curiosity driven with generic interest in content of museum. They expect that something that will grab their attention and fuel their curiosity. They tend to remember clear details of what they saw and learned.

2. Facilitators. Facilitators are socially motivated. Their visit is focused on enabling the learning and experience of others in their social group. They provide descriptions of what their children or significant other did but have only a vague memory of what they saw or did.

3. Hobbyists. Hobbyists feel a close tie between the museum contents and their professional or hobbyist passion. They desire to satisfy a specific content-related objective.

4. Experience seekers. Experience seekers view the museum as a must-see destination. Their satisfaction derives from “having been there done that,” which is an important goal for them.
5. **Rechargers.** Rechargers seek contemplative, spiritual, and restorative experiences and see the museum as a refuge from day-to-day work. They may also visit as a confirmation of their religious/spiritual beliefs.

6. **Respectful pilgrims.** Respectful pilgrims visit the museum out of a sense of duty or obligation to honor those represented.

7. **Affinity seekers.** Affinity seekers are people who are motivated to see an exhibit due its connection with their personhood or heritage (Falk and Dierking 2013).

An “Entering Identity” was assigned only for those that were interviewed. I did not feel there was enough information to assign a proper Entering Identity for those who only filled out a survey. The two most common types of visitor at the Kluge-Ruhe were “Explorers” with 48% and “Hobbyists” with 39%. I identified only one person for each of the following: “Experience seeker,” “Recharger,” and “Respectful pilgrim.” No one was identified as an “Affinity seeker” or as a “Facilitator.” I will address the significance of the “Entering Identity” later in this thesis.

**Aesthetic vs. Ethnographic**

In 1988 James Clifford developed a diagram to help Westerners visualize the art-culture taxonomy. Figure 19 shows how art is classified and the Western schema for regulating the value of art. “Most objects-old and new, rare and common, familiar and exotic-can be located in one of these zones or, ambiguously, in traffic, between two zones” (Clifford 1988:99). The diagram divides art from culture, and non-culture from non-art, on two continua between “authentic” and “inauthentic,” and “masterpiece” and “artifact.” This matrix shows the gulf between art that is deemed as artistic and art that is deemed as cultural. “Artistic” art is seen as original and singular, while “cultural” art is seen as traditional and collective. “Artistic” art can be a
masterpiece, but “cultural” art cannot; and “cultural” art can be an artifact, but “artistic” art cannot (Clifford 1988). These dichotomies cause restricted interpretations.

Since the 1950s and 1960s, the debate about how Aboriginal art should be represented and interpreted has circled within the basic patterns of Clifford’s diagram. The discussion revolves around whether Aboriginal art should be presented and interpreted as Fine Art, in aesthetic and visual terms, or as artifacts, in ethnographic and anthropological terms (McLean 2011). Both have been called into question, for different reasons. If one judges the art according to its aesthetics, one is accused of automatically imposing Western art values on work that has completely different merits. But if one judges the art by only its ethnographic value, he or she is judged for viewing it as unworthy to be compared to Modern Art and Fine Art, and for ignoring
the visual qualities of the work. For decades, this deliberation about the categorization of Aboriginal art has prevented its original intention from being realized, which is its political power and agency. Aboriginal art does not fit neatly into this diagram, which might hinder Western understanding and appreciation of it.

I began this study with an inquiry about whether visitors at the Kluge-Ruhe were primarily interested in learning about the cultures of the Australian Aboriginal people, or to appreciate the visual beauty of their art, or both of these equally. Twenty five percent of patrons said they were more interested in the aesthetic or visual aspects of the art, 12% said they are more interested in learning about the culture and the people and 63% indicated that both categories were equally important to them. Based on their responses, I asked what they specifically like about it. Although there was not an option about the art’s political objectives, I am doubtful that many patrons would have chosen it. This doubt is based on the responses and conspicuous exclusions pertaining to anything political for the remainder of the interviews.

A majority of the 25% who were interested in the aesthetic and visual aspects were also interested in many other types of art, or were artists themselves. They found ethnographic discourse about its ceremonial or spiritual functions to be unimportant. For instance, when asked what interests her about the art, one patron at the Kluge-Ruhe indicated “Nothing against the museum, but I don’t read most of the write ups. I just get it from the piece. And I have a couple of art buddies who feel the same way.” Some art critics consider the input of anthropologists to be irrelevant to the value of the objects (Myers 2013).

Euro-Australian reviews often reflect an attempt to find an aesthetic discourse in which to frame Aboriginal aspirations (Myers 1994). Sebastian Smee (2011), art critic from Sydney, Australia, supports judging the art with an aesthetic approach, such as by its color and design. He
says that because Aboriginal artists have adopted Western conventions, they should be judged by Western criteria. He explains that people should focus on what the art is doing, instead of what it has the potential to do. Likewise, Australian philosopher Elizabeth Burns Coleman points out that since the art is produced for the public, it must be evaluated by conventional aesthetic standards (McLean 2011). The group of 25% at the Kluge-Ruhe who were primarily interested in the aesthetic and visual aspects would probably agree with Smee, Coleman, and others state that if the art is shown as contemporary art, in a contemporary art gallery, then it should be evaluated according to contemporary art criteria (Smee 2011).

But the fact that Aboriginal artists have adopted some Western techniques and their art is sold on the international art market does not provide sufficient reason to judge it against Western standards. Focusing on the aesthetic importance of Aboriginal art should be considered ethnocentric because the aesthetic values that are used are modern European inventions. Many anthropologists doubt Aboriginal people even had a concept of the Modern aesthetic sense prior to the 1980s (McLean 2011). He goes onto explain that Aboriginal art has proven to be aesthetically interesting to critics who are already familiar with Modern Art. “Such antagonism to the ethnographic is a convenient ideological move in a world in which it became significant to claim control over these objects and in which art comprises an autonomous domain” (Myers 2013:161). Further, the idea that the art is simply decorative creates a sense of homogenization about Aboriginal people, leaving diversity of groups as an afterthought (Myers 2011a). There are significant ideological differences about aesthetic contemplation between native Australians and Westerners. To the West, exquisite aesthetics usually relates to level of talent, but to Aboriginals, exquisite aesthetics relates to how intensely a design portrays ancestral power. So, what about the talent of Aboriginal artists?
To convolute the topic further, Fred Myers addressed some thought-provoking points about the recognition of Aboriginal artistic talents. “Some anthropologists have insisted that the category “aesthetics,” assumes modernist notions of an object detached from context submitted to the senses of the observer for detached contemplation purely for its formal qualities” (Myers 1999:221). He says he used to agree with these anthropologists because the Pintupi he studied had very few words to discuss art aesthetically. But, he points out that some Aboriginal artists do have better artistic talents than others, either from innate abilities, or due to persistent study of the craft. The practice of each artist reveals his or her level of technique and skill (Myers 1999).

In order to aesthetically judge a piece of Aboriginal art, Myers (1999) said one would need to view and study the artist’s entire body of work through decades. The aesthetics of an artist’s portfolio should consider his or her range of paintings in terms of variety, inventiveness, and experimentation. Unlike Western artists, there are not detailed records for the sequences of production for indigenous artists. When placed in a series, it is easier for the viewer to see the paintings as a developing practice. When viewed as a developing craft, categorization of “art” or even of “aesthetics” becomes obsolete (Myers 1999).

Aboriginal people value paintings for their ability to convey the power of the ancestors, the Dreaming, and ceremonial messages. Lack of talent confines some artists to repeat the same stock of images, in the same manner for decades. More talented artists can convey these stories in a variety of moving and powerful ways, and, per Myers (1999), that multiplicity is potent. He says it is the recombination of the limited formal elements (such as rectilinear and circular iconographies) that determines a painter’s virtuosity. Only those acquainted with the artist’s work can appreciate these subtle modifications (Myers 1999).
Aboriginal art collections do not provide an opportunity to recognize changing iconographies and practices of artists. Paintings are sold and distributed without thought about the process through which the artist developed a painting. As a result, evaluation of these paintings becomes superficial. Myers (1999) adds that even though Pintupi valorize the “truth” of paintings in relation to the Dreaming, and not its aesthetic qualities, this does not mean that the paintings lack an aesthetic component.

Other Western Categorizations

The most common response when asked what patrons enjoyed about the visual aspects of the art was its color, natural pigments, and patterns. These comments will be addressed later in this thesis with respect to how these aspects of the art have changed due to Western influence. What I would like to focus on is the 2nd most common response about the visual aspects of the art. These responses included what patrons termed illusions, perspectives, dimensions, and its “abstract” nature. These words indicate the degree to which patrons compartmentalize Aboriginal art in Western terms by comparing it to Modern and Abstract Art. But such comparisons are misplaced because Modernism emphasizes notions of innovation, progress, and freedom; Modern Art critics favor art that conforms to Modern visual conventions.

Visual similarities lead to the fallacy of isomorphism

In “Limitations of the Comparative Method” Boas (1896) objected to 19th century evolutionist idea that the same cause always has the same effect, and vice versa. Ignoring societal histories, evolutionists drew conclusions about cultural characteristics by comparing characteristics found amongst different groups. They posited that similar cultural features must have developed in comparable ways. Boas argued that similar traits in different places could have arisen independently. He illustrated this by showing that the use of masks were brought
about by a number of causes, such as rituals, entertainment, representation of spirits, or to
deceive spirits. Therefore, what superficially appears to be linked could have different meanings
and functions.

![Figure 20. Conrad Tipungwuti KULAMA CEREMONY, 2012](image)

Similarly, the fallacy of isomorphism is affecting how Western viewers interpret
Australian Aboriginal art. The fallacy of isomorphism is the misconception that similar meanings
can be ascribed to images that happen to have similar visual configurations (Benjamin 2011). It

![Figure 21. Fgjkfllee (Bleumeziani 2010)](image)
is easy to see why patrons make visual comparisons and see parallels with Modern and Abstract Art. Both styles often use huge blocks of color and have patterns that are geometrical and systematic. Both styles typically lack an evident visual center, points of specific emphasis, and corners. “This visual similarity often leads to an assumption that the Aboriginal artists also work within the modernist practice of expression” (Coleman 2011:260). But as Boas anticipated, the meaning behind the styles of Aboriginal art and Abstract Art are clearly different. For instance, unlike Abstract Art, the large blocks of color in Aboriginal art often convey the enduring importance of the piece of land it represents (Nowra 2011). Figure 20 shows Tiwi artist Conrad Tipungwuti’s, KULAMA CEREMONY, while Figure 21 is an Abstract painting by Bleumeziani (2010) titled Fgjkfllee. Despite the visual similarities, the meanings of these paintings have little in common.

The fallacy of isomorphism has had a great impact on the Aboriginal art movement. The comparable styles often motivate Westerners to become interested in Aboriginal art. Because these styles are familiar to Western sensibility, Westerners are able to make simple comparisons between the two. One of the Kluge-Ruhe patrons said

It’s interesting, like I thought the whole dot thing was so fascinating, it reminds me of Seurat and it reminds me of Jackson Pollock and it’s just so, you think how people are so different, but there are aspects of the art that are just all the same.

The fallacy of isomorphism is similar to emic and etic observations, which is a broader concept that is often raised by cultural anthropologists. The emic approach focuses on the native perspective, and the etic method contemplates the viewpoint of the social scientists or outside observers. By comparing Aboriginal art with art styles with which they are already familiar, patrons at the Kluge-Ruhe are taking an etic approach.
It is possible for one piece of artwork to encompass several different meanings and elicit different interpretation, without one being more correct than another. Viewers made consistent comparison of Aboriginal art with Western styles. These comparisons lead to interpretations and critiques of the art as if they were Abstract and other Modern Art genres, which are often seen as decorative and ornamental. One patron commented how she enjoyed “seeing how one could take a piece and decorate a whole room around it, or a whole house around it. It offers that much. The abstractness appeals to me.”

Art historian Rex Butler contends that the ongoing Eurocentric nature of art critics cause interpretations of Aboriginal art to be compared to Abstract Art and other Western-art genres (2011). Probably the most informed patron I interviewed, a professor of art who has taught classes about Aboriginal art and works at a museum, stated that “Often times if there isn’t a center that focuses on it for research, the Australian Aboriginal art often times is minimized in collections or integrated in thought in terms of contemporary ideology and philosophy.”

Coleman (2011) notes that in 1988 New York Magazine writer Kay Larson wrote that “Modernism has allowed us to comprehend the Aboriginal point of view… Aboriginal art at its best is as powerful as any Abstract painting I can think of.” I ask, how exactly has modernism allowed the West to comprehend the Aboriginal viewpoint?

There are two antithetical Modern artistic styles that are most identified with Aboriginal acrylic painting, both of which are misleading (Baume 2011). Some people categorize the art as Abstract Expressionism, which is most identified with artists like Jackson Pollock. Westerners in this faction imagine an Aboriginal creative genius, sitting alone, creating art. The other group categorizes Aboriginal art as Minimalist, and imagines a group of Aboriginal painters, all sitting around one canvas. Once categorized in comfortable terms, Western viewers have difficulty,
resistance, and apathy about learning or seeking any political meanings behind the art (Baume 2011).

Another problem with the etic view and the fallacy of isomorphism is that it creates copycat accusations. Many critics claim that the Aboriginal artists are frauds, and that they would not have been able to do such sophisticated paintings without having seen books on modern paintings (Baume 2011). For example, Roberta Smith, a well-known art critic for the New York Times and a lecturer on contemporary art said that Aboriginal art lacks the power of Western Abstract Art (Myers 1994). This suggests that Aboriginal painters are trying to emulate Abstract artists. Papunya artist, Paddy Carroll Jungarrayi indicated

I grab out that idea. I can see ‘em. I must have a picture in here [pointing to his head]. And it comes out just like that. The idea. We don’t practice you know. We just work with the idea. In other words, it’s the idea rather than the touch which may confer authorship in Aboriginal art. People who initiate the choice of the Dreaming event to be depicted will always present themselves as the painter even if they have been assisted by other people and, occasionally, even if they have done none of the actual painting themselves. (McLean 2011:220)

Unfortunately, the Modern and Abstract association ignores the art’s intentions and leads to cultural misunderstanding and disregards Aboriginal rights (McLean 2011).

**Descriptions of Aboriginal People and Cultures**

In addition to asking interviewed patrons what they found interesting about Aboriginal art, I asked them to describe Aboriginal cultures and people, to tell me what was most satisfying about their visit to the museum, what they would like to learn more about pertaining to their visit today, and why or why not they think it is important to have a museum dedicated to Aboriginal art. I combined these answers in attempt to look at patrons’ overall impressions. Two themes were tied as the second most common responses. One category included answers having to do with Aboriginal connection with the land, nature and the environment, and the other included
answers involving their connection with the ceremonies, spirituality, and creation stories.

Examples of the former include comments such as:

- The art that they do represents almost a map of their land as well as their cultural stories. It’s just really interesting, what a different way they found to put it down in an art form.
- The Aboriginal culture is based on nature and spiritualism and their connection to……. the Earth. I think everything they do and think and exist is very connected to the Earth, the world we live in, the sky, the moon, whatever. And that’s a wonderful thing.
- Well obviously, very much in touch with their relationship to the Earth, or the universe.
- There’s tradition there, consistency in different beliefs, the connection to the Earth, following traditions that went before them.

Many words used to describe Aboriginal art are illusions brought on by the failures of Western languages and “spirituality” is a prime example (Butler 2011). Fred Myers believes that using the word “spiritual” when describing Aboriginal art is misplaced and colonialist. This is because in Modern and Abstract Art, the term “spirituality” is used to describe the artist’s self-expression, which is very different from Aboriginal “spirituality.” Western art critics and Kluge-Ruhe patrons use this term without realizing they are imposing Modern and Western categories. Myers asks, what gives Western reviewers permission to use the word “spirituality” when they are grossly uninformed about Aboriginal cosmology? He points out that many viewers give no thought to what “spiritual” means to societies who have no split between the mind and the body, the self and the other, and man and nature. Further, he asks, what right do Western viewers have to refer to their “Dreaming,” which is already a very poor translation? (Myers 2011a). The following are comments made by Kluge-Ruhe patrons:

- The history of the people, their legends about how they came to be there, and beliefs about the dreaming, it’s just all wonderful.
- They’re spiritual, spirituality is just like mine.
In contrast with Myers, I do not believe that viewers and critics should refrain from talking about or referring to Aboriginal “spirituality” or “Dreaming.” The West is forced to use these glosses, although imperfect, in order to talk about Aboriginal life. The point here is to underscore that viewers should realize how loose these translations are. The only reason these words are used is because the English language does not have the vocabulary to convey these Aboriginal philosophies properly. In fact, modern Western thought does not even have similar concepts.

Another common description was about Aboriginal similarities to Native Americans. Comments included:

- It’s a part of the world that we probably know very little about for the most part, most of us. And to see how this culture is very similar to our Native Americans.
- And to see how this culture is very similar to our Native Americans and makes you kinda wonder if somehow it was all connected at one time.

The recurrent comments about the importance of Aboriginal connection with the land and nature, ceremonies, creation stories, and Dreaming, indicate that patrons recognize some of the key Aboriginal values. This shows that Aboriginal “artists” are clearly conveying part of their message through their artwork. But patrons did not connect these values with the Aboriginal struggle for land rights and cultural preservation. Patrons surely know about the terrible history of land confiscation and cultural destruction of Native Americans, but mention of these issues for Aboriginal people in Australia was rarely made. This disconnection is due, in part, to the ways in which the art is portrayed by people with dubious understandings of Aboriginal objectives. For example, art historian Terry Smith wrote that Aboriginal art is “designed to satisfy the insatiable spiritual hunger of Western civilization” (Smith 2011a:220). He says it is “designed” for the West’s spiritual hunger, but his critical inaccuracy is that it is not “designed,” but “represented” for the West’s spiritual hunger. “Designed” would indicate that the Aboriginal people who
created the art had the specific intention of appealing to the Western appetite to marvel at the “noble savages” and their spirituality. There is no evidence to support this assessment. Instead, due to the commodity that Aboriginal art has become, it is “represented” by Western art dealers as “spiritual” for financial gains. The art is also “represented” as “primitive” and the next section explains the extent to which Kluge-Ruhe patrons viewed the art as such.

*Aboriginal art is viewed as “primitive”*

The most common reply when describing Aboriginal culture and people represented 25% of responses and referred to how the Aboriginal people are “ancient,” “preserved,” “primitive,” “traditional” and a “lost civilization.” This classification includes comments such as “not having been influenced by the West” and “their immunity to the world around them.” Some of the comments are as follows:

- Still a culture that hasn’t been too influenced by modern Western means, that they live on the Earth, that they’re very Earth oriented, intuitive to the spiritual world, which I really like.
- The main word is that they have a primitive culture.
- It seems like they exist outside of the world we presently live in and I’m assuming that’s by their choice.
- Aboriginal culture as a whole seems to me like an old culture that has been preserved for a long time, which is cool.
- Their lives are so different in terms of being able to go to the grocery store and purchase things, they are totally self-sustaining in a way that Americans modern life doesn’t even come close to.
- It seems through the art, similar themes to what I’ve learned about Native American settlement in the now United States with strong hunter gatherer system.
- I’d like to know how they live and what’s important to their way of life and what changes they might have made over the course of years, cause you have a feeling that they might not have made any changes.
- It’s wonderful how some of them are still able to remain and live as their ancestors did.

Using the term “primitive” to describe Aboriginal people or art is derogatory in that it suggests a lack of sophistication and complexity (Weber 1989). I will attempt to explain and dissect why these types of responses were so common by Kluge-Ruhe patrons.
Prior to the 1980s, there was not an existing consumer demand for Aboriginal art; audiences and markets were built through exhibitions made by Western curators who have disproportionate control over how this art is perceived. As mentioned earlier, many Western curators divide Modern and primitive art. If they view Modern or Fine Art as being strictly subject to aesthetic contemplation, then images that are created by inspirations from ancestral beings and sacred places do not apply, and are therefore “primitive” (Myers 2013).

Conceptualizing Aboriginal art as “ethnographic” perpetuates the idea that it is exotic and “primitive,” rather than the modern creation of a contemporary practice, made by living people (Mundine 1998).

The appeal of the “primitive” has a strong hold in the American psyche. Many writings are marketed to Western interests, but are assumed to explain, authenticate, and contextualize Aboriginal people (Myers 2011a). Objects that are seen as old are perceived to be endowed with a sense of depth and knowledge (Clifford 1988), and Coutts-Smith adds that Western consumer and economic imperatives favor the idea of a “frozen” product that resisted cultural change (Coutts-Smith 2011).

Contributing to the perception that Aboriginal art is “primitive” is that it is radically different from other marketable artistic styles such as Abstract, Modern, and Postmodern. (Myers 2013). This difference places their art into an undefined category, outside of Clifford’s matrix. With the absence of a definable classification, many Western critics default it as “primitive.” “This orthogonal relationship of being ‘outside’-or Other- is what lends support to tendencies to place them in the ‘Primitive’ (vs. Modern) category, especially in the U.S.” (Myers 2013:159).

Writers, art historians, and anyone else with the power to publish contribute to the misconceptions. For example, the book *Art Since 1900*, published in 2004 is considered by art
historians in the United States and Europe to be one of the most comprehensive critical histories of art in the twentieth century, but it made no reference at all to Australian Aboriginal art (McLean 2011). The authors were Americans, Hal Foster and Rosalind Krauss, and Europeans, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin Buchloh. Also the feedback in 1998 to the “Dreaming” exhibition in New York denied Aboriginal art a place in the contemporary art scene. Unfortunately, the career advancement of Westerners in the art world depends upon their ability to intrigue the public with the allure of the “primitive” (Myers 2011a). Consequently, the more Westerners speak for Aboriginal people, the more they steal the chance for Aboriginal people to present their works on their terms (Myers 2011a). The Kluge-Ruhe is a prime venue to alter these misconceptions and to reject the “primitive” stereotype. If these were the intentions, the statistics show it to be unsuccessful.

As addressed by anthropologists and historians, curators Hetti Perkins and Victoria Lynn say that using the term “traditional” when discussing Aboriginal art is problematic because it is a Western category that also implies an unchanging civilization. In reality, they say there is a complex relationship between a living past and a political present, which is not reducible to nostalgia. Using the word “traditional” to refer to the art suggests that it simply retells the past, when instead the art intersects the present, and renews the past (Perkins and Lynn 2011).

When explaining Aboriginal people and cultures, only 6% of patrons used words that show concern for Aboriginal social imbalance and marginalization. No one used the words: “land rights,” “advocacy,” “support,” “health,” “genocide,” or “bigotry.” I intentionally did not mention any of the above words because my goal was to find out how patrons described Aboriginal art and culture in their own words. I did not want to influence the direction of their answers, so with each question I allowed them to speak until they had nothing else to say. This
low percent could be due to the fact that the “Entering Identity” of 48% of patrons was “Explorers.” As noted, “Explorers” are curiosity driven with only a generic interest in content of the museum. But curiously, I identified 39% as “Hobbyists,” who have a close relation with the contents of the museum and were labeled as such due to their loyal patronage. Again, the Kluge-Ruhe is an essential location to convey the needs of Aboriginal people, but the statistics show that these needs are recognized by only 6% of patrons.

There were three patrons out of 53 (interviewed and surveyed) whose responses stood out because they seemed to understand the underlying intentions of the Aboriginal art movement. For the first two, their demographic profiles and professions have a lot to do with their acute awareness about this topic. The first was a woman from Eritrea, whose answers were not included in the data because she is not American. She realized that she might have a different viewpoint from Americans and said “I come from Africa, and so there were elements of art that I was able to observe over there and so I have a view of the art that may be more inclusive than that of most people, just from the outside.” She has a PhD and has been a foreign language educator for almost 30 years. With respect to Aboriginal people, she said

I also learned how the Aboriginal people have been subjected, like many other aboriginal people, have been subjected to laws that really work to their detriment. They were marginalized, they suffered and the abuses continued. And so it’s something worth preserving, their identity, their message to the modern man is worth preserving.

Although she compares Aboriginal people to “modern man” as if Aboriginal people are not, her comments are perceptive and compassionate. The professor of art mentioned above said, “I think they’ve been greatly oppressed and I often think about how they have been decimated the way Native Americans have historically.” And finally a man with an MBA who has travelled to over 30 countries said,
Living under the conditions they live under. Looking down upon from which they receive from the dominating invading culture. I think that we cannot allow the memory of people and the injustices done to people in the past, I think that we need to learn from that and grow and hopefully someday we will be a nice, happy society. “Happy” sounds like a real flippant term, but a society that gets along.

Comments about future learning

When patrons were asked what they would like to learn more about after visiting the museum, the most common response was “nothing,” and even a higher percent was left blank on the survey. Of those that did respond, the question was open-ended, and I categorized the responses. The most common answers were ones that involved learning how the art is created, such as desires to learn stylistic methods, and how the colors are produced. The following are example quotes:

- How they create the colors, what type of tools they use. I did see the comb. I would want to know how they paint these pictures.
- I love the color that the Aborigines use, how they come up with the colors, I think they’re made naturally from plants, I’d like to know the sources.

These answers focus on Aboriginal techniques, and do not acknowledge the political strife of Aboriginal people, or art’s potential for political agency.

The second most common responses were tied. One group showed an eagerness to learn more biographical information about the artists, and the other wanted to know more about regional diversity. I believe both of these signify, in an indirect way, that patrons sense struggle and unrest among Aboriginal communities. The following are quotes:

- More about them as people; how they live and what’s important to their way of life.
- The artists themselves, their background, what else they’ve done.
- Regional attitudes and regional environment, everyone is just a little different.
- To learn more about the different tribes and locations and what, if any, connections they have.
- To keep hearing and learning about the regional diversity of the people.

The next most common responses were also tied between wanting to see more Aboriginal
art, and aspirations to learn more about the significance of what was viewed on that day.

- I’d love to see more. It’s a pretty small exhibit. I’d like to keep going through more rooms.
- Deepen my understanding of translating the Dreaming into visual expression.
- I’ll probably go online and read a little bit more about this culture, of these people.
- I bought a book on Aboriginal art by Howard Morphy, mainly to see more of the artwork and delve deeper of the cultural significance of all the works.

Again, these replies were encouraging, because they indicate that patrons recognize that the art was produced by real people and that they would like to learn more about those people. More importantly, these replies show that patrons perceive that there might be more significance behind the creations of these works.

I’d like to highlight a few of the least common responses that are somewhat telling. Three percent of responses indicated a desire to purchase souvenirs. For example, a patron said:

“I’m just sorry they don’t have the little gallery here like they used to where you could buy a few things.” Although a low percent, these answers reveal the consumption-obsessed tendencies of Americans, which will be discussed later in this thesis. Only one of the responses indicated a desire to know more about Aboriginal views about the outside world, and only one wanted to know about Aboriginal history. These low numbers reaffirm the level of apathy patrons have about the driving forces of the Aboriginal art movement. Not one of the responses conveyed a curiosity about whether the wide distribution of Aboriginal art over the course of 30 years has helped their standard of living and social status.

Comments about why it is important to have a museum dedicated to Australian Aboriginal art

I asked an open-ended question about why patrons think it is important to have a museum dedicated to Australian Aboriginal art in the United States. When asking this question, I allowed plenty of time for the patrons to say everything that was on their mind. After they finished speaking, I asked again if there were any other reasons why it is important to have a museum
dedicated to Australian Aboriginal art. Upon analyzing the answers, I recognized six categories into which the answers fit.

Below they are labeled A-F:

A. Exposing Americans to world cultures.
B. Recognition of marginalized people.
C. Exposing Americans to Australian Aboriginal art.
D. Exposing Americans to world art.
E. Exposing Americans to Australian Aboriginal cultures
F. Outliers.

Table 3 illustrates responses about the importance of having a museum dedicated to Australian Aboriginal art in the United States. It shows that the most common category was A, at 52% which consisted of answers about exposing Americans to world cultures. Given that the overall demographic of Kluge-Ruhe patrons is well travelled and well educated, these comments are somewhat expected. As noted, 28% visited “5-9” countries, 17% visited “over 30” countries, 19% have PhD’s, and 81% have at least undergraduate degrees.

Examples of responses in category A include:
- I think it’s important to have museums dedicated to lots of different kinds of art and cultures, and I think the Aboriginal one is an important one. Because we need to know as much as we can about other cultures in order to understand them. Whether or not people think it’s important to understand other cultures, which I’m not sure Americans do, I think it is. I think the broader our knowledge is about that, the better we are as human beings. If we isolate ourselves and our country, that’s just crazy. What a narrow-minded view.
- It brings culture to the people who are maybe not able to go to that part of the world. So we need to understand that the world has all these different cultures, subcultures, cause that’s the beauty of the world. Thank God we’re not all the same.
- Every country should have some sort of museum about somebody else’s culture from another country because not everybody has the money to visit other countries.
Survey responses in this category A were very similar to one another and included responses such as:

- It's important to recognize and appreciate all cultures.
- The world is round! All people are chosen.
- We need to be aware of other cultural beliefs.
- Always important to celebrate cultures different than ours.

Table 3. The importance of having a museum dedicated to Australian Aboriginal art in the United States, categories A-F.

- It’s necessary to learn about other cultures and beliefs systems.
- We should broaden our view whenever possible.
There were 19% of responses that fit into category B. These answers stressed the importance of drawing attention to minorities and recognizing marginalized people. Some referred to marginalized people generally, some referred to Native Americans and some to African Americans, but very few referred specifically to Australian Aboriginal people. This indicates that at least 19% of patrons are aware that there are or could be social problems. But this percent is unsettling considering that the question about what patrons wanted to learn in the future lacked any replies at all about Aboriginal struggles as minorities. They did not show an interest in learning how Aboriginal people are treated, and whether the art movement is helping. Perhaps, due to lack of research, patrons do not realize the severity of discrimination against Aboriginal people. Or perhaps group B has the mentality that social injustice needs to be addressed, but are not interested in learning details, or knowing if the art movement is making a difference.

The bottom four responses, categories C, D, E and F were tied at 7% in frequency. Only 14% of all responses referred to the Aboriginal people; this included 7% with category C (exposing Americans to Aboriginal art) and 7% with category E (exposing Americans to Aboriginal cultures). Here are some responses from categories C and E:

- It’s a very interesting and ancient culture. And then from an artistic point of view, it’s something new for all of us.
- Because with the variety of cultures represented at all museums in the U.S. it would be a travesty to not represent Aboriginals.
- I think that often times groups like the Aboriginals tend to be foreign to most Americans, so having access to a gallery of Aboriginal Australian art would help the American public be more knowledgeable about their groups.

**Summary**

According to these data, using art as a catalyst for these changes has proven futile. Data show that 86% of all responses did not refer to Australia or its natives at all. As discussed, this is due to several factors including: the objectives of the Kluge-Ruhe; previous exposure to biased
information about Aboriginal people and art; the tendency for categorization based on Western
criteria; the visual similarities to Modern Art styles; and Western thirst for “primitivism” and
“ancient” ways of “spirituality.” These factors pull attention away from the messages about
Aboriginal mistreatment, land rights, and cultural preservation. There should be some
information with the art pertaining to the social strife of Aboriginal people, for it is the main
reason that that their art is shown and sold internationally. Unfortunately, even devout
enthusiasts of Aboriginal art might never realize the underlying statements within the works they
adore, or the hardships of the artists they admire.
CHAPTER V
ANALYSES: DATA CORRELATIONS AND OMISSIONS

This section examines demographic information with answers patrons provided. It looks at how comments relate to how patrons identify ethnically, their level of education, and their extent of international travel. This section also looks at how Entering Identity correlates with responses about why they think it is important to have a museum dedicated to Australian Aboriginal art in the United States.

Although Charlottesville, Virginia is close to the East Coast, patrons showed vague cultural identification with ethnic roots. This was illustrated when they were specifically asked about their ethnic heritage and 74% of “European Americans” simply indicated they were either “White,” “Caucasian,” “Anglo,” or “WASP.” I examined this group because they are the demographic majority of the patrons in this study. I wanted to know if there was a difference between how this group viewed Aboriginal art and how those who identify with a specific ethnicity, like Italian or Polish view the art. This is because anthropologist E.L. Cerroni-Long (2008) claims that even proud Americans deny that there is a distinctive “American” culture. She says that “ethnicity” is often mislabeled and misinterpreted as “race.” To Americans, ethnicity is what needs to be erased in order to be American, a process that typically takes three generations. She reported that when she interviewed Americans about their “ethnicity,” they automatically
assumed the study was about “racial” groups and majority-minority relations. She also reported that her interviewees looked uncomfortable and embarrassed about this topic (Cerroni-Long 2008). “On top of denying that an American culture exists, mainstream Americans also tend to deny their ethnic roots” (Cerroni-Long 2008:200). She says this denial has to do with the fact that American culture is defined by the absence of ethnicity, which has been promoted by the concept of the “melting pot,” and hundreds of years of intergroup marriage. As a result, many Americans identify themselves simply as White, WASP or Anglo. Cerroni-Long (2008) says these vague terms highlight their preoccupation with “race,” instead of with specific ethnic roots.

With regard to sympathizing with minority populations, I thought there would a positive correlation for people with fewer generations separating them from the land of their progenitors, and a negative correlation for those who identified as “White” or the like. The reasoning behind this hypothesis was that if patrons who identified as “White” can trace their family lineage on American soil for hundreds of years, they may feel more entitled to the land and have less empathy for minorities and colonized people. They might not have had any family members endure the challenges of being a minority and would therefore, be less receptive to the social messages of Aboriginal artwork. But, whether people identified as White, Anglo, Italian, Scandinavian, Korean, or Asian, I could find no patterns regarding why they thought it was important to have a museum of Australian Aboriginal art in the United States, or what they hoped to learn about Aboriginal art in the future. Theoretical consistencies correlated more with level of education and international travel, than with self-proclaimed ethnicity.

**Education Correlations**

Based on interview and survey responses, I found a correlation between level of education and the reasons patrons thought it is important to have a museum dedicated to
Australian Aboriginal art. It is important to keep in mind the overall education breakdown of the subject group. As stated, the largest group was those who completed an undergraduate degree, at 32%, followed by those who finished a master’s degree at 30%, and those who have a PhD at 19%. There were also 19% who had only a high school degree, are current college students, or have associate’s degree.

**Importance of Having an Aboriginal Art Museum in the United States**

Among all six categorized answers for the question about the importance of having an Aboriginal art museum in the United States, there were two that showed a correlation with level of education. One was with those who indicated that the importance is to recognize the struggle of marginalized people (category B); the other was the Outlier group (category F). Table 4 outlines the education levels of patrons in category B. There were 25% who had bachelor’s degrees, 38% who had master’s degrees, and 37% who had PhDs; and there were no other levels of education represented in this category. Table 5 shows the education levels for category F, the Outliers. This group was represented by 67% with only high school degrees and 33% with bachelor’s degrees. The Outlier category consisted of responses that were awkward and seemed to have been stated with undeveloped analytical thought. Perhaps these patrons have seldom
contemplated such issues, and are inexperienced in providing educated guesses. No one with a master’s or PhD gave answers that were considered Outliers.

Based on these statistics, education level appears to be a factor that affects one’s interpretation of the museum, and particularly recognizing its value as a voice for underrepresented people. The absence of anyone with a high school degree/current college

![Bar chart showing education levels for category F.]

Table 5. Education levels - category F.

students/associates degree in category B shows that this group overlooked how the art and the museum might be important in conveying the struggles of marginalized people. This could be because higher education encourages critical thinking about perceptions and mainstream assumptions. Additionally, people who choose to pursue a higher education may be more curious about causes of phenomena such as the Aboriginal art movement, and are equipped with skills to conduct meaningful research. The other four categories showed very little or no correlation with education. The education levels of those in category E, who indicated the importance is for Americans to know about Aboriginal cultures were broken down evenly between high school education, bachelors, and master’s degrees, all at 33%. While interviewing, I purposely used the word “cultures” when referring to the Aboriginal people, as opposed to the singular “culture.” I
took note of how many people, when replying back to me, used the word “cultures” or “culture.” I found that less than 10% of patrons used the plural version. Two of them have PhDs, and the other has a master’s degree. This reinforces the notion that higher education affects how people interpret the art. Not only does a higher education correlate with recognizing Aboriginal art as statements from marginalized people; it also correlates with recognizing them as diverse and varied. Finally, my data show that as education increases, the number of countries visited increases. The next section discusses how travelling impacts patrons’ views about why the museum is important.

**Travel Correlations**

The number of countries to which patrons travelled were divided into five categories: “four or fewer,” “five to nine,” “10 to 14,” “15 to 20,” and “over 30.” Table 6 illustrates a positive correlation between level of education and number of countries visited. Of those with a high school education, just over 44% visited “four or fewer” countries; just over 22% visited “five to nine” countries; and 11% visited “10-14,” “15-20,” and “over 30” countries (11% for each category). For those with a bachelor’s degree, 35% visited “four or fewer,” 29% visited “five to nine,” and 12% visited “10-14,” “15-20,” and “over 30” countries (12% for each category). For those with a master’s degrees, only 12% visited “four or fewer,” while 25% visited “five to nine,” 38% visited “10-14,” 6% visited “15-20,” and 19% visited “over 30” countries. Of those with a PhD, no one visited “four or fewer,” but just over 36% visited “five to nine” and “10-14” countries, 9% visited “15-20,” and 18% visited “over 30” countries. These data show that as education level increases, the category of four or fewer countries traveled decreases. For example starting from high school to bachelor’s to master’s to PhD, the proportion of people who traveled to “four or fewer” countries drops from 44% to 35% to 13%
to 0%, respectively. Also starting from high school, to bachelor’s to master’s to PhD, the proportion who visited “over 30” countries increases from 11% to 12% to 19% to 18%, respectively.

One of the most revealing correlations was between number of countries visited and what patrons indicated about the importance of the museum. My data show a positive correlation between greater number of countries visited and answering in category B, recognition of marginalized populations. Data also show a negative correlation between increased number of countries visited and providing answerers in category F, Outlier. Table 7 shows that among those whose answers were in category B, recognition of marginalized people, 29% traveled to “5-9” countries, 14% to “10-14” countries, 14% to “15-20” countries, and 43% to “over 30” countries.

Table 6. Correlations between level of education and number of countries visited.

In contrast, of those in the F category, 33% visited “5-9” countries and just over 66% visited “10-14,” and no one visited more than 14 countries.

In terms of travel, no correlation was found for categories A, C, D and E. The positive correlation between the number of countries visited and remarking on marginalized populations is particularly related to extensive travel. Empathy would be difficult to acquire by remaining in
a confined area during one’s lifetime. This is illustrated by the fact that 43% of people in category B (recognition of marginalized people) visited “over 30” countries. While travel can confirm people’s prejudices, it often encourages people to challenge ethnocentrism and bigotry, and to recognize systematic oppression and violence. I believe systemic violence is easier to identify outside of one’s own country. The transition one usually goes through while traveling helps to develop sensitivity to underrepresented and marginalized people. Travel helps to humanize foreign people and unfamiliar lifeways. Worldwide travel provides tangible awareness about social structures as well as the poverty and discrimination that plague the world.

**Entering Identity correlations**

Entering Identity is the most significant variable and most predictive of what people remember because visitors arrive at the museum equipped with their own agendas and expectations (Falk and Dierking 2013). This emphasizes why the correlation between one’s Entering Identity and why one thought it is important to have a museum dedicated to Aboriginal art is important. The most common identity, “Explorers,” made up 48% of everyone interviewed.
Of them, 50% responded within category A; 20% responded with category D; 20% with B, and 10% with E.

Thirty nine percent of patrons interviewed were identified as “Hobbyists,” which makes them the second most common type of person interviewed. They are characterized as having a close tie with the museum and its contents and seem to consider themselves as Aboriginal art enthusiasts. I find this group to be the most important to examine, because they are loyal visitors who consistently make an effort to be part of the Kluge-Ruhe events. They are the people who are most likely to communicate to others about the museum and its importance.

Table 8 compares responses of “Explorers,” “Hobbyists,” and everyone interviewed. The top two “Hobbyists” responses were categories A and C, which were tied at 33%. The bottom three responses were also tied at 11% between B, E and F. The diversity of the “Hobbyist”
responses seems to downplay the importance of Aboriginal advocacy and shows how even Aboriginal art and culture enthusiasts can overlook key points about Aboriginal lives and struggles.

Only 7% of the whole group, and none of the “Explorers” cited category C, exposure to Aboriginal art and 7% of the whole group and 10% of “Explorers” indicated category E, exposure to Aboriginal cultures. However, “Hobbyists” cited these categories at 33% and 11% respectively. Therefore, 44% of the “Hobbyists” referred specifically to Australia compared to only 14% of the whole group, and 10% of “Explorers.” This shows that the “Hobbyists” are probably entering the museum more focused on Australian Aboriginal cultures and art, than “Explorers” and the patron population as a whole. Also, only 11% of “Hobbyists” mentioned minority rights after walking through the museum, as opposed to 20% of “Explorers,” and 19% of the group as a whole. This suggests that upon entering the museum “Hobbyists” arrive anticipating what they will learn, which were matters other than Aboriginal marginalization, land rights and related issues. This could be because they are caught in a routine of visiting the museum with preconceived intentions and expectations. Compared to Explorers,” “Hobbyists” might be less receptive to learning something theoretically new to them.

Because “Hobbyists” frequent the museum several times per year with fervor, they could potentially be strong advocates. This group of well-educated, affluent Americans could communicate to others about the treatment and losses of Aboriginal people, and how the art plays a role in conveying these losses. According to my data, when “Hobbyists” talk to their social and professional networks about the importance of the Kluge-Ruhe, 89% will not mention the treatment of Aboriginal people and the art’s political meanings. They will not mention the conditions under which Aboriginal people live, their position under a dominating force, and the
injustices they have endured. With these omissions, they are conveying to their networks that Aboriginal subjugation does not matter, or that their circumstances are satisfactory.

Ideally, the “Hobbyist” group would have more characteristics of the “Respectful Pilgrim” who Falk and Diekring defined as people who visit the museum with a sense of duty or obligation to honor those represented. If this group of regulars were unified, they could utilize their influence, resources, and determination, and collectively have significant power. I identified only one person as a “Respectful Pilgrim.” He was one of the three people mentioned in the last section as being acutely aware of Aboriginal politics.

One group who has not been mentioned yet is the No Answer group. This group took the survey and answered only a few key questions, but did not answer why it is important to have a museum dedicated to Aboriginal art in the United States. If the same concept is applied here as it was to the Outlier group (those with limited education are less able to provide an opinion), one would expect the No Answer group to have lower levels of education. But the No Answer group consisted of patrons who have no less than a bachelor’s degree. In fact, 50% have a bachelor’s degree, 40% have a master’s and 10% have a PhD.

Perhaps their reluctance to answer the question had more to do with limited travel than to lack of education. The most common categories for number of countries traveled for the No Answer group were the two lowest; 30% traveled to “four or fewer” countries and 50% traveled to “five to nine” countries. These percentages are high compared to the group as a whole, with only 23% who traveled to “four or fewer” countries and 26% to “five to nine” countries. Ten percent of the No Answer group traveled to “10-14” countries as opposed to 25% of the group as a whole. The No Answer group and the whole group were about tied at 10% and 9% respectively with the percent who traveled to “15-20” countries. Most telling is that the No Answer group did
not contain a single patron who had traveled to over 30 countries, compared to 17% for the group as a whole.

Considering the positive correlation between level of education and number of countries visited, the No Answer group is notably less traveled than the whole group. Of the people with bachelor’s degrees from the No Answer group, 60% traveled to four or fewer countries, as compared to 35% of bachelor’s degrees from the whole group. There was no one with a bachelor’s degree from the No Answer group who visited “10-14,” “15-20,” or “over thirty” countries, as opposed to those with bachelor’s degrees from whole group, who had 12% for each of these categories. For those who have a master’s degree from the No Answer group, only 25% traveled to 10-14 countries, but 38% traveled to this many countries from the whole group. There was no one with a master’s degree in the No Answer group who traveled to 15-20 or more than 30, while those in the whole group with the same level of education had 6% and 19%, respectively. These trends show that the No Answer group generally traveled less than the mean for all Kluge-Ruhe patrons that were interviewed or surveyed.

**Omissions from patrons’ comments**

Based on lengthy discussion with patrons, it appears that they view and respect Aborigines as people and as artists. But omissions in their answers were indicative of their limited understandings about the inward significance of the art, and about Aboriginal political struggles. No one mentioned how the art reflects corporate identity, the significance of *rarrk*, or the pervading presence of haptic communication. Even more crucial, the forces of Western influences such as diffusion and syncretism were rarely mentioned. Diffusion is the transference of cultural traits from one society to another, and syncretism is the blending of traits from two or more different societies or cultures to form a new trait. Both occur constantly, but become
intensified as a result of colonialism, migration, trade, or war. Finally, there were no comments about the impact commercialization has had on the Aboriginal art and people. In combination with what patrons did say, these omissions suggest that many still approach this art from a colonialist standpoint, and do not recognize the impact of systematic oppression.

Corporate identity through shared stylistic elements

Aboriginal art almost always represents various forms of corporate identity through shared stylistic elements, and these types of designs were prevalent in the art at the Kluge-Ruhe. Forms of corporate identity include family, tradition, region, and language. This means that if an artist is a member of a family that uses a certain style, like tight squiggly lines, that artist too will use tight squiggly lines to show he or she is part of that family. In Chapter 3, I used the example of artists from Eastern Arnhem Land representing their clans with shared stylistic elements such as the depiction of connecting diamonds for one clan, and a chain of elongated diamonds for another (Morphy 1999).

These forms of identity are conveyed in varying degrees. The meaning of a single piece of artwork usually derives from a variety of these components, so one stylistic aspect may reflect family while another style reflects region. Only skilled artists will express their own self-identification by incorporating a unique quality, but corporate identity styles always take precedence over individual ones.

Art gives Aboriginal groups the opportunity to educate their youth about familial, clan, and moiety traditions and ceremonies. They paint about life and stories that were told by their family, usually their patrilineal (or patrifilial) groups. Therefore, artists must not only be artistically talented; they must also be well educated about the traditions in order to properly
illustrate and represent their family, clan, or moiety. This requires knowing the language, myths, stories, ceremonies, and practices of their group, past and present.

In addition to family, clan, and moiety, there are regionally distinct styles that represent geographic identity, which are typically used to declare territories (Taylor and Veth 2008). Gibson states that natives in Wilcannia create art with a specific style of lines that express a distinct regional identity (2008). However, to avoid criticism of infringing on other groups’ rights, some artists refrain from incorporating references to location (Taylor 2008). Some artistic designs act to bind people across language groups (Gibson 2008), but I was unable to find information as to how this contends with the dozens of dialects within each language family.

A strong Western value is individuality. Westerners see themselves as individuals rather than as part of social groups. The focus on individualism not only makes history less relevant, but it hides the ways in which wealth has been distributed over generations to benefit Whites (DiAngelo 2011). This focus could contribute to why Kluge-Ruhe patrons are not attuned to the messages of corporate identity. If Kluge-Ruhe patrons recognized that Aboriginal artists are connecting with one another and to an area of the land through subtle designs, they might develop a better understanding of their group solidarity.

**Diffusion and Syncretism**

Kluge Ruhe patrons made no references to how the West has influenced the Aboriginal people, or any of the implications that follow. To the contrary, the most common comment when describing Aboriginal cultures and people was that they are circumscribed entities, “preserved,” and “immune to world around them.” A circumscribed view of societies drives the tendency to essentialize groups and promotes the idea that they are timeless and unchanging (Ulin 2007). Even when professional critics compare one Aboriginal artist to other Aboriginal artists, they
often refer to them as a unified group (Butler 2011). Unintentionally, these ideas produce the notion of a single "other" and as having a clear set of customs, beliefs and cultural practices. The “other” is then compared and contrasted to the "modern" and dynamic West (Ulin 2007:815).

The history of anthropology may have had a role in why Westerners view Aboriginal cultures as circumscribed. There is a tradition in anthropology of conducting field research in what were imagined to be well-defined, bounded areas. Even conducting research in the confines of a defined field site in contemporary anthropology could be misunderstood as the study of a circumscribed indigenous culture (Ulin 2007). But political, economic and social processes that operate regionally and globally make groups worldwide porous. As a result, the identities of people are constantly made and remade across boundaries. This is why it is nonsensical to assess any group of people as if it were a circumscribed unit (Ulin 2007).

Diffusion and syncretism can occur in many aspects of culture including in language, technology, religion, social organization, political leadership, and in the arts. Native people often create new music styles by merging their own with Western styles. The arrival of Europeans in Australia brought new ways of understanding the world. Aboriginal artists merged their techniques and styles with Western styles to create new ones. Toa sculptures of Lake Eyre illustrate this merge because they are highly significant in Aboriginal cultural history, and also for Lutheran mission history in colonial South Australia.

Due to diffusion and syncretism Aboriginal and White Australian cultures are intertwined and cannot be separated. The Aboriginal world is complexly related to the Australian state, for example through welfare and other social services. Adaptation and endurance have always been features at the heart of Aboriginal cultures. Since colonization, they have been influenced by the global world through Western films, video, television, music, clothes, religions, and more. “Such
intermingling of culturally heterogeneous form is, of course, one of the principal problems for contemporary cultural theory” (Myers 2011a:298). If Kluge-Ruhe patrons could grasp the impact of the pervasive Western influence, they might be more attuned to Aboriginal social problems.

*The tradition of art-making*

Keesing (1989) contends that traditions are often invented as counter movements to the hegemonic force of their colonizers. When colonizers influence and control the natives, they often convince them that their dominance is the natural political structure. Because of this, natives absorb Western thought, which is then reflected in their cultures and identities. These reflections are ubiquitous and varied, and are revealed through many cultural channels, including traditions such as creating art. Therefore the contemporary tradition of Aboriginal art-making is partly a product of political and economic forces of industrial capitalism and globalization. This notion was negligibly acknowledged among Kluge-Ruhe patrons.

Various manifestations develop when traditions become a representation of social and political contexts. In the journal *Oceania*, Klus Neumann (1992) showed that despite geographical proximity within Papua New Guinea, Tami and Tolai natives have experienced very different cultural trajectories. He attributed these differences to each group having had its own colonial experience. The Tami, who were formerly central to a local trading system, dispersed as a result of colonization, and they are now marginalized. In contrast, because the Tolai’s struggle over their land created anti-colonialist solidarity, they currently thrive as a large and influential group. These differing colonial experiences created different senses of culture, tradition, and identity. Likewise, Linnekin (1992:258) speculated that in Hawai‘i, the educated elite natives valorize their pre-colonized society as a utopian, egalitarian commune, while working class and poorer natives posit that it was riddled with tyranny.
Similarly, colonialism has evoked various philosophical trajectories for Aboriginal people with regard to how they identify themselves. These viewpoints include the desire to: recreate and revitalize the precolonial past, delineate “non-Aboriginals” from “Aboriginals,” combat the Western stereotype of them, and, conversely, accept Western labels (Gibson 2008). Most commonly, artists embrace the past. Keesing (1989) says that natives revere what has survived colonization in part because of anger about oppression they endured over generations. He states, “In Australia, idealized representations of the pre-European past are used to proclaim Aboriginal identity …” (Keesing 1989:22). On the contrary, Lorraine Gibson provides an example of an artist accepting Western characterizations by noting how Murray Butcher, a native Barkindji artist from Wilcannia in western New South Wales creates art. Among other things, he reports that he draws upon his interactions with museum collections and with written accounts of his “culture” in research publications (Gibson 2008).

Per Keesing (1989:34) some Pacific natives create fetishized representations about themselves to affirm what the West has taught them about their cultural heritage.

The imagined ancestors with whom the Pacific is being repopulated–Wise Ecologists, Mystical Sages, living in harmony with one another, cosmic forces, and the environment–are in many ways creations of Western imagination.

Scholars such as Sutton and Anderson (2011) believe that the control of Aboriginal heritage and its interpretation should lie exclusively with Aboriginal people. In the 1990s, the general reaction of Western art critics and patrons to Aboriginal art was questioning its “authenticity.” With diffusion and syncretism, societies are constantly morphing, so doubting art’s “authenticity” is pointless. This tendency was exemplified by the reaction to “Aratjara: Art of the First Australians” in Dusseldorf, Germany in 1993-1994. German patrons observed Aboriginal artist Djon Mundine in his Western clothes, and heard him speaking English and
questioned how he could actually be Aboriginal. People in Germany insisted that the art could not be authentic because it was made with acrylic paint on canvas, two technologies that are not genuinely Aboriginal (Mundine 1998).

   The German observation that Western technologies have been intertwined with Aboriginal techniques was accurate, but does not diminish its authenticity. Aboriginal art and people are as much subject to change and transformation as Western art and people, so the contemporary ways in which Aboriginal people reproduce their cultures are not inferior to ways of the past. As Keesing noted (1989) the symbolic representation could be completely new, but be just as important with regard to the group’s identity, principles, and beliefs. The current representation of cultures and tradition has been shaped by colonial domination, so it has meaning to them in the current situation (Keesing 1989). Keesing stated that

   The ancestral ways of life being evoked rhetorically may bear little relation to those documented historically, recorded ethnographically, and reconstructed archaeologically—yet their symbolic power and political force are undeniable. (Keesing 1989:19)

Regardless of how large or small they are or for what reason the differences exist, current traditions are authentic. Contemporary Aboriginal art is a political message that is as authentic as cave paintings produced 20,000 years ago.

*Haptic responses*

Haptic characteristics are an integral part of Aboriginal art, and are not generally found in Western art. This is why haptic responses of Western viewers are stifled by their reliance on visual understanding. Some Aboriginal designs are read by touch, and do not involve visual perceptions at all, which allows the designs to remain embedded in the senses (Bardon 2011). Consequently, from the same piece of art, a Western critic might see a formal and decorative
piece, while the Aboriginal mind sees richly layered instrumental iconography (McClean 2011). Also, unlike Western artists, Aboriginal artists will often touch their art when explaining it. The connection to relatives that Aborigina ls feel through haptics illustrates the triviality of Western aesthetic contemplations (Watson 1999).

If Kluge-Ruhe patrons recognized the concepts and meanings of haptics, they might feel a heightened sense of compassion for the art and its creators. They could start to experience the paintings as they were intended to be experienced. They could reflect on the qualities of touch and the qualities of emotion that are embedded in the paintings.

How commercialization changed the art and people

Aboriginal activists and some anthropologists have been concerned with how commercialization has affected the integrity of Aboriginal art. Prior to Western interest, creating art was an activity for pleasure and to recall and retell events and lore. The artworks are not simply art, disconnected from the rest of life. They exist because the people who created them live in a special relationship with their environment, and their art comes directly out of that relationship (Dodson 2011). The transition to making art for an audience inherently changed it. Prior to Western contact, Aboriginal people did not define their paintings as “art” in the European sense, and they certainly did not see their creations as objects to be bought and sold (Morphy 2011a). This is why they were so surprised by the West’s interest in their art, and became even more shocked to learn they wanted to “purchase” it. Aboriginal people do not purchase these paintings. This is because they have the images in their heads, on their sacred objects and at their sacred sites (Kimber 2011). It was the Western entrepreneurs and art dealers who originally tested the marketability of these works. They were interested to know the sales potential and value that would be placed on Aboriginal art in the context of Western art and
aesthetics. From the beginning, the market value had little to do with the significance within Aboriginal cultural contexts. While Westerners discussed the values of objects as art, the Aboriginals were left out of the conversations (Morphy 2011a). Perkins and Lynn (2011) argue that this appropriation, the action of taking something for one's own use, between the dominant Whites and oppressed Aboriginal groups, is a form of symbolic colonization.

Like “primitivization” art collectors, distributors and consumers Orientalize contemporary Australian Aboriginal art. Orientalizing is a false cultural assumption, held mainly by Westerners that their own society is normal and “others,” like Aboriginal societies, are peculiar and abnormal. The images are portrayed as “exotic” expressions of “primitive” peoples. Also like primitivization, Orientalization can cause Aboriginal art to seem more profound than contemporary art from industrialized regions, therefore rendering it more valuable. Many Aboriginal artists realize that these Western influences and the Postmodernization of the art have changed their creations into “tourist souvenirs” (Morphy 2011a).Persistently, Kluge-Ruhe patrons overlooked how primitivization, Orientalization, and the commercial sale of Aboriginal art have changed the art itself.

Additionally, many Aboriginal artists tailor their work to meet Western expectations and preferences by removing or modifying certain artistic styles. The backgrounds began to be painted instead of remaining stark (Kimber 2011). In many cases they also changed from natural pigments, such as from ocher, to more reliable and durable synthetic paints that are available through Western art schools and centers. Some artists use bark as a medium, which is inspired from designs on rock, and merge it with Western art media like watercolors and acrylic. “Balgo artists have found unique ways to combine the two systems of representation by experimenting with the possibilities of combining Aboriginal and modern systems of colour” (Watson
They may now also use Western primary colors, red, black, and yellow, when traditionally-used ochers created only pale colors. In fact now the red-black-yellow-white spectrum is supremely important in Kutjungka art (Watson 2011).

Many Aboriginal artists perceive the commercial artworld as desiring a “pretty picture” or an “easy story.” They say that the images tell true enough explanations but do not reveal “deep law” stories (McLean 2011). Since commercialization detailed depictions of human figures, sacred and “dangerous” aspects of the art were either modified, or removed. Patterns of straight lines, arc and cross-hatching often changed to dots. This is because straight lines, arcs and cross hatching reveal sacred elements, while dots are only mildly important (Kimber 2011).

As mentioned earlier, the most common feature that Kluge-Ruhe patrons enjoyed about the aesthetics of Aboriginal art was its color, natural pigments and patterns. Based on the interviews, few of them recognize the major influence the West has had on these pigments, patterns, and presentations.

The commercialization of Aboriginal art has changed both Aboriginal people and the communities in which they live. The following is a brief overview of some of these changes, which are essential to understand in order to make informed interpretations of Aboriginal art. These changes and influences from the West were rarely mentioned by Kluge-Ruhe patrons. If patrons knew the impact these changes had and are still having on Aboriginal communities, they might be more attuned to the social messages of the art.

It is given that the market has changed Aboriginal art and people, but there is wide debate about the degree and whether these changes have been beneficial or detrimental. Some hold that it has revived the Aboriginal people, while others believe they have been degraded by greedy
Westerners (McLean 2011). I will first discuss general changes that have happened, and then I will address contrasting opinions.

General changes

Myers points out several changes and that occurred in Papunya and Yayayi since the 1970s and the implementation of commercial imperatives. There has been a shift from the importance of the group, to importance of the individual. The making of symbolic forms in ceremonies prior to commercialization involved a person as part of a larger system. Ceremonies necessitated cooperation and consultation with those who have subordinate or equivalent rights to the Dreaming story. There was a collective approach to sandpaintings and to body decorations. These designs were administered by many different people. Additionally, he notes that ritually relevant songs were sung by the group while painting. The works were guarded by being vigilantly protected from the elements and stored in secret places in order to be hidden from women and uninitiated men (Myers 2011b). “Women and children were not allowed near men’s paintings or allowed to see the completed paintings” (Myers 2011b:283).

As commercialization took over, the production of the art became organized around individual artists. There is now much less, if any recognition given to the shared rights to the Dreaming (Myers 2011b). “By mid-1973, painters were individually being given specific canvas boards to paint, and individual authorship was recognized in the practice of exchange” (Myers 2011b:282). These artists began to sing by themselves instead of in a group and the art became less guarded and preserved. Although paintings are now created where everyone can watch, they are still considered to be images of sacred stories, which remain concealed from the uninitiated. A painter may now produce as many as thirty to fifty paintings per year, which is far more than
customary in ritual contexts. Some artist have even formed their own individual styles and followed fads (Myers 2011b).

**Negative social changes**

A majority of scholars believe that commercialization has had a negative effect on the treatment of Aboriginal artists, and the work that they produce. They note that most of the writing about Aboriginal art is geared to a White audience and is Eurocentric and market-driven. The placement of Aboriginal art in public places was one of the actions that supposedly represented changes in Aboriginal social standing. For example in 1988 a mosaic by Aboriginal artist Michael Nelson Tjakamarra was installed in the courtyard of Canberra Parliament House. The Parliament House Authority commissioned Tjakamarra to paint the forecourt mosaic for the bicentennial opening and then have a very public meeting between him and Queen Elizabeth. Art historian Sylvia Kleinert (2011) noted that this event was intended to show the government’s inclusions and acceptance of Aboriginal people. It was thought to be one of the most significant and visible symbolic presentations of how the government had improved the political position of Aboriginal people. But this mosaic was still situated within a bureaucratic institution of powerful White rulers. Kleinert believes that this particular work was selected because it follows “Western traditions by relaying a symbolic narrative about a meeting of animals” (2011:291). Even worse, local Aboriginal artists were not invited to submit work for the new Parliament House because of the fear that an invitation to them would admit their ownership of local land. The deliberate use of this mosaic from another area is symbolic of Aboriginal dispossession. Kleinert analogized this incident to the entire Aboriginal art movement. While claiming to recognize the importance of Aboriginal cultures and political progress, the movement has been evading the real issues. Supporting Aboriginal art for Whites in Australia is to risk nothing. It can only benefit them by
being associated with the appearance of progress and the illusion of cultural autonomy (Kleinert 2011).

Anne-Marie Willis and Tony Fry believe the commercialization of Aboriginal art created a type of ethnocide. When White-trained Aboriginal advisors induct new Aboriginal artists into the mandates of the Western art market, Aboriginal people are essentially incorporated into commodity production. Their art becomes a product of the Western art market.

There are only objects produced by a range of fragmented cultures with varying connections to tradition and economic necessity, posed against the homogenized reading of these objects according to the meaning systems of the culture of dominance. (Willis and Fry 2011:289)

Willis and Fry (2011) fear that the Aboriginal art phenomenon could have further damaged social relations for an already marginalized population.

Nicolas Rothwell notes that as sales increased, exploitation of the artists escalated and subsequently destroyed the industry. The working conditions for the artists are often dirty and unpleasant, while White art dealers display elegant and sophisticated shopfronts (Rothwell 2011). When selling to private dealers the artists are often paid a very small sum, in cash. With the cash they typically purchase alcohol, prostitutes, Viagra, pornographic DVDs and Valium. Detrimentally, when selling to private dealers, artists know they will not make large amounts of money so they do not do their best work. By selling inadequate work, they are undermining their own brand in the marketplace for short term gains. Consequently, they are destroying the Aboriginal art industry and putting their own cultural integrity at risk (Rothwell 2011).

Many Aboriginal artists advocate that critics think outside the label “Aboriginal art,” pointing out that it is a term that was invented by Aborigines and non-Aborigines alike. They claim the term is reductive and limiting and fixes Aboriginal societies in a position of rigid, inflexible stagnation (McLean 2011). In essence, they view contemporary art discourse as
rendering inadequate parameters, such as the ones used in Clifford’s diagram (see Figure 19). Many Aboriginal people feel that Aboriginal “art” is a Western invention (Butler 2011). One of the most outspoken about this notion is artist Richard Bell from the Kamilaroi tribe in Queensland. He is known for winning first prize for the 2003 Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award for his painting *Scientia e metaphysica (Bell’s Theorem)* which says “Aboriginal art It’s a White thing” (Bell 2011). Bell asserts that Aboriginal art has become a commodity with a great marketing strategy and White patronage. Without these things, there would be no Aboriginal art industry. Key players and controllers of the industry are White. Many Aboriginal people do not even participate in “Aboriginal” art shows, because they do not see themselves as “Aboriginal artist,” they are simply “artists.” Further, non-Aboriginal Australians continue to dehumanize Aboriginal people in order to perpetuate the idea that it is okay to deny them justice. He thinks it is too late for Aboriginal people to regain control of their creations, and that there is no hope in even making an effort (Bell 2011).

Willis and Fry (2011) agree that the value of Aboriginal art has been created by the Western art world. They posit that the Aboriginal art movement in the West was created by shifting objects from one symbolic order to another, into a Western “system of objects.” This commodification has turned the Aboriginal art industry essentially into a “cash crop.” Myers even proclaims that Aboriginal art exhibits are more demonstrative of colonial conquest than anything else. He says white Australians are “fencing in” their cultures, just like they “fenced in” their land (Myers 1994).

*Positive social changes*

There are a few scholars who view the socio-cultural situation in Australia much differently. Montgomery, for example, believes that Australia is becoming aware of her own
identity by rejecting the cultural imperialism that is seen in America and Europe (1983-1984). These scholars see the cultural changes that resulted from commercialization of Aboriginal art as beneficial to Aboriginal people. Jon Altman, economist and anthropologist from Australia maintains that Aboriginal art has been a spectacular success for Aboriginal people due to their growing involvement in the Australian arts and the improvement of their well-being. He points out that in the past, art was exchanged for non-material items, such as for access to esoteric knowledge or rituals, but now the artists’ main objectives are to sell it for money. The sale which now helps them to accumulate money, includes them into the capitalist system, and can give them power and prestige. Indeed well-known and commercially successful artists can gain recognition and respect by Westerners, within the Western value system. This leads to increased reverence and ritual superiority within their Aboriginal communities. He says, “Artists, in fact, are the only section of outstation communities that can earn substantial sums of discretionary cash income through their own skills and work effort while residing at outstations” (Altman 2011:280).

Altman suggests that Aboriginal people support Bell and his slogan, “Aboriginal art It’s a White thing,” only because he won first place. Altman also contends that the critical mediating institutions that are involved in the marketing and the community-controlled Art Centers consist of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people and processes equally. These centers have Aboriginal artists as members, and these artists elect management committees which form the governing body; the governing body then hires the staff. In this way, he says, these institutions are hybrid organizations, and Aboriginal art is an “inter-cultural thing” and not a “White thing.” He references the political statements about land rights and regional identity that have been expressed through their art. And he points to the money artists make for their work.
These are weak arguments. Just because the art expresses desires for land rights and identity, does not mean that viewers are receiving the message, as evidenced by the data from the Kluge-Ruhe. Further, it does not signify that governing powers care, or that any changes are being made. As mentioned above, the cash many artists make is meager and has not improved living conditions for the community at large.

Art historians Terry Smith and Roger Benjamin also wrote about the advantages of commercialization. In 1989, Smith argued that Aboriginal art is succeeding in the Western artworld, and that the artwork protects Aboriginal beliefs and values by presenting beautiful substitutes of them (Smith 2011a). Benjamin sees the artists as “playing the system,” because the art empowers those who produce it. He says that Aboriginal artists have learned how to exploit the art market to their advantage. As a result, producing paintings not only increases finances of the artist, but also rebuilds respect for all traditional cultures around the world. He believes that the political messages in the art is broadcasting throughout Australia and abroad, and is advancing the struggle for Aboriginal land rights, health and education. He says the art movement is slowly overturning two centuries of prejudice against Aboriginal people (Benjamin 1990).

Again, these declarations are unwarranted. As indicated by the data from the Kluge-Ruhe and by the current standard of living for Aboriginal people, the political power of Aboriginal art has proven to be inadequate. The 548,368 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent only 2.5% of the Australian population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011b). They have very little wealth, recognition, and prestige, so the notion that Aboriginal artists are “playing the system,” as Benjamin suggested is highly doubtful. On the contrary, all of the evidence proves that they remain subordinate. I would ask Benjamin for evidence on how the commercialization
of Aboriginal art is improving land rights, health, and education. As noted the West Australian government plans to close between 100-150 indigenous communities, which is the biggest threat to Aboriginal people since the 1960s. Additionally, the Bureau of Statistics shows that Aboriginal Australians are almost three times as likely to experience psychological distress and are twice as likely as non-indigenous Australians to commit suicide (Australian Associated Press July 28, 2014).

Conclusion

The absence of patrons mentioning the forces of diffusion, syncretism, colonization, haptic communication, and commercialization sheds light on why the patrons were unable to perceive the political intentions of the Aboriginal art movement. The artwork itself cannot protect Aboriginal values and cultures. Strong governmental support, which they do not have, is really the only force that can help. But the Aboriginal art movement is trying to rally international support as a heritage worth preserving by substantiating their traditions, and rightful ownership of land.
CHAPTER VI
THE REFLECTION OF AMERICANISM ON PATRON RESPONSES

The Aboriginal art movement has not come close to solving Aboriginal social and political problems. But measuring the movement’s efficacy is impossible without knowing how severe these problems would be without it. There is just a small percent of Americans who have an interest in Aboriginal art, as represented by patrons of the Kluge-Ruhe. However, even loyal patrons neglect to make the connection between the Aboriginal values that are conveyed through the art and their fight to keep these values by way of political changes. One patron even said that the Aboriginal people are “recovering and growing.”

This section will attempt to explain a few cultural tendencies of Americans that contribute to their misunderstandings. As discussed, many features of all cultures are unspoken and even unconscious (Cohen 2008). Cohen analogizes conscious and unconscious tendencies to the grammar of language. Both are learned from birth and are so deeply ingrained that people become captive within their confines. Deeply ingrained cultural beliefs act as blinders that cause people to be convinced that their system is the best one and is the only real one. The arbitrary nature of symbolic systems prevents people from evaluating and respecting cultural systems of others, and from recognizing the arbitrary nature of their own choices and manners. These latent tendencies affect philosophical thoughts, beliefs, worldviews, and values. Because these latent
behaviors are unconscious they are the most difficult part of a culture to analyze or change (Cohen 2008).

Djon Mundine indicates that despite their dispute about the “authenticity” of Aboriginal art, many German critics in the 1990s thoroughly grasped the political messages that were communicated. Several Germans published articles in the years following about the Aboriginal fight for social justice and against land loss. In the same decade, the United Kingdom was more critical and defensive about the art, partly due to Australia’s colonial connections with England (Mundine 1998). These findings suggest that since German viewers grasped the political messages of the art, the Aboriginal art movement is successfully communicating its message at least to some people, and it is the American audience that is neglecting to see it. The problem then may not lie with the Aboriginal art movement, but with its American audience. This section focuses on a few major conscious and unconscious assumptions and propensities that prevent Americans from associating the importance of Aboriginal land and customs with Aboriginal suppression in Australia. The unconscious ideologies discussed will be: class structure, capitalism and consumerism, pecuniary philosophy, fascination with the primitive, lack of empathy, status, and geographical tendencies.

**Systemic discrimination and White Privilege**

I would like to revisit the notion of systemic discrimination in light of the observation that there were no patrons that I interviewed or surveyed who identified as African American, Native American, or Pacific Islander. With regard to “ethnicity” 86% identified as European American, 6% identified as “none, 4% as Asian American, and 4% as Jewish. It appeared to me that the 6% that identified as “none” were Caucasian. I surmise that the notion of “White Privilege” may have had an impact on patron sensitivities to the struggles of Aboriginal people,
who are dark skinned. In fact the demographics of the Kluge-Ruhe patrons are similar to White Australians. According to the 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics, the population is not classified by “race” as it commonly is in the United States, but by European ethnic identities. The top ethnicities were English at 25.9%, Australian at 25.4%, Irish at 7.5%, Scottish at 6.4%, and Italian at 3.3%. The highest non-White group was Chinese-born immigrants (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011a).

White Privilege, as described by Robin DiAngelo (2011) is similar to structural violence in that the direction of power is normalized, and deeply entrenched in the fabric of U.S. society. I will first discuss what White Privilege is not. The notion of mainstream “racism” in the U.S. generally refers to the deliberate actions that individuals demonstrate in effort to render someone else as inferior. By this definition, most white Americans are not “racist,” but they still live in a society affected by White Privilege. White Privilege is the result of societal mechanisms to which the entire society is subject. It is not necessarily intentional or malicious, but is a system that is enforced by dominant powers. It is the inadvertent structural advantage that benefits white people.

White children in the United States are routinely sheltered from awareness about their advantages. Consequently, as adults they are ill-equipped to recognize White Privilege, much less, take actions to resolve it. They are raised to experience their advantages as fair and normal (DiAngelo 2011). Based on their treatment of Aboriginal people, I surmise that White Australians are also often unaware of their White Privilege.

Part of the social structure and reinforcement of White Privilege is segregation. White people primarily live among themselves, and even if they live in physical proximity to people of color, they typically remain relatively separated. Calling schools and neighborhoods in the
United States “good,” is also a code for “White” (DiAngelo 2011). The existence of “White only” spaces creates a deeply internalized feeling that being surrounded by only Whites is “normal.” As a result, white people do not feel a sense of loss with the absence of people of color, such as blacks and Aboriginals. Segregation is one of the main factors that produce habitual thoughts, perceptions, expressions, and actions that strengthen the White Privilege system (DiAngelo 2011). “This dynamic of gain rather than loss via racial segregation may be the most profound aspect of white racial socialization of all” (DiAngelo 2011:59).

Another factor contributing to and exacerbating White Privilege is the “invisibility of whiteness,” or universalism. This is the social programming of Whites to believe that their perspectives are an objective representation of reality. This is illustrated by the fact that instead of being “White,” people think of themselves as just “people.” In this way, Whites assume the role of representing humanity, while “Black” or “Aboriginal” people can only represent their own racialized experiences (DiAngelo 2011). This point was made by Aboriginal artist Richard Bell when he indicated why many Aboriginal people do not participate in “Aboriginal” art shows. They do not subscribe to being “Aboriginal artist,” because they are simply “artists” (Bell 2011).

Although the “invisibility of whiteness” is part of the pervasive infiltration of ethnocentrism, the repercussions of White Privilege in places like the United States and Australia are particularly profound and rippling. This kind of ethnocentrism is destructive because the control is so disproportionate. In these countries, Whites are part of the dominant culture and possess the power to manipulate society to their advantage.

Additionally, universalism assumes that Whites and people of color have the same social opportunities, when in reality White interests and aspirations are almost always central. As a
result, the universalism prevents Whites from seeing or considering perspectives of people of color. There are sporadic and encouraging exceptions, as Aboriginal people have experienced for decades. For example the Eddie Mabo v. Queensland case in 1982, which found that Torres Strait Islanders owned their land prior to colonization. This historic ruling overturned *terra nullius*, the prevailing legal doctrine that declared the land as “nobody’s land” for Torres Strait Islanders and for mainland Aboriginals. But the infrequency and brevity of such progress prevents any momentum and political usefulness.

White Privilege in the United States was evident in the response of Kluge-Ruhe patrons. One of the challenges in recognizing White Privilege is that people tend to resist value changes. If patrons accepted the evils of White Privilege in Australia, they would have to consider White Privilege in the United States. This new perspective would clash with their deep-rooted indifference about White Privilege. This alternate perspective creates stress and uncertainty, so it is regularly avoided.

**Class trends**

In *Reflecting on America: Anthropological Views of U.S. Culture* Paul Durrenberger discusses Katherine Newman’s work on the ideological tendencies of American working and middle classes, and meritocratic individualism (Durrenberger 2008). Working class people have a structural outlook which means they believe that social standings are the way they are because there is an inherent structure to the system. Conversely, middle class tenets include: the ability to alter one’s future; people are not necessarily subordinate to larger forces; hierarchy is merit based; and social inequality is natural. In other words, middle class people tend to embrace meritocratic individualism, which is the idea that solutions to people’s problems are primarily up
to them (Durrenberger 2008). In fact, these ideologies help to maintain a fiscally healthy middle class.

I do not know the income or lifestyle of the patrons at the Kluge-Ruhe, but the interviews suggest that most of them would be considered middle class Americans. As discussed in the demographic section, the largest group of patrons (31%) indicated that they were retired. The next largest group comprised educators at 19%, followed by those in the healthcare industry at 13%. The bottom 10% encompassed twelve professions ranging from artist to government to sales and marketing. Of the retired patrons, 25% indicated that their former professions were in education, while 17% were formerly in government, and 17%, were former healthcare workers. The bottom 10% of retired visitors had various professions that ranged from journalism to history.

Based on Newman’s observations, middle class mentality discourages sympathy for underachieving groups, such as the Aboriginal people. If these patrons do possess middle class principles, they may tend to attribute the subordinate position of Aboriginals to being lazy or to not having worked hard enough to get ahead. Since challenging the middle class value of meritocracy would create uneasiness, patrons might resist acknowledging that access to resources is not equal between racial groups (DiAngelo 2011). This judgment is similar to the findings of beyondblue in Australia that indicated that one third of non-native Australians thought indigenous Australians were "sometimes a bit lazy.” Notably, the majority of non-native Australians have European roots similar to those of the Kluge-Ruhe patrons. As outlined in the Demographic section, 86% of patrons were “European American,” and of that 74% identified themselves simply as either “white,” Caucasian,” “Anglo,” or “WASP.” Similarly, Australians identified themselves as 25.9% English, 25.4% Australian, 7.5% Irish, 6.4% Scottish, and 3.3%
Italian (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011a). Beyondblue revealed that White Australians often do not realize when they are discriminating against Aboriginal people. Similarly, the data show that the sources that have been available to Kluge-Ruhe patrons have not provided the information necessary to recognize Aboriginal struggles, or that the Aboriginal art movement is principally a political campaign. This adds to why patrons continue to be unaware that comparing Aboriginal art to Abstract Art and describing Aboriginal people as “primitive” and “unchanging” is ethnocentric. These factors combined can lead to further systemic discrimination.

The Perfect Storm: Hungry businesses and absent minded consumers

The idea that material prosperity is a sign that one has been morally “good” was discussed by Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. The association of consumerism with morality influenced the development of capitalism. Jules Henry’s *Culture Against Man* discussed the cultural implications of capitalism, commercialization, and consumerism in America. He examined the American philosophical system of advertising and the extent to which Americans are influenced by it. He exposed societal effects of 150 years of preoccupation with amassing material wealth. The notion that material property indicates one’s level of morality explains why Americans have an obsession with standard of living and accumulation of material goods (Henry 1965). In other words, if they can show an impressive level of accumulation, they will be thought of as “good” people by their peers. He posited that modern society is a grim place to live because although people are materially rich, they have died emotionally. This is the reason, he argues, that culture is "for" man, but it is also "against" man (Henry 1965).
Americans are plagued with what Henry termed a “pecuniary philosophy,” which is a systematic method of thinking and a way to make money. Commercialization in America is driven by pecuniary logic, which revolves around bold statements intended to be believed, but that lack proof. Since most Americans are not obsessive truth seekers, they blindly accept advertising “proof.” Henry posited that if a consumer normally takes his coffee weak, he will drink it strong if advertising admonishes him to do so, or he will purchase products that claim to be “the best in the world.” The economy thrives on consumers being fuzzy-minded, impulsive buyers and refraining from over-thinking, analyzing or testing such claims. This system is an expression of an irrational economy and perpetuates faulty thinking. In fact, this faulty thinking is essential to the health of the American economy. If consumers were careful thinkers, or relied on logic in order to make a purchase, the economy would struggle to survive. Pecuniary philosophy’s concept of American consumers almost ceases to think of them as human beings (Henry 1965). After all, “in the world view of pecuniary philosophy the sin consists in letting the market go untapped” (Henry 1965:70). Henry indicated that advertisers see Americans as:

- insatiably desiring, infinitely plastic, totally passive, and always a bit sleepy;
- unpredictably labile and disloyal (to products); basically wooly-minded and non-obsessive about traditional truth; relaxed and undemanding with respect to the canons of traditional philosophy, indifferent to its values, and easily moved to buy whatever at the moment seems to help his underlying personal inadequacies—this is pecuniary philosophy’s concept of man and woman in our culture. (Henry 1965:79)

There are many repercussions of pecuniary philosophy, such as creating a society of consumption-centeredness. A common characteristic of childhood for all human societies is that it is a time to train children for the roles they will fill as adults. Inuit children, for instance, are taught how to be skilled hunters, so that by the time they reach adulthood they are capable and prepared. According to Henry, Americans train their children to be virtuoso consumers, and the
result is a consumption-centered society. The voracious appetite for consuming is matched only by business’ hunger for profit (Henry 1965). With all the thousands of consumer opportunities, each object consumed loses value and significance.

In 2014 Dara Mohammadi, reporter for The Guardian, wrote about the gullibility of Western consumers. She cited psychology professor Dr. Peter Ayton of City University London who suggested that Western consumer decisions are made in ignorance and on unchallenged assumptions. Ayton said “People assume that the world is carefully regulated and that there are benign institutions guarding them from making any kind of errors.” He says Westerners are susceptible to gimmicks because they live in a world with so much information, they willingly defer responsibility to others who they presume understand things better (Mohammadi 2014). Reflected in how Kluge-Ruhe patrons approach Aboriginal art, this creates a society of uninquisitive and careless consumers. If it seems plausible and appeals to a familiar concept, Western consumers will go with it, with no questions asked.

“Pecuniary philosophy” is a systematic method of thinking, so these values are engrained in the American psyche. So although Aboriginal art is not being purchased, “pecuniary philosophy” pertains to the way Americans approach it. In the same way that they might accept advertising’s so called “proof,” Kluge-Ruhe patrons blindly accept and embrace the Aboriginal art brand. The data show that no matter how many times patrons visited the museum, most remained fairly unaware about the role the art plays in Aboriginal politics. This is because they rely on their usual method, and refrain from over-thinking or analyzing how or why the art is being presented. It also supports the idea that Aboriginal art is unconsciously seen as just another option in America’s boundless assortment of products.

**Museum curation and protection from reality**
Patrons’ incomplete understandings about Aboriginal art are also influenced by the curation of the Kluge-Ruhe. The museum downplayed how the art serves as political statements. Perhaps this is because the museum caters to an American appetite, like the familiarity of Abstract Art and the intrigue of the primitive, which were the most common responses in the interviews. It is widely agreed by museum goers that art and worldly matters should be kept apart (Kennicott 2014) and that no one should worry too much about the ethical and moral issues that may lie just beneath the surface.

Those in charge of the museum may feel that it is not the place to impose a harsh reality on patrons, especially if they are coming to get away from stress and to relax. A crucial indicator of this is that the Kluge-Ruhe website says nothing about Aboriginal struggles. Many Americans, perhaps patrons of the Kluge-Ruhe, were brought up in privileged environments, where they created an ideology that is comforting to them, and have never been forced to face cruelty. As Pulitzer Prize-winning Art and Architecture Critic of The Washington Post, Philip Kennicott noted, museums are seen as safe places, where the uplifting narratives can easily conceal otherwise obvious atrocities such as widespread human rights violations (Kennicott 2014). Kennicott indicates that there is a return of a dated desire for a “polite society.” He describes it as a complex web of hypocrisy that helps assure elites that they can mindlessly socialize without being bothered with moral stressors (Kennicott 2014). But “polite society” at the Kluge-Ruhe hinders the opportunity to expose the injustices that are perpetrated on Aboriginal people.

**Aboriginal art as a way to increase status**

Going to the Kluge-Ruhe and knowing about Aboriginal art might also be considered an effort of self-reinvention, if not a status marker. Cerroni-Long (2008) considers middle class ideologies such as stressing merit-based hierarchy and embracing competitive individualism, to
be a postmodern emphasis on narcissistic self-reverence. Interpretive autonomy allows for self-invention and reinvention, both of which resonate strongly with American competitive individualism. Many patrons tend to view the Kluge-Ruhe as a trendy, interesting, edifying, and exotic place. Their patronage is in part due to their need for accessories to add to their identity repertoire.

Similarly, consumer motivations according to Henry involve buying a product from a certain company in order to identify with that company (1965). Buying has the power to portray someone as frugal, pretentious, cheap, extravagant, humble, etc. For example, purchasing a car from a Lexus dealer makes a statement about one’s status. Although it may take generations, Americans have the power to change their social status. They may do this by refining their exteriors such as their clothing or speech or by altering their interiors such as their thoughts, interests, and emotions. Members of a society centered on “status transformation” carefully observe their roles and how they are perceived by others (McCracken 2008). For centuries people, usually wealthy, used the art world to refine their reputations. Art museums emerged as a ruling-class strategy to enlighten and educate lower classes. This was an effort to make them more respectful of the leadership of the so called “polite society” (Kennicott 2014). Still today one can find elite social groups swirling around art museums, openings, and galas. This reinforces the belief that going to a museum and being seen serves as a social boon.

The social scene at the Kluge-Ruhe is no different. While talking to and interviewing patrons, it seemed that they were proud to be connected to the Kluge name is some way, even if only through visiting and being familiar with the museum. While talking to and interviewing patrons, it seemed that they were proud to be connected to the Kluge name, even if only through visiting and being familiar with the museum. Patrons acted thankful for the obscure art that
powerful people allow them to see (Kennicott 2014). Even outside of the museum I heard people talking about John Kluge and his contributions to Charlottesville. Patrons are likely not cognizant of how their efforts to know about Aboriginal art relates to increasing their status in the community. Even if they do realize it, I doubt they would verbalize it in an interview. Americans learning about Aboriginal art in order to increase their social status and mobility instead of to increase Aboriginal status mobility is rich with irony, yet is completely plausible.

**Impact of geography**

The Kluge-Ruhe is located in Charlottesville, Virginia, and this geographic location likely influenced patron responses. Although I did not explicitly ask, I believe most patrons live around Charlottesville, especially the people that were identified as “Hobbyists” because they frequent the museum. Of those who were not “Hobbyists” many mentioned that they work or attend school in the area. Mead spoke about early 20th century immigrants in America and their desires for upward status transformation. She described America as an atmosphere where miscellaneous participants react to one another as they struggle for collective goals of what she termed the “third generation.” The “third generation” is a system that is continually reproduced through ritual and everyday practices of people who have been seized by the gravitational center called the United States. The “third generation” aims to align with peers toward the major rites, symbols and practical production of America (Mead 2000). Mead indicated “we are all third-generation, our European ancestry tucked away and half forgotten, the recent steps in our wanderings over America immortalized and over-emphasized” (2000:31). Further, she explained, in education and in attitude, members of the “third-generation” are always looking forward and moving up, and never back. They feel as if they are members of an exclusive club and are not interested in tracing their own ancestry. She says that they even reject the elders of their own
family lineage. This “generation,” she says has a different outlook on life and ethics because many things came easily to them thanks to the really hard work that was done by previous generations (Mead 2000).

Mead observed that in parts of the United States immigrants brought their deep-rooted sense of hierarchy with them to the Old World communities on the eastern seaboard. Here, the class system echoed the European feudal system, so East Coast immigrants found themselves in social structure where pedigrees are remembered, people are stratified, and there are few options to move up. If one's parents were from Southern Italy, she surmised, that he or she would likely remain branded as “Southern Italian,” which is a lower status than Northern Italians.

In “middle-America,” the occupation or birth status of one’s relatives was not as well remembered. Here Americans had more access to upward mobility, making the objectives of the “third generation” easier to reach than on the East Coast (Mead 2000). Success was not seen as reliant on birth, as much as it was on effort. The accumulation of material property was a sign that one had made a lot of effort and has been morally “good.” These values are also what drive today’s middle class as described by Newman. Since most Kluge-Ruhe patrons showed little cultural identification with their European ancestors, I thought they retained characteristics of what Mead described as “middle-Americans,” who embrace “third generation” values such as moving forward and increasing status.

The Correlations section of this study shows that the nation has matured since the days of Mead, and America’s geographic diversity is now more complicated. There is a cultural patchwork within the United States that affects the way people think about social issues, including attitudes toward marginalized populations. In 2014 the Washington Post named American writer and journalist Colin Woodard one of the “Best State Capitol Reporters in
America.” In his recent book, *American Nations: A History of the Eleven Rival Regional Cultures of North America* (2011), he describes how North America is broken into eleven separate nation-states, which are different regions based on their origins and prevailing values. He analyzed historical settlement patterns in North American and found there to be lasting cultural foundations in these distinct areas that he calls “nations.” Each nation is embedded within a cultural framework of deep-seated preferences and attitudes. The identifying frameworks, he says, are so entrenched that waves of immigrants did little to alter the cultures. This is because the children and grandchildren of immigrants assimilated into whichever so-called nation they settled and culture that surrounded them. He describes how these nations clash in opinions about the role of government and about attitudes toward social issues. He believes regional differences in North America have been reinforced in recent years, as people increasingly sort themselves into like-minded communities. These observations refer to the dominant culture of that nation, and not to individual inhabitants. The eleven nations he describes are as follows: Yankeedom, New Netherland, The Midlands, Tidewater, Greater Appalachia, Deep South, Far West, El Norte, Left Coast, New France, and First Nation (Woodard 2011).

The two superpowers in terms of identity, mission, and population are Yankeedom and Deep South. Deep South is increasingly allied with Greater Appalachia and Tidewater and Yankeedom is aligned with New Netherland (Woodard 2011). This section will focus on Tidewater and Yankeedom, and their allied nations because these are the locations of the Kluge-Ruhe, and of Kent State University, respectively. The Tidewater region was mainly built by the sons of English aristocracy in the Chesapeake area and neighboring sections of Delaware and North Carolina. In place of peasants, these immigrants used indentured servants and slaves.
Tidewater places high value on respect for authority, and has very little regard for equality or for public participation in politics. Superpower Deep South was established by English slave lords from Barbados. It was modeled after slave states where democracy was a privilege for few, while slavery was the natural destiny for most. Politically, the combined agenda for Deep South and its allies like Tidewater is to slash taxes and to reduce government regulations, social services, and federal powers (Woodard 2011).

Yankeedom is described as a region that places high regard for the common good, and for the assimilation of others. It values education, intellectual achievement, communal empowerment, and broad citizen participation in politics and government. Inhabitants of this “nation” are more comfortable with government regulations and social projects than many other “nations” in North America. New Netherland is similar to Yankeedom, but is on the East coast of the United States and encompasses New York City and surrounding areas. This nation has an impressive tolerance for ethnic and religious diversity. It is characterized as having an unwavering commitment to the freedom of inquiry and conscience. It is known to be a place of refuge for those persecuted by other American “nations” and cultures. Politically, the combined agenda for Yankeedom and its allies is to defend public institutions and equality (Woodard 2011).

The historical and cultural gulf between Yankeedom and Tidewater is simply too large to expect similar viewpoints about indigenous people and their effort to gain equal rights. Concerns about equal rights and social welfare in the Tidewater region are overshadowed by a focus on reducing governmental power. These priorities are deep-rooted in the psyche of Tidewater citizens (Woodard 2011). The importance and efficacy of citizen participation in political
movements is not part of their cultural milieu, which prevents them from seeking a deeper
political meaning from Aboriginal art.

Northeast Ohio, located in the Yankeedom “nation” has a different cultural milieu.
Historically, this region has valued the common good, the assimilation of others, citizen
participation, and communal empowerment. Those values would likely cause inhabitants to be
attuned to social messages of the art. It would be difficult to accurately compare reactions to
Aboriginal art in Yankeedom to reactions at the Kluge-Ruhe because the setting would be nearly
impossible to replicate. Simply showing the same images to a group in Yankeedom would not
have the same effect or poignancy as going to a museum that is dedicated solely to Aboriginal
art.

American culture is still not well understood. A holistic understanding of American
culture can provide a useful framework for analyzing the pervasive inter-ethnic conflicts in
America. (Cerroni-Long 2008)

International relations are, first and foremost, intercultural relations, and cultural
reflexivity—the ability to recognize the cultural matrix of our behavior rather than
considering it the universal norm—seems a crucial first step on the path toward peaceful
coeexistence. (Cerroni-Long 2008:205)

An understanding of American subcultural groups and their tendencies could provide a useful
framework for analyzing the complicated and ongoing issues of racial and ethnic conflicts in the
United States.
CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSIONS

Systemic discrimination, structural violence, White Privilege, and abuse of hegemonic power have resulted in epidemic levels of persecution upon Aboriginal groups. Simultaneously, diffusion, syncretism, Western categorizations, commercialization, pecuniary philosophy, and museum curation have contributed to short-sighted interpretations of Aboriginal art. As exemplified by the data in this thesis, instead of being recognized as political statements, the art is described by its colors, patterns and abstract features. Otherwise it tends to be viewed like an antiquated artifact, which also restricts political meanings and categorizes the art and people as “primitive” (Perkins and Lynn 2011).

Aboriginal artists subtly convey their request for political support. There are no images of bloodshed, massacre, or misery. Clifford Geertz (1973) believed that people formulate their cultural realities in webs of signification. Aboriginal artists formulate their realities and identities on canvas, rock, bark, and other media. They portray the significant webs of their reality, culture and identity as symbolic objects and styles in their art. The delicacy of their approach could be a strategy to avoid projecting an image of grumbling underdogs. Aboriginal people realize that complaining about their issues would not be an effective method to gain respect. But subtlety has also proven unsuccessful.
Paradoxes and resolutions

The exhibition of Aboriginal art in the world market poses a series of paradoxes. There is a problematic dynamic between Aboriginal art producers, purveyors (such as Kluge-Ruhe patrons) and purchasers. Aboriginal people are attempting to have their designs acknowledged in the Western art world, yet avoid standard critiques of Western contemporary art. Aboriginal art that is directed to a Western audience becomes subjected to colonialist judgments. Western categories are imposed, and Aboriginal material culture becomes compartmentalized within Western categories. For example, referring to the creators of Aboriginal art as “artists” and “painters,” as is commonly done in Western dialog can be seen as problematic because these roles and titles were defined by the West. Also, Aboriginal art is not decorative, nor is it intended for passive contemplations. Therefore, it does not summon “bad” or “good” evaluations, as the West tends to present (Myers 2011a).

The idea that these familial and ancestral designs should be bought and sold as commodities is another paradox. These designs were not intended as fodder to be evaluated by the West’s exchange-value system and industrialized consumer interests (Michaels 2011). Instead, these works are supposed to signify sacred-secular communicative messages and statements about land ownership, spiritual beliefs, and exposing inequities of cultural exchange (Myers 2011a). If Aboriginal communities had better quality of life and were not desperate for money, health, and validation, perhaps they would not have resorted to selling their sacred designs to the public.

These and other paradoxes undermine Aboriginal political intentions and focus Western attitudes away from Aboriginal rights and injustices. This is why scholars such as Fred Myers (2011a) have expressed concern about Aboriginal art forms being shown and critiqued in
cosmopolitan art circles. Willis and Fry also stopped writing, curating, reviewing, speaking, and teaching about Aboriginal art because of their perceived hopelessness about its potential for political transformation. They claim that the political efforts of the art are futile due to the motivational divide between Aboriginal people and Western producers (2011). The next section will discuss suggestions that have been made about how to contend with these contradictions of Aboriginal art in the Western world.

*Aesthetics only view*

Since there is a built-in limit to Western appreciation of the images, this viewpoint contends that Westerners should only attempt to appreciate the art aesthetically. Western viewers can study the relationship between physical qualities and cultural values, but are unable to appreciate it from the Aboriginal perspective (Coleman 2011). Coleman suggests that establishing categories or types will allow Westerners to judge creativity and skill in the paintings. This way Westerners can at least aesthetically appreciate the symbolism that they do not understand. They can also appreciate the formal aspects of the composition such as the color, skill, and craftsmanship. This would provide a way to take the art and artist seriously, and recognize the works as exemplars of traditions (Coleman 2011).

*Postmodern considerations*

Another suggestion has been the postmodern notion that since Westerners can only view Aboriginal art from their narrow perspective, they should have no authority to speak about it. They can only compare it with the art they have been exposed to in Western art museums, galleries, publications, films, popular culture, et cetera (Morphy 2011b). Because it is unknowable to Westerners, any claims to interpret and understand it will fail. The use of many terms, such as “spirituality,” by someone from the West with regard to Aboriginal art has not
only failed to communicate the intended concept; it has transformed Aboriginal art into a commodity in the trade of “otherness” (Sutton 2011). To avoid further misconceptions, Westerners should refrain from making comments or efforts to understand it aesthetically or otherwise. Advocates of this position propose that Aboriginal people should present themselves in their own way and on their own terms. They believe this approach has the most promise to empower them (Sutton 2011). Like the strictly aesthetic approach, the absence of any effort to understand Aboriginal art, people, and their intentions discourages the input of anthropologists.

It can be argued that given the structurally subordinate position of Aboriginal people in Australia, the only ethically valid question with regard to their art is whether it is positively affecting them. Neither of these aforementioned suggestions logically addresses this issue, so I view them both as deficient. The first one places too much emphasis on the aesthetic and none on the people who create it. It is the artist that imitates life, not the colors or formal aspects of the artwork. The artist looks at his or her reality of life from all angles and emulates that life on a medium. Aboriginal values and background cannot and should not be ignored. Focusing only on the aesthetic would be to discount the people and their messages.

While the postmodern notion that all viewers engage Aboriginal art pre-laden with subjectivity and personal experiences is true, I argue that viewers do have the ability to comprehend other perspectives. Most Westerners would not adopt Aboriginal values, nor would they wholly appreciate the art from an Aboriginal standpoint, but the anthropological community can help them to expand their views. Additionally, the idea of Aboriginal people presenting themselves in their own way, on their own terms is idealistic, and is unlikely to garner the desired results. It has been established that the voices of Aboriginal people struggle to be heard from the low status to which they have been relegated. The art movement would inevitably be
overshadowed by the metropolitan art-world where the work is displayed, promoted, sold, and reviewed. In other words, Aboriginal voices would be absorbed into the hegemony of the society (Willis and Fry 2011). Both “aesthetic only” and “strictly postmodern” interpretations become moral issues due to the lack of attention to Aboriginal people, their well-being, and cultural preservation.

**Renewing humanism in anthropology**

The heart of this study is about the human propensity for and the dangers of ethnocentrism and systemic violence. There are many ways to be human and the reluctance to value cultural differences is what has in the past, and will in the future, lead to hideous phenomena ranging from colonialism to slavery (Cerroni-Long 2008). The forte of cultural anthropologists is to expose ethnocentrism by showing that different life-ways cannot be measured or ranked. They aim to communicate cultural relativism, which is the willingness to respect and understand other ways of living, while critically examining their own cultural assumptions. As opposed to Eurocentric critics, professional anthropologists should be sensitive to those who speak by considering power imbalances and influences. Their writings provide assessments that come from feminism, Marxism, psychoanalysis, deconstruction and postcolonial theory, all of which puts Aboriginal goals in perspective (Smith 2011b). The next section will expound on the growing need for anthropology and other disciplines.

There is accounting to be had for the distorted images of native people. These notions start in elementary school and are reinforced throughout the lives of many Americans. Images of native people often denigrate the potential of native communities, and reinforce popular prejudices (Wright 1988). Anthropologists need to take an active role in establishing partnerships
with Aboriginal groups. As allies, anthropologists can help Aboriginals to reset Western standards of thinking.

The emotional and intellectual spirit of many impoverished and marginalized people has been diminished, and their lives have been emptied of hope (Farmer 2004). From his work with the underprivileged in Haiti, Farmer (2004) explained the importance of exploring the historical roots of a problem in order to get the entire picture. This however, is not a popular process, because it exposes the malicious acts of dominating powers. “Those who look only to powerful present-day actors to explain misery will fail to see how inequality is structured and legitimated over time” (Farmer 2004:309). Looking only at recent history provides a limited view that has been manipulated by the engineers of structural violence. He suggests collaboration among disciplines such as anthropology, history, and biology to provide a comprehensive picture of wide social disparity.

Anthropological advocacy has become a legitimate undertaking as evidenced by numerous writings by anthropologists since the 1960s. By the 1980s, anthropologists assumed a critical role in evaluating the claims of native people in terms of international human rights laws and agreements (Wright 1988). Anthropologists should embrace the notion that their studies have political relevance for native people and the established social order. Wright (1988) listed several ways that anthropologists and advocacy organizations could contribute to aboriginal causes, and I think the following suggestions would be particularly useful.

1. **Conduct research.** Views of indigenous people are often compromised by state interests, and few nations make humanitarian decisions over political. Anthropologists should conduct comparative research that assesses native claims, which can then be checked against the “official” statements produced by the government. Contributions from a
variety of sources including indigenous organizations, anthropologists, and support organizations would be included. The Indigenous Peoples in Brazil Program of the Centro Ecumênico de Documentação e Informação (CEDI) in São Paulo coordinated such a research project. It produced a series of volumes surveying the current situation of indigenous peoples. These volumes have had a significant impact on public awareness, the support of indigenous people, and even the Brazilian government. Comparing explicit statements by Australian Aboriginal groups with government claims about issues such as access to healthcare, police brutality, housing conditions, and systemic racism would likely expose conflicting versions.

2. **Information gathering and distribution.** In order to prevent duplicated efforts, anthropologists, journalists, human rights groups, and international organizations should coordinate their information gathering and distribution.

3. **International Organizations and International Law.** Anthropologists could combat indigenous legal injustices by helping to develop international rules on human rights, or by providing forums for airing grievances. These actions must be based on the indigenous understanding of self-determination, and not on external definitions. Anthropologists should take advantage of the power of international agencies such as the United Nations, the International Labor Office, and international financial institutions because these institutions have key roles in the development of international policies for the protection of indigenous rights. They would have to learn how these institutions work before assessing their potential for defending specific aboriginal inequities.

4. **Coalitions.** Anthropologists typically understand the land use patterns and subsistence methods of the communities they study. These models often complement
environmentalists’ ideas about the nature of ecosystems. Because native and environmental motives are often similar, the anthropological community can facilitate mutually beneficial relationships. Together they can design development plans that provide workable solutions for both native peoples and the environment.

5. **Consultancies and Assessments.** Theoretical implications of advocacy in support of indigenous peoples have not received serious anthropological attention. Anthropologists are in a key position to evaluate and assess the effectiveness of processes affecting natives. But the goal of consultant assessments should be to help indigenous peoples to conduct the assessments on their own. Too much involvement could result in dependency, or other problematic situations. For the Aboriginal art movement, anthropologists could research the usefulness of the movement for various indigenous communities. Presented with qualitative and quantitative data, Aboriginal people might be more likely to make recommended changes.

6. **The Role of "Watchdog."** While advocacy organizations have been known to be successful in many cases, too often they have not been productive enough to prevent campaigns against native people. In the case of the Yanomami, there were international protests on their behalf, which were still inadequate to prevent major health problems and political sabotage (Wright 1988). This issue is especially difficult for Australian aboriginal advocacy because of their lack of external support. Unlike for the Yanomami, South Africans, and other marginalized groups, Aboriginals lack active international support.

The anthropological community can foster thinking that might not otherwise have been considered, such as awareness of the omnipresence of structural violence. It can illuminate
pervasive conscious and unconscious assumptions and ideologies of Americans and other Westerners that affect their views of native and underprivileged people. These ideologies were discussed in the last section and include how Americans have been programmed to think about class structure, capitalism, consumerism, pecuniary philosophy, the primitive, and privilege.

Anthropologists have an obligation to interrogate structural violence because it is constantly enacted in daily routines, and in social relations. Although it is often mundane and obscured, it profoundly guides people’s prejudices and actions. Linda Green, anthropologist at the University of Arizona, underscored the importance of analyzing the historical and current intricacies and complexities of power relations in order to obtain insight to the multiple ways in which structural violence is constantly reworked (Green 2004).

Since these lessons are deep and contemplative, they cannot be effectively conveyed in one or even in several visits to a museum. These lessons would be better suited for a book that analyzes Aboriginal art and the limited perceptions and misconceptions of Americans. There are books of this nature, but unfortunately it seems that they are not being read by Aboriginal art enthusiasts. One patron commented about how she missed having a gift shop at the museum. Instead of a gift shop with trinkets, there could be a book store to make relevant books easily available to patrons.

**Grass-roots advocacy in action**

The Australian government seems to be more concerned with the image it portrays to the world than the actual welfare of Aboriginal people. Scholars such as Loewenstein and Pilger have accused the government of deceitfully dressing up its recognition of Aboriginal people as compassion for them, addressed in Chapter 1. Ideally, the government would feel forced to make serious changes if it received sufficient censure and ridicule about the treatment of their native
people. Disapproval would be most effective coming from the government of a powerful Western nation, such as the United States. But verbal condemnation for inhumane treatment of citizens has often proven ineffective in changing government policies, as evidenced by past criticisms of nations such as Syria, North Korea, and China. This is why grass-roots movements are becoming more crucial.

White Australian attitudes may be improving since the beyonblue study in 2014. On March 16, 2015, thousands of Australian citizens rallied and conducted sit-ins demanding that the government abandon its plan to evict Aboriginal communities (McLoughlin 2015). McLoughlin believes the government is doing it under the guise of budget cuts. He calls Australia’s Prime Minister Tony Abbot a racist and asserts that the government is exploiting stolen land and resources, including fossil fuels. Based on new land leases in close proximity to the closing communities, McLoughlin and others allege that the displacement of Aboriginal people is financially motivated and is making space for drilling and mining projects. His article posted a photo of Jarlmadangah Burru, one of the communities at the risk of being displaced. It showed local students and elders at the community school where indigenous language and culture is taught alongside an ordinary curriculum.

ImportantCool, a worker-owned journalism collective whose slogan is “Change the media. Change the world,” is dedicated to radical transparency. ImportantCool correspondent, Ray Grenfell, also reported on the ongoing dispossession of Australia’s indigenous peoples. In March of 2015 he wrote that Prime Minister Tony Abbott supports the closure of the communities because the government can no long support Aboriginal “lifestyle choices.” Grenfell asked Aboriginal Herbet Bropho of Matagarup, one of the communities under inspection by the government, to comment. He said:
Lifestyle? We ain’t got not lifestyle, my lifestyle is just sleeping on the ground, by the Swan River, trying to fight for what we believe in, my brothers got nothing … the lifestyles they are living are on the streets of Perth, getting spat on or told to get a job, all these racist things and yet our community … it’s looked after by a white man, it’s called a whiteman’s park … and I really want to go home, take my mob home because we’ve got no lifestyle… we’ve got nothing.

To support the notion that non-governmental organizations can have a societal impact, I would encourage a study of the power of political art. For example, political cartoonists are particularly successful at capturing the attention of the public and raising awareness about political issues. The visual aspect of this mode of communication might incite and inspire the public faster than written form. Although ending tragically, the Charlie Hebdo attack in France underscores the visceral power of political cartoons. I would not expect Aboriginal art to rouse such extreme reactions, but the Charlie Hebdo incidents illustrate the power of visual media. Maybe political cartoon satires about the government treatment of Aboriginal people would resonate with the world audience.

Museum visitor experience and meaning development

Museums curators should be mindful that what is displayed may not project to viewers what was intended. An Aboriginal art exhibit requires more visitor guidance than a Modern or Abstract art exhibit. Unlike Aboriginal art, Modern and Abstract art are expressions of an artist’s inspiration, creativity, and originality. Viewers of these genres are expected to create their own meanings and interpretations.

The Kluge-Ruhe can improve its understanding of the how patrons are interpreting Aboriginal art by conducting further qualitative research. Patron evaluations, if done properly, can serve as a decision-making tool for curators. Qualitative research is how the data comes alive, and can divulge rich, complex, and personal accounts of the museum visitor experience. It
can even offer insight into unexpected areas. It provides information from the user’s perspective that can determine the exhibit’s successes and shortcomings, which can guide decisions about future exhibits (Korn 1994).

One of the challenges of conducting qualitative research is asking the right questions. Questions are usually open ended, which increases the chance for misinterpretations for both the interviewee and the interviewer. If the questions are not formulated correctly the visitor can misunderstand the questions, and just as easily, the interviewer can misunderstand the answers. The interviewer may not even realize they asked the wrong questions until the data is analyzed.

*Role of anthropologists*

Anthropologists can positively contribute to resolving the dilemmas that arise when Aboriginal art is presented on the world art market. Currently, the financial motivations of the hegemonic forces have far overshadowed the objectives of Aboriginal people. As a result, the conditions of Aboriginal communities are declining instead of improving. Aboriginal artist Morphy writes:

> The anthropological endeavor of understanding difference as well as similarity is one that gives agency to the artists who made the works and allows their intentions and motivation to be reflected in the histories of their works that are produced. (Morphy 2011b:232)

The study of anthropology can help viewers to think critically about what the art means within the Aboriginal community, and to consider its social context (Butler 2011). The art is not simply a reflection of Aboriginal people, but a reflection of the West onto Aboriginal people. More than anyone in the world art market, anthropologists have the know-how to translate social contexts.

Writers, curators, and museum goers assume that any information or commentary about Aboriginal art supports the people who create it (Willis and Fry 2011). But it has been
established that much of what is being said about Aboriginal art is Eurocentric. These biased efforts lead a trajectory away from Aboriginal rights. “The demand that classical Aboriginal paintings be evaluated from the basis of Aboriginal standards and values reverses the relationship of power as the people with the knowledge of Aboriginal standards and values are Aboriginal people” (Coleman 2011:260). Employing the expertise of anthropologists could help this reversal of power by explaining that Western standards should be used minimally when analyzing Aboriginal art. Anthropologists can teach the basics of Aboriginal standards, such as using designs to portray ancestral power, rarrk, haptics, or a series of diamonds to identify with a clan. Aboriginal people can become the authority, at least with regards to their art.

Anthropologists in the United States and Australia can help Aboriginal art enthusiast by enlightening them about the reality of Aboriginal lives. They might accomplish this by placing placards next Aboriginal artwork that describe the living conditions of Aboriginal artists, and the deterioration of the communities from which they come. They can educate non-Aboriginals about the statistics that show the decreasing number of people and land in Aboriginal communities over past decades; and about the excessive rates of incarceration, poverty, substance abuse, and premature deaths of Aboriginal people compared to non-Aboriginals. If art enthusiasts learn these truths about the artists they admire, and about where their favorite artworks were created, they may develop a personal connection to the cause.

_Phenomenological touch_

Museums exhibits, such as the ones at the Kluge-Ruhe, could enhance visitor experiences by diversifying sensory stimulation opportunities. Emotional reactions to the images would generate a deeper connection between the patrons and the exhibits. Touching an object, both physically and imaginatively can create profound levels of reflection and meaning development
(Wood and Latham 2011). These actions bring the experience of place, time, and relationship into focus. In a museum setting, touch “contributes to greater consciousness and intentionality of the visitor around the meaning and interpretation of objects, as well as contributing to the greater purpose and value of the human experience” (Wood and Latham 2011:62).

The sense of touch played a significant role in human perception of the world until the Enlightenment. Since Western museums were heavily influenced by ideals of the Enlightenment, touching objects and paintings became prohibited; objects became viewed and treasured from the other side of glass cases. Wood and Latham (2011) posit that modern museums should re-invigorate visitor understanding of objects and ideas by eschewing these outdated models. Physiologically, touch combines information of innumerable receptors and nerve endings through pressure, temperature, pain, and movement. By moving from only visual to visual and tactile perception, patrons can improve their understanding of objects and images (Wood and Latham 2011).

The idea and sensation of touch is especially important when observing Aboriginal art because physical contact is an integral part of most Aboriginal cultures. Aboriginal people unify with nature and land through contact with it, and express this unity through art. Aboriginal artists often use grainy textures to capture the qualities of ground, sand, rock, and body. Touch can bring seemingly distant objects, images, and people into proximity. In a museum, touching can become a unifying sense and the site for the intersection of the viewer’s body and mind. Visitors crave opportunities to explore objects beyond the intellectual confines of exhibitions. Contact with objects can enable visitors to think critically about what they are seeing and touching. The focus becomes about the artist’s inspiration and process, and not necessarily on the object itself (Wood and Latham 2011).
Phenomenology is the study of human consciousness. The crucial aspect of a phenomenological experience is its intentionality. The experience is directed toward an object by virtue of its content or meaning. Phenomenological touch is a profound interaction with an object that triggers directed awareness of it. It allows the connected nature of the object’s material, cultural, and personal meanings to emerge (Wood and Latham 2011).

The potential for phenomenological touch in museums draws from two elements of touch, cutaneous and deep. Cutaneous touch is the physical contact made with an object; it is the physiological interface between skin, nerves, brain, and the external world. Deep touch is internal and emotional. It is the connection felt between one’s skin to one’s inner affective states. The combination of these two types of touch enables new levels of interaction and transaction with objects and exhibits (Wood and Latham 2011).

Implementing simple features at the Kluge-Ruhe may assist patrons in achieving phenomenological touch. For instance, next to images that reflect sand designs, there could be a small sandbox with sticks, whereby patrons can simulate sand drawing with sticks, or with their fingers. They can be reminded to quickly erase their designs in order to contemplate the intended ephemerality of Aboriginal sand art. By the bark art there could be an example of carved eucalyptus bark so patrons can become aware of what the surface feels like prior to being painted. The Kluge-Ruhe did have a sample pwoja (comb made from ironwood) but it was not intended to be touched or used. It would have been helpful if patrons could actually use a pwoja with acrylic on fabric. This activity would connect patrons with the process of making Tiwi designs, such as geometric dotted lines. These additions are likely to facilitate a richer connection between patrons and the land and materials that Aboriginal artists use to create images. Patrons might learn to approach the art with a deeper purpose, and to understand the
meaning of Aristotle’s quote (and the first sentence of this thesis) that, “The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.” Consequently, sensitivities about Aboriginal treatment and land loss might increase, and illuminate structural violence.

**Potential benefits of increased Aboriginal contribution**

One of the most emotional museum experiences I have had was at The National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) in Washington, D.C. The museum presented the heinous acts of oppression and killings of Native American Indians in an unforgettable way. The history of American Indians does not personally affect me, but the feelings generated at the museum had a lasting impact. Perhaps this resonance was because the exhibitions were designed in collaboration with Native American tribes and communities. Since the passage of legislation in 1989, the National Museum of the American Indian has been committed to bringing Native voices to museum exhibits. Native voices infiltrate what the museum publishes and posts on the internet. Their influence also permeates the on-site exhibits at all three museum locations (National Museum of the American Indian 2015).

Perhaps a bolder Aboriginal presence at the Kluge-Ruhe would impact patrons in a similar way to how I felt at the NMAI. Aboriginal people could express their voices on the Kluge-Ruhe website. Or, they could have significant involvement in the layout of the exhibits. Currently the images at the Kluge-Ruhe are hung on the walls with track lighting, typifying a Western gallery. In order to communicate their perspectives, Aboriginals may design the exhibits differently, in ways that make sense to them. This approach may improve patron understandings of the political messages that are being conveyed through Aboriginal art.
APPENDIXES
APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Date

1. Why do you visit museums?

2. Why did you visit the Kluge-Ruhe today?

3. How much did you know about Australian aboriginal culture before visiting the Kluge-Ruhe?

4. Are you more interested in learning about Aboriginal art or Aboriginal people?
   If art, what interests you about Aboriginal art?
   If people, what interests you about Aboriginal people?
   If both: What interests you about Aboriginal art and people?

5. Do you think it is important to have a museum dedicated to Australian Aboriginal art in the United States? Why or why not?

6. After seeing the exhibitions at Kluge-Ruhe, how would you describe Australian Aboriginal cultures?

7. What was most satisfying about your visit to the Kluge-Ruhe?

8. After visiting the museum today, what would you like to learn more about?

Demographics

1. Do you identify yourself as American?
   If yes, with what ethnicity do you identify, if any?

2. What is your religious affiliation, if you have one?

3. What is your gender?

4. Approximately how many countries have you visited (for work or leisure)?

5. What is your profession?

6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
APPENDIX B
PAPER AND ONLINE SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. How old are you?
   □ Under 18      □ 35 – 49
   □ 18 – 21       □ 50 - 64
   □ 22 – 34       □ 65 or older

2. With which gender do you identify?
   □ Female        □ Male          □ Other

3. What is your religious affiliation, if you have one? ______________________

4. What is your profession? ___________________________

5. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   □ High School or General Education Degree
   □ Undergraduate degree
   □ Master’s
   □ Doctorate

6. Are you affiliated with the University of Virginia?
   □ No
   □ Yes, Undergraduate student
   □ Yes, Graduate student
   □ Yes, Faculty or staff

7. Approximately how many countries have you visited (for work or leisure)?

8. Do you identify as American?
   □ Yes □ No
   
   A. If yes, with what ethnicity do you most identify? ______________________
   
   B. If no, with which nation do you most identify? ______________________

9. How did you hear about the Kluge-Ruhe Collection?
   □ Word of mouth       □ Signs            □ Brochure
   □ Radio               □ Web search       □ Other ___________
10. Have you traveled to or lived in Australia?
   □ No  □ Yes  □ I am planning a trip.

11. Is this your first visit to the museum?
   □ No  □ Yes

12. Would you have liked a map of the museum?
   □ No  □ Yes

13. Did you know anything about Aboriginal Australian art or culture before visiting the museum today?
   □ No  □ Yes

14. How much did you knowledge of Aboriginal culture increase as a result of your visit?
   □ 1 Not at all  □ 2  □ 3  □ 4 A significant amount

15. Of the information presented, what was most interesting to you?
   □ The art
   □ Aboriginal culture and people
   □ Both art and culture equally

16. Do you think it is important that the United States has a museum of Aboriginal Australian art?
   □ No  □ Yes
   
   Why?

17. What did you like about your experience at the museum today?

18. What would you have liked from your experience today that you did not get?

19. Do you plan to visit the museum again within the next 12 months, or the next time you visit Charlottesville?
   □ No  □ Yes

20. Will you recommend the museum to others?
   □ No  □ Yes

21. Please make any additional comment you wish.
REFERENCES

Altman, Jon


Australian Associated Press


Australian Bureau of Statistics


tat/0

Australian Bureau of Statistics


tat/0

Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet


Australian Institute of Health and Welfare

N.d. Accessed May 1, 2015

Bachman, Bill


Bardon, Geoffrey


Baum, Nicholas


Bell, Richard


Benjamin, Roger

1990 Aboriginal art: Exploitation or empowerment? Art in America 78(7)73-81.

Benjamin, Roger

Bennett, Lance


Bleumeziani


https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode


Boas, Franz


Bourgois, Philippe and Scheper-Hughes, Nancy


Butler, Rex

Caruana, Wally


Cerroni-Long, E.L.


Clifford, James


Cohen, Mark Nathan


Coleman, Elizabeth Burns

Cook, Timothy


Cooke, Martin, with Francis Mitrou, David Lawrence, Éric Guimond, and Dan Beavon


Coutts-Smith, Kenneth


Davidson, Helen

2014  “WA plan to close 100 remote and Indigenous communities 'devastating','”  

Dhathangu, Paddy (Attributed to)


Dhathangu, Paddy

1988-1990 *Wititj (Olive Python) with Eggs* [Painting]. Charlottesville, Virginia: Kluge
Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection. Photo taken May 2014.

DiAngelo, Robin


Dodson, Mick


Durrenberger, Paul E.


Edkins, Keith.


Falk, John and Dierking, Lynn

2013 The Museum Experience Revisited. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

Farmer, Paul


Geertz, Clifford

Golbez


Scale not given. Licensed under Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 via

Wikimedia Commons.

https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.5/legalcode


Green, Linda


Grenfell, Raymond


Accessed May 12, 2015.

http://importantcool.com/matagarup-the-fire-is-still-burning/

Gulunba, Anchor


Harvey, Julie

2014  *WE ARE TIWI*. Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia.

Henry, Jules


Kaylan, Melik
http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748703298004574459424048137960

Keesing, Roger


Keller, Christiane


Kennicott, Philip


Kimber, R.G.


Kleinert, Sylvia

Korn, Randi


Langton, Marcia


Linnekin, Jocelyn


Lipundja


Liyagalawumirr, Namiyal Bopirri and Gupapuyngu, Tony Djikululu


Loewenstein, Antony


Marika, Wandjuk

McCracken, Grant


McLean, Ian, ed.


McLoughlin, Matthew


Mead, Margaret


Michaels, Eric


(Original, 1989)

Mohammadi, Dara


http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/dec/05/detox-myth-health-diet-science-ignorance
Montgomery, Jill


Morphy, Howard


Morphy, Howard


Morphy, Howard


Mundine, Djon


Mundine, Djon

Myers, Fred


Myers, Fred


Myers, Fred


Myers, Fred


Myers, Fred


Napanangka, Sarah


National Museum of the American Indian

Neumann, Klaus


Nobletripe


http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Australia-climate-map_MJC01_1.svg

NordNordWest


https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/legalcode

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Aborigines-Regionen.png

Nowra, Louis


Olegzima

Perkins, Hetti, and Lynn, Victoria


Pilger, John


http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/nov/05/australia-apartheid-alive-aboriginal-history.

Rothwell, Nicolas


Smee, Sebastian


Smith, Terry

Smith, Terry


Smith Boles, Margo, ed.

1999 Art from the land: dialogues with the Kluge-Ruhe Collection of Australian Aboriginal art. Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia.

Survival International


www.survivalinternational.org

Sutton, Peter


Sutton, Peter and Anderson, Christopher


Tipungwuti, Conrad

Tjampitjinpa, Dini Campbell


Tjapaltjarri, Charlie Egalie


Wahlquist, Calla


Watson, Christine


Watson, Christine


Weber, Max

Willis, Anne-Marie and Fry, Tony


(Original, 1988-89)

Wonaemirri, Pedro


Wood, Elizabeth and Latham, Kiersten


Woodard, Colin


Wright, Robin

ENDNOTES

1. The Torres Strait separates Australia’s Cape York Peninsula from Papua New Guinea. Although this region is part of Queensland, Australia, Torres Strait Islanders are culturally and genetically considered Melanesian. “Melanesian” is also a problematic category.

2. Antony Loewenstein is a Sydney-based independent freelance journalist, author, documentarian, photographer and blogger. Among many others, he has written for the *Sydney Morning Herald, The Australian, Washington Post, Huffington Post, The Daily Star, The National, The Nation, and BBC World Service*. He is a columnist for *The Guardian*, a Research Associate at the University of Technology Sydney’s Australian Centre for Independent Journalism and an Associate at Sydney University’s Sydney Democracy Institute.

3. John Pilger is an Australian born journalist, writer and documentary filmmaker. In 1991 he won the *Richard Dimbleby Award* for Outstanding Presenter in the Factual Arena, in 2003 and 2004 he was nominated for the *BAFTA TV Award* for Best Current Affairs, and 2011 he won the *Grierson Trust Award* in the United Kingdom.

4. Professor Howard Morphy has done extensive research in Arnhem Land and is the Director of the Research School of the Humanities and Arts at Australian National University.

5. Per the Kluge-Ruhe, the word “attributed” here means that they were not certain that the artist of Figure 11, *Dhapalany (Itchy Caterpillars)* was Paddy Dathangu, but it probably is.

6. There was one response that described Aboriginal people as “sophisticated.” This patron was a college professor of art history and art education, and was quoted earlier in this thesis.

7. The answers of patrons with PhDs were confined to only two categories, A, to expose Americans to world cultures and B, to recognize marginalized people. Category A is the only category that represented all education levels.