'I Am the Old and the New[1]':
Aboriginal Arts in the Australian Art World, 1973-2018

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This study addresses changing representations of Aboriginal arts by an arts agency since 1973. It examines whether representations correspond with transformed arts programs or whether they are a continuation of the historical appropriation of Aboriginal arts by colonial-settler Australians. The images contribute to a particular system of meanings, ongoing challenges and change. There are moral claims about efforts to demonstrate self-determination among marginalised Aboriginal peoples. Our findings challenge expectations about images of arts, artists, and people in artistic leadership roles, revealing complex factors shaping the Australian art world during the period in which settler-colonial cultural values regarding Aboriginal peoples have shifted.

Keywords: annual reports, post-colonialism, arts

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1788 arrival of white people in the countries that came to be called Australia, Aboriginal peoples have been subjected to a policy of colonial genocide. The genocide of Aboriginal peoples in Australia has included massacres, punitive killings, the forced removal of children from parents, and dispossession from land, culture and language. This genocide continues to have deep and pervasive impacts for Aboriginal peoples today through a lack of political and community will to make meaningful reparations, ongoing social disparities, and racism (see: Atkinson, 2002; Davis and Langton, 2016; Gunstone, 2016; HREOC, 1997; Moses, 2004; Pascoe, 2007; Watson, 2009). Though oppressive practices are still in place, some small shifts began to take place in the history and culture of colonial-settlers in Australia in terms of their perceptions of Aboriginal peoples in the 1970s. These were underpinned by the 1972 establishment of the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts; the 1975 Racial

Discrimination Act; and the 1976 Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory Government 1) Act. Further shifts since then have included a Royal Commission into Aboriginal deaths in custody (1991), the overturning of the 'terra nullius' fiction that the land was uninhabited when Europeans arrived (1992), and the National Apology to the Stolen Generations (2008). Alongside these changes, and of interest to this paper, has been the establishment of the Australia Council for the Arts (ACA) in 1972. The emergence of contemporary Aboriginal arts in 1972 paralleled the establishment of the ACA and their Aboriginal Arts Board, which are examined in this paper in annual reports over 46 years, from the first annual report that appered in 1973 until 2018.
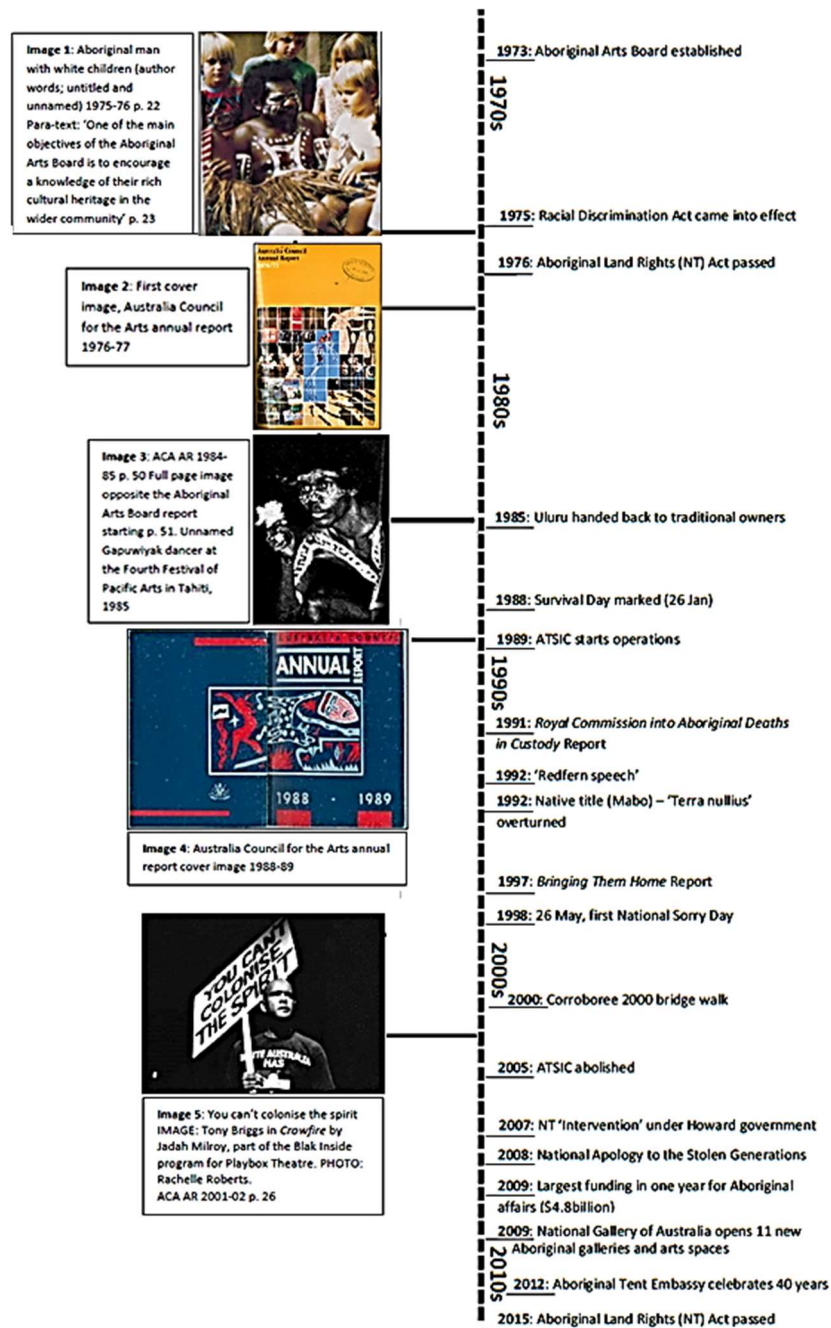
Against this background, the case is viewed from a post-colonial point of view (Fisher 2012; Venbrux 2002), which generally rejects a Eurocentric analysis of documents such as annual reports. In this case however, these reports are a key neo-colonial artifact that potentially reveals the largely European government's treatment of Aboriginality in the context of the arts. We focus on both the visual emphasis on and funding for Aboriginal arts between 1972 and 2018.

This period saw the emergence of new Aboriginal art forms and the slowly emerging recognition by colonial-settler Australia of Aboriginal artworks as 'art' rather than 'anthropological objects'. There was an explosion of global interest in Australian Aboriginal arts, signalled for example by the inclusion of art by Aboriginal visual artists Rover Thomas and Trevor Nickols in the 1990 Venice Biennale (Belk, & Groves, 1999).

This study seeks to reveal whether the representation of Aboriginal arts reflects and keeps pace with shifts in understanding of Aboriginal arts by colonial-settler society, Australian arts funding and leadership, and Australian society in general. To understand the representations of Aboriginal arts in Australia, we have undertaken a longitudinal analysis of changes in the content of images reproduced by the Australia Council for the Arts (ACA). These images are those reproduced in ACA ARs from 1972 until 2018. We have also sought to reveal the stories behind these images and what they can tell us about regard for Aboriginal arts and Aboriginal culture. We pursued this objective through photo elicitation interviews with key Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal government officials and arts leaders, who were engaged with the ACA over the period studied. The dataset produced through the longitudinal analysis together with the reflections of key players in Australian arts allows us to assess the extent to which representations of Aboriginal culture have changed, how these players account for these changes or non-changes, and whether a shift in the values ascribed by colonial-settler Australians to Aboriginal arts has taken place.

This paper provides reflections on the images provided to participants. Images included illustrations of art and artists from the annual reports as well as a figure that showed the funding of Aboriginal arts versus all other matters funded by the ACA. Figure 1 provides a timeline illustrating the key external events that impacted Aboriginal peoples in Australia over the period of this study, concatenated with a sample of the images that are the focus of this study.

FIGURE 1
TIMELINE OF EXTERNAL EVENTS AND IMAGES FROM AUSTRALIA COUNCIL FOR THE ARTS ANNUAL REPORTS

Image 1: Aboriginal man with white children (author words; untitled and unnamed) 1975-76 p. 22 Para-text: 'One of the main objectives of the Aboriginal Arts Board is to encourage a knowledge of their rich cultural heritage in the wider community' p. 23

Image 2: First cover image, Australia Council for the Arts annual report 1976-77

Image 3: ACA AR 1984-85 p. 50 Full page image opposite the Aboriginal Arts Board report starting p. 51. Unnamed Gapuwiyak dancer at the Fourth Festival of Pacific Arts in Tahiti, 1985

Image 4: Australia Council for the Arts annual report cover image 1988-89

Image 5: You can't colonise the spirit IMAGE: Tony Briggs in *Crowfire* by Jadah Milroy, part of the Blak Inside program for Playbox Theatre. PHOTO: Rachelle Roberts. ACA AR 2001-02 p. 26

1970s
1973: Aboriginal Arts Board established
1975: Racial Discrimination Act came into effect
1976: Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act passed

1980s
1985: Uluru handed back to traditional owners
1988: Survival Day marked (26 Jan)
1989: ATSIC starts operations

1990s
1991: *Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* Report
1992: 'Redfern speech'
1992: Native title (Mabo) – 'Terra nullius' overturned
1997: *Bringing Them Home* Report
1998: 26 May, first National Sorry Day

2000s
2000: Corroboree 2000 bridge walk
2005: ATSIC abolished
2007: NT 'Intervention' under Howard government
2008: National Apology to the Stolen Generations
2009: Largest funding in one year for Aboriginal affairs ($4.8billion)
2009: National Gallery of Australia opens 11 new Aboriginal galleries and arts spaces

2010s
2012: Aboriginal Tent Embassy celebrates 40 years
2015: Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act passed

The primary contribution of this study is its identification of the role arts councils play in classifying culture (Bowker, & Star, 1999; Lampland, & Star, 2008; Day, 2014), where images form an important part of identity creation but have been little studied within this domain. The provocative presence of different types of images in ACA ARs is framed by a growing literature on annual report content analysis, although seldom focussed on examining images (see: Rentschler et al., 2019). By analysing these annual report images, we derive deep insights into the role of Aboriginal art in representing Australian national identity.

Nothing of this sort has been done in this way before. While others have examined the annual reports of museums (see for example Alexander, 1996; Rentschler, & Geursen, 1999), arts councils have received little attention, leaving an opportunity to better understand post-colonial struggles. By comparing the trends in including Aboriginal arts images to the level of funding for Aboriginal arts, we reveal a great disparity and a systematic underfunding of Aboriginal arts.

The reading of the images of Aboriginal arts and peoples in ACA ARs is underpinned by Barthes' semiotics of denotation and connotation and of myth-making (Barthes 1973, 1977). In this reading, the images found in the ACA ARs are understood as a representational system. Australia's colonial history has produced a range of representational imagery from photographs of Aboriginal peoples to the co-opting of Aboriginal artwork. In these images, an intersection of connotative and denotative meanings produce readings of the coloniser and the colonised and of unnuanced stereotypes and mythologies about Aboriginal peoples. These narratives are heavy baggage, readable in some of the images of Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal art reproduced in the ACA ARs. Also, at work in the images reproduced by the ARs are the institutional ideologies and the power of representation held by the ACA. This paper argues that it is not possible to view the images of Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal art reproduced by the ACA through a neutral lens. In this, the authors do not negate the analyses of the images made by the participants, instead viewing them as readings that inform a complex picture of the disparities and contradictions at work in the historical championing of Aboriginal arts in Australia.

BACKGROUND

Over the past 50 years, the stance of various Australian government agencies towards Aboriginal peoples has changed toward respect (Lertzman, & Vredenburg, 2005), though this is arguably informed by reasons of capital and resource monopolisation. Over these five decades, the ACA has played a key role in reflecting as well as shaping the reception of Aboriginal arts in Australia and abroad (Mendelssohn, 2013). Thus, it is appropriate to examine retrospectively the challenges that the ACA has faced in making choices about Aboriginal arts funding over this period, informing ideologies that can be interpreted by examining images. Given the difficulty of directly assessing the Council's stance, we chose the indirect means of examining the content of its annual reports.

In seeking the shifting changing attitudes of colonial-settler society and of the government agency which has produced these images, we find that we must attend to the tropes and metaphors that implicitly vilify or venerate Aboriginal peoples and arts, often at the same time and sometimes in the same image. We also seek to understand why the decision to reproduce *these* images specifically was made.

The importance of Aboriginal cultural production within Australia is evident in government policies. These policies have increasingly recognised its role in simultaneously contributing to a vision of a collective cultural identity for all Australians seen in the external promotion of Australia while representing the continuation of the Australian assimilationist mindset. The role of Aboriginal cultural production in meeting these goals is largely a question of the cultural capital and national economic benefits of Aboriginal arts.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population represents 2.8 per cent of the national population according to the most recent census data (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016); yet the Aboriginal visual cultural sector alone contributes a disproportionately large component of more than $500 million to the Australian economy annually (Northern Territory Government: 2), outstripping the income produced by non-Aboriginal artists by three to one (Altman, et al., 2002). In addition, 28 per cent of Aboriginal people are creatively participating in the arts (Australia Council for the Arts 2015). Ninety-two per cent of Australians think that Aboriginal arts are an important part of Australian culture, but 54 per cent consider that Aboriginal arts are not well represented as part of the arts offerings (Grabowski, 2014). Increasing Aboriginal participation in the arts and culture fields has been paralleled by an increase in Aboriginal cultural recognition and renewal, and this has had a positive financial impact on Aboriginal communities (Cardamone, & Rentschler, 2008). This unique art also has an important impact on Australian tourism and adds social as well as economic value to Australia's Aboriginal peoples and the wider Australian community. Furthermore, the Aboriginal art market plays a significant role in promoting appreciation of

the accomplishments of Aboriginal culture both nationally and internationally and serves as a means of exporting national Australian culture (Myers, 2002).

Aboriginal Arts and the ACA

Aboriginal culture is more than 60,000 years old. A core component of Aboriginal culture is visual culture, with some media such as sand paintings and body painting being intentionally ephemeral and other media such as rock art lasting hundreds or thousands of years. This extensive heritage of cultural production has been manifesting traditionally in many forms such as painting, wood carving, rock etching, weaving, body adornment and performative practices. These traditions have been retained and at the same time, transformed into an exciting contemporary artistic paradigm. Contemporary Aboriginal arts and culture are seen in new media, contemporary dance, literature, acrylic paint on canvas, silkscreen prints, and glasswork, for example.

While Aboriginal art, coming as it does from the world's oldest living culture, has extensive historical roots and traditional practices, it is a vibrant and evolving tradition (Morphy, 1991; Myers, 1995, 2006). One of the signs that Aboriginal art had become globally recognised as high art as well as a key part of the image of Australia was the inclusion of two Aboriginal artists, in the 1990 Venice Biennale: Rover Thomas and Trevor Nickolls (O'Ferrall, 1990). Thomas and Nickolls represent different degrees of impact of colonial-settler consumer culture (Belk, & Groves, 1999). These two artists also represent the diversity of Aboriginal art; a diversity that extends into other Aboriginal art forms, including performing arts.

Over the past 40 or more years, there has been considerable policy debate and change in the use of arts and culture to pursue and achieve social and economic ends for Aboriginal peoples (Bridson et al., 2015). Due to profoundly damaging and pervasive colonial practices and policies, Aboriginal people in Australia carry the generationally accumulated social and economic impact of genocide. They are over-represented in the prison population, have been forcibly separated from both Country and family, have a suicide rate that is at level far exceeding that of non-Aboriginal people, an unemployment rate of 26 per cent, a historical legacy of unpaid wages for work, and an average income that is 55 per cent that of other Australians (Atkinson, 2002; Davis & Langton, 2016; Evans & Sinclair, 2015; Gunstone & Heckenberg, 2009). The Federal government spent A$7b on culture in 2012-13 and arts-related ticket sales generated A$1.5b in 2013. All told, cultural activity directly generates over A$7b to Australian GDP (ACA, 2015), and some multiple of this indirectly in activities such as tourism. Aboriginal arts play a crucial role in policy development. They are a vital part of the ACA's strategic plan as they 'strengthen cultural identity and wellbeing' (ACA, 2015: 30).

Hence, the ACA has positioned itself as playing a key role in changing colonial-settler attitudes toward Aboriginal peoples. It has helped to stimulate pride and a sense of belonging in the arts sector as well as provided opportunities to use arts and culture as a means for creating a sense of identity and a source of employment within an economy of disparity. The role of ACA stimuli in arts and culture has been reported widely in ACA ARs, as has the significant inequity of Aboriginal peoples in Australia.

The arts supported by the ACA can be produced, performed or exhibited in urban, regional or remote areas of Australia as well as internationally. As the ACA Chair, Sam Walsh stated in the AR in the 2017-18: *The arts matter. They are intrinsic to the individual lives of all Australians, our communities, our society, our futures.' (Australia Council for the Arts Annual Report, 2017-2018, p.2)*

This statement is supported by the statement about the ACA: 'Australian arts are without borders' (ibid., 8). The ACA functions pursuant to the 2013 Australia Council Act to provide a framework for arts support: it must be 'excellent,' 'diverse,' and 'promote community participation.' Further, Aboriginal arts are the only art form mentioned in Act as being of importance to Australian identity. Nonetheless, we know little about the centrality of Aboriginal art for the ACA as may be revealed in images in their annual reports and its funding practices.

The ACA, a statutory authority, is modelled on the post-World War II Arts Council of Great Britain (Johanson & Rentschler, 2002). Based in Australia's largest city, Sydney, on the east coast of Australia, the ACA has always been subject to politics and complaints of being Sydney-centric, favouring urban art over regional arts and having difficulty in balancing its competing objectives to fund 'excellence' in the arts as

well as to fund new, innovative and emerging arts (Gardiner-Garden, 2009; Rankin, 2018; Throsby, 2001). The ACA is totally funded by the Federal government which sits at arm's length from the Council's decision-making. It was established in 1972, but lobbying began in the broader socio-political environment of post-World War II reconstruction and the corresponding flowering of interest in the arts. It was in the 1960s and 1970s that major national cultural institutions were built with government assistance, including the Adelaide Festival Centre, the Sydney Opera House and the Arts Centre Melbourne. Chairs of the ACA were not artists but politicians, business leaders, academics or senior public servants. The ACA has a broad societal influence on arts institutions and arts-related policy-making of the state.

METHODS

To explore perceptions of ACA treatment of Aboriginal arts among the Australian arts community regarding Aboriginal art and artists, we chose to show a subset of images from the ACA ARs, we conducted Photo Elicitation Interviews (PEIs). In these interviews, a set of five images and one graph showing ACA funding allocated to Aboriginal arts were shown to participants in order to prompt discussion and reflection. The images comprised a small sample of images gathered through a larger research project, which coded all images from the ACA ARs between 1973 and 2018 (see Rentschler et al., 2019). The images selected for this research project were selected by the researchers as being representative of both Australian societal attitudes to Aboriginal people and arts and of the ACA's use of images of Aboriginal arts and artists (See Figure 1). Table 1 describes the rationale for the images selected.

TABLE 1
ACA IMAGES AND RATIONALE

ACA Image	Rationale
Image 1: An Aboriginal man (with another artist seated next to him, partly out of shot) demonstrating arts practice to a small group of white children. (ACA AR 1975-76)	This image shows a somewhat dated depiction of Aboriginal art in its staged depiction of both traditional craft and the performance of Aboriginal arts for a white audience. This image was chosen to prompt a discussion of what has changed since this image was published in relation to authentic depictions of Aboriginal arts and artists.
Image 2: First cover image showing a mosaic of different art forms, including Aboriginal arts (ACA AR 1976-77)	The first cover image was chosen to elicit responses about what is and what is not 'Aboriginal art' as part of an emerging Australian identity.
Image 3: Unnamed Gapuwiyak dancer at the Fourth Festival of Pacific Arts (ACA AR 1984-85)	This photograph was selected to elicit responses about the uniqueness and value of Aboriginal arts and artists to Australia and the ACA.
Image 4: Bicentennial year cover image showing an untitled graphic incorporating the ACA kangaroo logo (ACA AR 1988-89)	This photo was selected to prompt a discussion of the significance of Aboriginal arts and artists in the bicentennial year of white settlement, also prompting reflections on identity in Australia as exemplified through Aboriginal arts.
Image 5: Tony Briggs in *Crowfire* (ACA AR 2001-02)	This image was selected to elicit responses about the relationship between protest, politics and Aboriginal theatre as an artform, Aboriginal identity and Australian identity.
Graph of total ACA income and total Aboriginal Arts Board allocation from the ACA.	This graph was selected to evoke conversations on the importance of identity for the ACA using Aboriginal arts as the mechanism, balanced by conversations on

		the funding provided to support the development of Aboriginal arts.

The PEI method was selected for this study for its potential to unlock conversations and trigger memories (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2013; Matteucci, 2013: 193) through viewing and discussing images. Images prompt memories as they are associated with events (Belk, 1990). It also allows for a demonstration of the visual signs and signifiers at work within an image, asking participants to consider the multiple meanings and messages behind each image together with the broader myths about Aboriginal peoples and about Aboriginal arts that are reinforced through the images. This interpretive phenomenology was chosen for its emphasis on the lived experience (Vickers & Parris, 2007) and the meaning that narratives and images hold for individuals. The benefit of this approach is in aiding learning about the phenomenon from different perspectives: those of the organisation in the annual reports (ARs)and those of the individual in the interviews. This study is aimed at theory building based on rich, longitudinal content analysis, interviews and observations with a grounded theory and abductive approach (Belk, & Sobh, forthcoming).

By making use of visual data, we largely avoid the chance that the readings of the images by participants are influenced by the text of the ARs. It pursues a way of looking at images, and specifically photographs, with and without code as articulated by Barthes (1973). This also provides the space to supply interviewees' own readings, following Langton (2003) and Schroeder's (2002: 19) point that 'visual images demand verbal explanations.' The discursive approach focuses on the effects of representations, including their political implications (Hall, 1997). PEI allowed differing meanings and interpretations of the images to emerge (Collier, & Collier, 1986; Belk, 1990; Harper, 2002; Lapenta, 2012).

Participants and Data Collection

Photo Elicitation Interviews were carried out with ten participants. All participants are aged between 25 and 75 years of age, and all have experience with the ACA either in the workplace or in the arts ecology. All participants have extensive experience in Aboriginal arts, government arts funding, and/or arts organisations. Participants work as commercial gallerists, curators, Aboriginal art collectors, arts managers, arts board directors, government officials working in Aboriginal arts or as board members and staff in arts agencies (see Table 2). As research about Aboriginal people has historically had a negative impact on their lives and cultures (Myers 2002), it was important that this research engaged the voices of Aboriginal people. Accordingly, four of the participants are Aboriginal people.

TABLE 2
DEMOGRAPHICS OF INTERVIEWEES

Code	Role	Years in role	Age range	Aboriginal Participant	Gender	Skills
SH1	Chair	6	40-55		M	Philanthropist
SH2	Department head	15	40-55	x	F	Aboriginal department head
SH3	CEO non-profit arts organisation	10	40-55		M	Arts leader and social commentator with extensive experience in Aboriginal arts
SH4	Board director	3	56-65	x	F	Aboriginal arts leader; extensive experience in arts and festivals leadership, arts board chair roles
SH5	Government officer arts department	5	25-40		M	Significant experience as arts government official in arts departments

SH6	CEO non-profit arts organisation	5	66-75		M	Arts leader with extensive Aboriginal arts experience
SH7	Deputy chair	6	40-55	x	F	Aboriginal arts leader
SH8	Department head	15	56-65		F	Research department head
SH9	Nonprofit arts leader	2	56-65		F	Arts leader with extensive experience in nonprofits and government arts agencies
SH10	Government officer and arts agency employee	25	66-75	x	M	Aboriginal arts leader and government official

The PEIs were conducted in both pairs and one-on-one, in gallery settings and offices. Table 3 summarises the data sources.

TABLE 3
SUMMARY OF DATA SOURCES

Source	No.	No. of discussions
Interviews		
Board directors	3	2
Government and agency officials	3	2
Non-profit arts leaders	4	2
Total number of interviews	**10**	
Archival material		
Annual reports, including text, images and financial data	46	-
Media reports	20	-
Observations		
Observations in offices of those interviewed	3	-

Analysis

Following the PEIs, data were transcribed and thematically analysed using NVivo software to gain insights into the views and experiences of Aboriginal art and artists as described by the interviewees. The transcripts of each interview were inductively coded by a researcher not involved in the interview. The researcher who had conducted the interviews also coded a subsample to ensure that the themes were consistent and that there was a level of inter-rater comparability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The interview data were analysed using a phenomenological methodology, with intensive reading and re-reading of the combined narratives that emerged from the interview transcripts. An 'open coding' approach from grounded theory was employed (Strauss, & Corbin 1998). This technique entailed a line-by-line analysis of the interview data, allowing for all ideas and concepts to emerge from the transcripts. From here, the most prominent meaning structures of the images in the ARs for participants emerged.

The data presented in this paper illustrate the responses of participants to the images with which they were presented. Each participant had connections to the ACA. Therefore, participant anonymity is protected, and each participant has been assigned a label (SH standing for stakeholder).

FINDINGS

Three key meta-themes emerged from the analysis, which are discussed in turn:
1. Aboriginal Identity
2. Australian Identity
3. Funding

Aboriginal Identity

Participants were shown all the images in order (see Figure 1). Figure 1 shows all images as well as a timeline of key contemporaneous events, to guide the reader. All participants discussed the types of Aboriginal identity depicted in the images. Some mention key events in their responses. In this section, we focus on their reactions to Images 1, 3 and 5. These images exist in a cultural space in which Aboriginal peoples were (and continue to be) routinely stereotyped in their depiction (Langton, 1993) and in which tokenism and a lack of consultation persist. As Langdon writes: ... *there are the familiar stereotypes and the constant stereotyping, iconising and mythologising of Aboriginal people by white people who have never had any substantial first-hand contact with Aboriginal people (Langton 1993, p. 34).*

Indeed, as one non-Aboriginal participant who had worked for a government arts agency commented: *We always felt that [Aboriginal] people were getting a raw deal. It was tokenism. We did consultation in a way that wasn't culturally appropriate and was a tick the box exercise (SH10).*

However, when viewed as images removed from their historical context, images of Aboriginal artists and arts practices were overall seen by participants to be 'distinctive,' 'spectacular,' 'powerful,' or 'stunning,' and in particular 'distinctively Australian,' as 'they [the images] are more powerful than a thousand words' (SH8). The images were also seen to be 'defiant' and showing strong 'cultural conviction' (SH1), illustrating their importance to participants. However, it is possible that even seeing positive attributes such as strong culture in these images, as hooks describes, this is where representation slips into stereotyping, where: *however inaccurate, [stereotypes] are one form of representation. Like fictions, they are created to serve as substitutions, standing in for what is real. They are there not to tell it like it is but to invite and encourage pretence. They are a fantasy, a projection onto the Other that makes them less threatening. (Hooks 1992, p. 341).*

Image 1 is from the 1975-76 AR and shows an Aboriginal man demonstrating fibrecraft to a group of at least four white children, one of whom is seated on his knee. The man is bare-chested and is wearing white body and face paint. The para-text, also shown to participants, states: 'One of the main objectives of the Aboriginal Arts Board is to encourage a knowledge of their rich cultural heritage in the wider community' (23). No attribution is given to either the people in the image or to the photographer.

In looking at Image 1, participants generally agreed that the image was dated, showing a stereotypical 'white-Australia imagining' of Aboriginal people, particularly apparent in the 'chaperoning' of the Aboriginal artist by the group of white children. In this image, particular myths and essentialist notions about Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal arts are reproduced and reinforced as 'natural', reducing complex and mutable identities and arts production practices to simplistic constructions (Barthes 1973, 1977). Indeed, as one participant remarked: *you can't be broad brush about that, because there are so many different cultural entities... so many different nations of Aboriginal people ... so much around the Aboriginal art movement is yet another exploitation, is yet another ... it's not holistic in how it looks at the contribution Aboriginal people can make. (SH4).*

The tokenistic and exploitative tenor of these times was captured by the interpretation of one participant who was involved in the production of later ACA ARs: 'The smiling Aboriginal man and the white children; the children appear disengaged and look uncomfortable' (SH1), while for another participant the man is 'a bit like an animal, surrounded by white children. His space is invaded by others' (SH10). Another participant—a non-Aboriginal, non-profit arts leader and social commentator—in examining the image alongside the paratext interpreted it as a hypocritical and racist use of Aboriginal arts: *It strikes me as someone who's worked with Aboriginal people a lot that it's pretty hypocritical. (...). It struck me that they*

were using Aboriginal arts as a way for soft power, or cultural diplomacy, or whatever you want, that obscured the truth. (SH5).

Participants viewed the image as emblematic of the ways in which white Australia interacts with Aboriginal Australia. One participant pointed out that in the children we are seeing Australia: 'as represented by (...) blue-eyed blond-haired children' (SH2). The presence of mainstream or normative Australia is seen in the white children who, in a sense, chaperone the Aboriginal artist, letting us know that this image is for consumption by a white Australian audience. Something unknown (Aboriginal arts) is being opened up to the white audience through the children: 'in some respects, it tells you that here's knowledge that's going to be imparted' (SH2). In this sense, Aboriginal identity is not something that the intended audience is thought to be able to identify with beyond a tokenistic or stereotypical representation. As one participant highlighted, 'this image reflects a tokenism that existed at the time. It's four little white kids sitting, and the Aboriginal elder in [this] context is (...) interesting' (SH6).

These readings of the images are complex. On the one hand, they are influenced by the mythological level of the image, which, as previously noted, presents certain reductive readings of identities or production as natural and simplistic, and also by participants' intellectual and experiential understandings of the people and objects in the images. However, the reading of images is also impacted by the context of the image, of its presentation as an image which appeared in the annual report of the ACA but also in the viewing of the image in the context of an interview. The use of the word 'interesting' by participant SH6, while requiring further interrogation, points perhaps to an unwillingness to engage in overt criticism of the ACA.

However, all participants in their reading of Image 1, engaged in a projection of one sort or another of their understanding of what was happening in the image and what the aim of reproducing it might have been. While Participant SH6 concealed their conjecture behind the word 'interesting', for another participant, an Aboriginal arts leader, the production and selection of this and other images by the ACA had implications for the image of the ACA itself: *I'm interested to know who is controlling the images and who decides. Because I know from the work that we do, as a board and as an executive team, we always check in with each other, is this the story that we're trying to tell, does this reflect our work, does this align with some strategic missions that we're doing, and our goals, and it's ... really important that through imagery that we tell our story (SH7).* Appearing nearly a decade after Image 1, Image 3, from the 1984-85 AR, is a close-up, full-page internal black and white image of an Aboriginal dancer with painted upper body and face, holding what might be feathers. The unnamed dancer, the paratext tells us, is from Gapuwiyak in north-eastern Arnhem Land, and he is performing at the Fourth Festival of Pacific Arts in Tahiti in July 1985. The image is credited to photographer Michael Riley.

Unlike the artist in Image 1, the dancer of Image 2 is not depicted as demonstrating his art to white people. Instead, he is representing his culture among others in the region. Participants reflected on the apparent autonomy of the cultural representation of the dancer, which was lacking in Image 1: *Images that show strong cultural conviction such as that image of the dancer, whilst it may not be a traditional image of what you might call protest, nevertheless, it's a defiant, powerful image (SH6).* Another participant shared with us: *Because so much through history has been denied that there's been a time where, gathering of what's left or salvaging what's left of stories or song lines and dance, is really important (SH7).*

The reading of this image is, therefore, somewhat different from that of Image 1. As he is shown alone, participants read power and autonomy into his image as well as a continuation of cultural practice. While both of these things might also be readable in Image 1, Image 2 might also be just as staged or tokenistic as participants perceived Image 1 to be. Indeed, again, the selection of this image by the ACA altered its reading. Participants described Image 3 as reflecting the uniqueness of Aboriginal art to Australia and the country's dependence on Aboriginal arts and artists for developing a national identity that can serve as a "brand" for Australia, enhancing the value of the artist and of the ACA along with it. However, the creation of this value in the time of Image 3 (and beyond) has been decided by non-Aboriginal people and a non-Aboriginal arts agency. As one participant commented, 'who's got the right to tell what story' (SH7).

Together with Images 1 and 3, Image 5 also elicited strong responses about Aboriginal identity, although this time the discussion centred on agency and activism. Image 5 shows Tony Briggs in a performance of Jadah Milroy's Crowfire from the 2001-02 AR. It is a black and white image, showing

Briggs holding a placard reading 'YOU CAN'T COLONISE THE SPIRIT' and wearing a T-shirt reading 'White Australia Has' above the Aboriginal flag. The rest of the slogan on his T-shirt is cropped from the image, but it is likely to be 'A Black History'.

This is one of the few overtly political images in the ACA ARs, although it is embedded in a play, potentially making it more palatable to ACA AR stakeholders. However, it is also taking place at a time in Australian society of political activism and demonstration—for Aboriginal justice, for reconciliation, against the Vietnam war, for refugee rights, for example. Indeed, interviewees viewed the image as 'confronting,' illustrating the 'impact of colonisation on Aboriginal people,' giving 'insight into politics of the time' (SH4). Another participant came to a conclusion that: *It reads like it is part of community theatre because of the placard, which was big at the time. It's obviously raising awareness. ... really changing the representation of Australian people. (SH4)*

It is interesting that this participant viewed this image in terms of its temporal positioning in theatre ('big at the time') rather than within the broader and continuing history of Aboriginal activism and the temporal backdrop of a rising protest culture. However, one participant also considered the ways in which the arts might play a role in changing the representation of Aboriginal people: *It just goes to show that perhaps the arts have been really instrumental in that. You know, it's not something that's been softened or made nice to make the story nice. It seems as though it's a fairly confronting vocal piece of art, the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal society and Aboriginal people (SH4).*

One participant, who had worked for five years in Aboriginal arts community leadership roles, also reflected on the informing culture in the arts in Australia at the time of Image 5 that might have influenced its selection for publication: *It would be interesting to know when the leadership of the Aboriginal Arts Board changed ... Leaders can be a force [for change] ... Leaders can be activist in their work. ... It goes to the culture behind the issues ... you can't colonise the spirit or the heart (SH6).*

On looking at Image 5, an Aboriginal participant extended the conversation to reflections on Aboriginal theatre and also on the possibility that this image may be just as stereotypical as Image 1 in its understanding of Aboriginal arts: *There was also a decline in Aboriginal theatre. They are playing to the gallery. Neorealist plays and cutting-edge plays at the Festival of the Dreaming has been left behind. I've seen how theatre has been an algorithm of what to tick if you want to get a grant. There's no investment in theatre. You can get on stage with a placard. It is bleak. There was something based on real life, rather than a platform for yelling at the audience. You need to be more subtle than that for art. How easily people become pigeon-holed or stereotyped and angry. You expect it. (SH10).* While this comment is of interest in its calling out of the myth of the 'angry Aboriginal person' suggested in this image, the subjective call for subtlety in art is challenged by another participant, an Aboriginal arts leader, who described the necessity for art to be confrontational in order to fight against the ongoing disenfranchisement of Aboriginal people in Australia: *It just goes to show that perhaps the arts have been really instrumental in [changing the representation of Aboriginal people]. You know, it's not something that's been softened or made nice or to make the story nice (SH4).* While this anger might appear stereotypical or 'algorithmic,' SH4 also reminds us that it is anger in response to the history—of uneasy relations, disenfranchisement and genocide—that is concealed in Images 1 and 3.

Australian Identity

Reflections on Australian identity in general, and more specifically in relation to Aboriginal identities or Australia's history of immigration and its colonial history, emerged when participants viewed Images 2 and 4. In general, participants saw these ARs as providing the Australian public more broadly as well as the arts community specifically with Australia's 'uniqueness as a country' presented visually through its arts (SH2). One participant, an Aboriginal departmental head, noted that the representation of this uniqueness, needed to represent as many Australian identities as possible: *... it is an interplay by putting an array of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal peoples together so that people talk about Aboriginal interests (SH2).* An attempt to depict the range of Australian identities in the arts is visible in the 1976-77 AR when an image was used on the cover for the first time. This image (Image 2) is a collage of seven images, showing a range of art forms overlaid with a white grid. Four images are unattributed, and three reproduced

with attribution inside the AR. The images are, clockwise from top left: the queue for the *Chinese Exhibition* at the Art Gallery of South Australia (attributed inside the AR); a bark painting of a crocodile (unattributed); three male performers from Bob Barnard's Jazz Band on stage at the Old Push in Sydney (attributed inside the AR); the shadows of three people throwing objects into the air (unattributed); six of the entered and prize-winning books of the *Children's Book of the Year Awards* (attributed inside the AR); a theatre performance (unattributed); and, in the centre, a kite flying in the sky (unattributed).

The majority of participants, when reflecting on the many art forms and cultures visible in Image 2, placed a particular emphasis on what the ACA might have been attempting to achieve in this collage image and what might have been influencing this type of image. For example, one participant commented on the ACA's attempt to be representative and inclusive: 'Well, I think they're trying to be multi-cultural. I think that they're trying to ensure they include multiple cultures and multiple art forms' (SH4). Some participants also felt that Image 2 reflected contemporary societal and governmental shifts toward presenting an outward image of Australia as a multicultural nation, with Image 4 reflecting this emphasis on multiculturalism. As a male government official advised: *It speaks a lot to multiculturalism which was a big deal within the arts at the time. You can see Asian images, some Asian style writing. I'm not sure which ones, probably Chinese. The kites look Asian. Obviously, there is Aboriginal work. (SH5)*

As with Participant SH4's reading of Image 5, this participant understands this image in terms of its temporal positioning. However, in so doing, they layer what they see with what they might expect to see within the context of the broader push for multiculturalism of this period within the arts and the government. Here, philosopher Marshall McLuhan's famous dictum: 'The medium is the message' comes to mind. The images on the cover of the ACA AR in Image 5 are part of a larger whole. They are both images presented together in a larger mosaic, and they are images presented on the cover of the ACA AR. They are not, therefore, easily readable (nor intended to be read) as stand-alone images. Instead, these images are a composition intended to supplement an existing understanding of Australia at the time as a multicultural nation. The kites and the writing in the cover image are 'Asian' because that is what would be expected of a major arts agency of this period. Equally the inclusion of Aboriginal art is 'obvious' for the same reason.

For some participants, the message was too big for its medium. One participant expressed frustration with attempts to cover everything in a cover image, referring positively to the more recent ACA reports, which have a plain red cover: 'the imagery on the front cover of reports is a bit of a minefield. I think the simplest thing to do is just have the blank, you know, like those red ones' (SH5). This is a bold instruction for an agency which, in a very broad sense and in part, deals in the visual. While the desire here is perhaps for the neutral, however, in subsuming absence with neutrality a different sort of connotation emerges.

Participants also expressed confusion about what the images were actually of: 'I can't quite make out some of the other images' (SH5). As noted earlier, some of the images on the cover shown in Image 2— for example the bark painting—are unattributed even within the inside pages of the AR itself. Throughout the interviews, the attribution given to images emerged as being of great importance to participants, who described a need to know not only *what* was being looked at, but *whose work* was being looked at. This issue came up most markedly when participants viewed Image 4.

Image 4 is another AR cover image, this time from the 1988-89 AR. The cover is dark blue with 'Australia Council Annual Report' in red and white at the top of the front cover and '1988 – 1989' in light blue at the bottom. Between this text is a rectangular box which spans the front and back cover. The box contains a series of figurative images in red, white and light blue. The images include a mask or face shape, a stylised human figure, a spotted dog, musical notes, red flashes, snake-like shapes, and the red kangaroo logo of the Australia Council for the Arts which was developed for the ACA in 1983. This logo has been used in their publications in some form ever since 1983. There is no artist/designer attribution given for this cover image.

A number of participants saw the images that comprise Image 4 as 'reminiscent of Mambo' and as incorporating 'a number of art forms and styles' (SH4) in the patterns, designs and colours, illustrating the influences being used in collage form. Mambo was a group of Australian graphic artists with a distinct and irreverent style (e.g. Johnson, 1994). Mambo was initially influenced by Hawaiian 'Aloha' shirts and was

popular within street/skate/surf culture in Australia, cementing its popularity during the bicentennial year when it was the sponsor of a surf music festival in Sydney (McAuliffe, 2017).

Participants also commented on the use of this type of image—a quasi-Mambo image of kangaroos and masks—as being an attempt to establish a uniquely Australian identity: *It was a time that Australia was trying to put a stamp on its own culture and start reflecting on its Australian-ness. That's not just the purely earlier 50s and 40s royal British culture. There must have been a greater awareness of the history of the place, the attributes and the contribution (SH4).*

This reading of the attempt to present a uniquely Australian identity that is separate from the 'British' version of Australian identity which positions an Australian culture that is universally (in the confines of Australia) relatable. However, this is problematic in terms of the flattening-out of cultures that takes place when the universality is presented by a largely white arts agency. As Freydberg (2004, p. 282) reminds us: *Western society continually espouses the need for universality in art. But this has become an excuse to give the public a homogenized universality that appeals solely to White people.* In its use of these objects, Image 4, therefore, brought up marked questions of appropriation due to the lack of attribution for the image and the appropriation of particular images as culturally homogenous. As one participant commented: 'Given the year of it, I'd be worried that it's just been appropriated. That would be my first instinct in that it probably has been' (SH5). That this 'worried' participants in a way that Image 2 did not, is of particular interest. Image 4 is more overtly a pastiche, and a highly stereotypical one at that, of Aboriginal arts compared to Image 2, which contains what appears to be an authentic, though unattributed, artwork (the bark painting of the crocodile). Another participant, a non-Aboriginal arts leader with extensive Aboriginal arts experience, expressed frustration at the lack of respect for Aboriginal arts and people demonstrated by Image 4: *It is awful.... Okay. So, we've got a central image of a spotted dog that is reminiscent of an Aboriginal dog perhaps, but maybe not. It could be any bloody dog, couldn't it? Okay? This is trying to do too many things, to be too inclusive, and gives respect to no one. So, this is trying to be a snake with apparent cross-hatching that might be an Aboriginal [style], but it got the head cut off, and does no respect to ... I reckon this has been created by a non-Aboriginal person because no Aboriginal person would [dis]respect their totem by [cutting] it up. (SH6).*

The lack of attribution, particularly of Aboriginal artwork, in Images 2 and 4 is a problem; the potential that Aboriginal artwork is being produced by a non-Aboriginal artist is doubly problematic, as one participant, non-Aboriginal philanthropist, describes: *It would be a terrible thing if they were Aboriginal markings made by non-Aboriginal people to get an Aboriginal flavour, and if it is that we all need to protect ourselves. Now, that would be very culturally inappropriate (SH1).* However, what Image 4 tells us about Australian culture is of interest. Here is a culture which appropriates and erases. While one participant commented that he didn't 'think the Australia Council now would be very proud of that cover' (SH6), one participant, an Aboriginal woman and Aboriginal arts leader, spoke of the bravery and energy on the part of Aboriginal people that seems to help white Australia move on from these kinds of ways of representing Aboriginal art and engaging with Aboriginal stories and culture: *I read a lot of scripts by non-Aboriginal people both internationally and nationally who have got, Aboriginal content within it, and there's a new narrative that's coming out [of] inclusivity. It's almost like you will naturally get things wrong or things might feel uncomfortable but we have to be brave and go there, and make those mistakes and go, okay well how do we walk together and guide each other to have an authentic, and storytelling that has integrity, and that it's being guided by the right voices (SH7).*

In reflecting on the Australian identities apparent in the images, it became clear that participants tended to focus on the attempts at national imagery, which they found lacking in representation in ACA covers in particular. However, for some, there was also an element of frustration at how best to achieve an AR that represented the diversity of identities: *This is an annual report from a public agency, which has a responsibility to service the Australian public and also artists, saying what is our uniqueness as a country. This is an outward looking document, that as we always do say within the AR text is the unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures. ... we are conveying that. That's our responsibility. [However] if we promoted that and people did not see themselves in the images, then people would invariably question our arts, asking: 'For me, where am I in this?* Participants interrogated themselves about Australian identity

which has shifted between 1973 and 2018, as illustrated in the ACA ARs, challenging features that were seen as central and distinctive to the organisation. As reported, participants doubted the institutional presentation of Australian identity in some cases, referring to internal and external events as providing pressures that prompted one to question: is this really who we are?

Funding

After participants had viewed and reflected on the five images from the ACA ARs, they were shown a graph of the ACA funding and Aboriginal Arts Board funding from 1973–2018. Figure 2 illustrates the funding allocations to Aboriginal arts and artists compared with the funding provided by the Federal government to the whole ACA. As can be seen, it shows the growth in ACA funding versus the flat-lining of Aboriginal arts funding over time. The differences in the art form funding allocations were completely unexpected. For us, those results came after editing the narrative and visual stories that dominated the ARs of the value of Aboriginal arts and artists and the central role they played in developing an Australian national identity.

The initial reaction of participants to Figure 2, was not surprising, but frustration at the continued disenfranchisement of Aboriginal people in Australia represented here in the funding of Aboriginal arts. They called it 'appalling' (SH4 and SH6) and something that 'breaks my heart' (SH4). Others saw it as 'clumsy institutional racism' and 'an utter disgrace' (SH3) that led to such a funding distribution for Aboriginal arts at the ACA. Drawing clear relationships between funding decisions such as this and the ongoing dispossession of Aboriginal people in Australia, two participants, a non-Aboriginal arts leader with experience in Aboriginal arts and an Aboriginal arts leader respectively, point out: *We could call it utter appropriation of something we don't fund properly. Dominant cultures hold out their hand in friendship to non-dominant cultures BUT at the same time withdraw funding and blame the poor on their own poverty! (SH3).* This comment could be interpreted as colonial/white guilt. The comment is bookended by the disappointment in and anger at both the social history and the impotence of guilt (Cunneen 2008) of those who may feel uncomfortable at being privileged survivors. This view is apparent in the following comment: *If we talk about closing the gap, if we talk about a lot of the societal issues and a lot of the health outcomes, marginalisation, disenfranchising, disempowerment, we know that Aboriginal culture is about connection to country and expression of stories, sharing of culture. That connection to culture is absolutely key to the well-being of Aboriginal people. ... an investment in that area would have a huge impact. ... so much around the Aboriginal art movement is yet another exploitation. (SH4)*

Each of these comments moot and mute one another. Further, the latter comment is interpreted as being a recognition of a blind spot in relation to Aboriginal arts funding that requires a cognitive shift if equity and reparations are to occur. Values like fairness are inculcated into AR narratives but are not enacted on the ground in relation to fair acknowledgement of artistic contribution, either in price of art work or attribution of the work. Racial discord is the result while white leaders are unable to understand why their investment is not lauded. One participant, a non-Aboriginal philanthropist, reflected on the lack of funding as being due to a lack of internal advocacy within the ACA: *The areas that are under-funded are literature and Aboriginal arts. There is profound underfunding of these two areas. There are no great advocates inside the ACA for them. Not any more at least (SH1).* One Aboriginal former government official reinforced this point. He succinctly summarised the problem that Aboriginal arts and artists have no power: 'they clearly have no power or leverage. It takes a circuit breaker to change it' (SH10).

The amount of funding afforded to Aboriginal arts was raised by the Aboriginal arts leader cited earlier as in fact being more marked than might appear on paper, given the added financial cost needed to produce Aboriginal art: *The other thing is, from my experience, a lot of the Aboriginal art is going to cost a lot more money. Because of remoteness, because of translation, because of a whole range of things. It's outrageous (SH4).* However, other participants considered that ACA was not the only source of funding for Aboriginal arts: *You'd need to pay attention to what degree federal funds were allocated to Aboriginal arts and cultural groups through different avenues. (SH5).* This assumption, posited by a non-Aboriginal government official, may be self-serving, given the finding that Aboriginal arts funding did not increase over time. The notion that funding for Aboriginal arts may be coming from other federal sources was challenged by a non-

Aboriginal art leader, who also highlighted the funding that was brought to Australia through the use of this very art in its international promotions: *It is squibbing with the truth to say that we need to look more widely than ACA funding to see what is fair for Aboriginal arts funding. ... Uluru, Great Barrier Reef and Sydney Opera House are together $1 billion in branding for Australia. It is pillage, and there is a trove of explosion of Aboriginal creativity in Aboriginal arts centres, and they do an incredible amount of work for the taxpayer yet we fund it for little money. We trade on it to fill hotels, restaurants. Yet we clumsily, not deliberately, take from the Aboriginal peoples their heritage without due payment for it. (SH3).* This participant also argued that it is possible to change the funding envelope if the will is there: *Australia is a rich nation. We can't be mesmerised by the dollars. Priorities must change for two decades into the future, to allow the inequities to be reversed. Then we can revert. ... It is not about funding. It is about priorities. (SH3).* A proposal by an Aboriginal arts leader was whether '25 per cent of [ACA] funding' (SH7) should go to Aboriginal arts, as they are one of four strategic areas in the ACA, rather than the present funding of less than 10 per cent.

In sum, the stories evident through the images in the ACA ARs and the perceptions shared by the majority of participants tell of the prominence given to the story of Aboriginal arts, dominated by frustration at issues of appropriation, tokenism and lack of consultation, in the ARs is evident by their presence on covers and internally. While the ACA has positioned Aboriginal arts as 'uniquely Australian' (SH5) and has made great use of images of Aboriginal art and artists in its reporting materials, the centrality of Aboriginal arts to the ACA story is not reflected in the funding allocated to it over time.

FIGURE 2
ACA FUNDING AND ABORIGINAL ARTS BOARD FUNDING 1973-2018
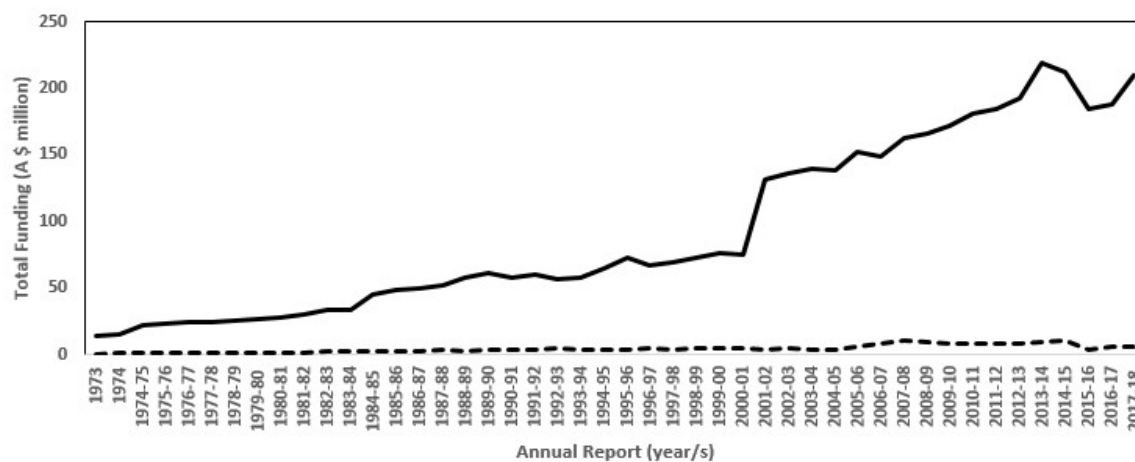
Dotted line: Aboriginal funding allocated from ACA
Solid line: ACA Budget allocated by the Australian government

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Australia Council for the Arts assistance of Aboriginal arts has no doubt improved the economic status and identity of Aboriginal peoples; however, it seems clear that Aboriginal art was appropriated and under-funded. In narrative terms, the analysis of images and the interviews show an association that is surprising as irreplaceable images may not only be appropriated in some years, but funding does not empower under-resourced Aboriginal artists and arts organisations that are often regionally and remotely located.

In line with Barthes' (1973) association between indices, "facts," and suppression of minorities, our data support a conclusion that Aboriginal artists face barriers in finding a way forward that overshadows ACA achievements in its key role in developing the Aboriginal arts industry. Funding for arts and artists in predominately remote locations requires a shift in policy and practice. The result at the ACA level is

diminished performance of the arts industry while many artists in it remain in poverty. The period studied has seen the ACA unable to acknowledge the tensions that lie beneath the surface, contributing to broken trust, disgruntled stakeholders and an inability to obtain higher benefits from greater artistic diversity. By losing the funding battle participants considered that it diminishes the value of Aboriginal arts and artists in the eyes of the public.

The participants, all with experience with the ACA either in the workplace or in the arts ecology, were on the whole unwilling to engage in overt criticism of the ACA, adopting either a veiled or rhetorical approach to problems that the images raised. Such a stance could be due to perceived power differentials of the federal funding body or their own counter-view that the ACA also took a lead role in developing the Aboriginal arts industry.

Therefore, the broader context of the 'interview' itself must not be ignored. Participants were selected for their professional expertise and, as such, some presented as being under pressure to remain 'on message,' presenting official government views. This may explain the hesitancy to overtly critique the ACA. Indeed, in a PEI interview, this goes beyond being merely contextual and becomes the 'moment of interpretation' (Livingstone 2007). The responses presented in this paper are those gathered at the moment at which participants are viewing these images and the presence of an interviewer, audio-recorder, and lack of time to reflect on and research the images in question must be taken into account.

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants alike in this study were willing to read these images as being representative of their contemporary contexts, for example of a governmental emphasis on multiculturalism or the depiction of protest in theatre, rather than in terms of the decisions made by the ACA to select these images (rather than other images) and what these decisions meant. As a whole, participants tended not to offer any reflection on how the decisions made by the ACA to use particular images was a reflection either of the ideology of the ACA or on what artistic decisions might be made by today's ACA.

The discourse surrounding the racialised body was the focus of the participants. The images were largely read by participants in terms of the wider context of the coloniser and the colonised with an eye for the reproduction of negative stereotypes and mythologies about Aboriginal people and Aboriginal arts. This is largely contextual. Participants were taking part, after all, in an interview to examine the representation of Aboriginal arts and artists by the ACA. Despite this, participants remained largely un-intersectional in their reflections. For example, while the majority of participants discussed the representation of women on boards, none discussed the absence of images of Aboriginal women in the five images chosen.

The approach of showing images to participants initially without funding or textual information reflects the *paradox of the photograph* as presented by Barthes (1973). This is where Barthes refers to the image with or without code. According to Barthes and in our study, the photograph is not like other art forms. This is because the relationship between the photograph and what is captured is not arbitrarily fixed. For example, image making is coded through interpretation, mimicking a type of reality. As participants considered images without text (i.e. without code), they focused their interpretation on the image. By showing participants images without text, they respond to images in a different way. In the transition of Aboriginal art from anthropological object, we may be seeing the reverse in ARs, where the coded image shifts from an anthropological object to act as a "display" for ARs.

Hence, images are powerful, emotive and uplifting, but often stereotypical, with the use of Aboriginal arts and artists shown as increasingly integrated into colonial-settler society. Prior findings support the argument that images are can cue memories (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2013; Collier, & Collier, 1986). The use of imagery as identity, presaging the emergence of Australian national identity, shows Aboriginal artefacts, arts and artists in "traditional" and in-country settings giving way to contemporary and sometimes (but rarely) images that recall the ongoing genocide of Aboriginal peoples. This suggests a strategy that is aligned with ACA's stewardship both as a resource provider for Aboriginal arts, and a change-maker, pushing for contemporaneity and innovation. These observations are in line with comments by Langton (2003) on the power of Aboriginal images and by Schroeder (2002) on the need for 'verbal explanations' of images due to their sometimes overt or covert political implications (Hall, 1997). It is through these interpretive lenses that meanings are attributed to images (Belk, 1990; Rentschler et al., 2019), drawing on

connotations and symbolism. We find a sharp disconnect between images as symbols and the funds allocated to Aboriginal arts.

This study probed the experience and attitudes of a small group of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants with professional experience of the ACA on a set of images representing Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal arts from the ACA ARs. Participants provided a reading of the five images with which they were presented that focused on both the white colonial construction of myths around Aboriginal identity and culture as reproduced by some of the ACA AR images. While the role of the ACA in reproducing these mythologies was not probed in detail, the picture that emerged was of a complex historical relationship between arts bodies and Aboriginal arts. The images reproduce damaging myths and raise issues of appropriation, tokenism and lack of consultation while being mobilised through their use in an annual report to promote the work of the ACA. But they also show an agency dedicated to developing an Aboriginal arts industry for which the ACA should be lauded, while imperfectly implemented.

ENDNOTE

1. One of the Aboriginal participants in the research presented in this paper used these words, reflecting (i) the retrospective exhibition of the same name by Aboriginal artist, John Mawurndjul, at the Art Gallery of South Australia, October 2018-January 2019 as part of the Tarnanthi Aboriginal arts festival, and (ii) her knowledge of the place of history and tradition for Aboriginal peoples balanced against living in contemporary society.

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