

UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY, SYDNEY

A critical investigation into the way in which art works demonstrate and contribute to the construction and changing perceptions of national identity in Australia as reflected in the public collections and institutions responsible for collecting and displaying these art works

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This thesis discusses the means by which the collection and exhibition of art works, primarily by Australian public collections and institutions, reflect and construct national identity, whether consciously or unconsciously. Cultural history and 'national identity' have become areas of particular interest in the available literature as there has been a significant re-evaluation of Australian history in recognition of the fact that a single linear account of history no longer provides an accurate version of the Australian story. This shift has been largely due to societal and political changes in the Australian communities which have facilitated the recognition of diverse groups and the telling of their own stories. This account looks at five major areas of interest – the role of museums, landscape, portraiture, Indigenous art and contemporary art in Australia. Art museums, their acquisition, exhibiting and publication policies and practices, clearly contribute in some formative way, to the images and dialogues around how Australians see themselves domestically and internationally, and to the image projected overseas through the visual arts. Critical and public responses have not always been positive, especially from some of the more conservative commentators, despite the best attempts of art-practitioners and advocates.

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Table of Contents

| | | |
|-----------|---|----------|
| | Introduction | Page 4 |
| Chapter 1 | Role of the Museum | Page 19 |
| Chapter 2 | Where the bloody hell are we? The Australian landscape | Page 52 |
| Chapter 3 | What does 'Australian' look like? A fascination with faces | Page 80 |
| Chapter 4 | The rise and rise of indigenous art | Page 111 |
| Chapter 5 | The shock of the new! Contemporary art in Australia | Page 163 |
| | Conclusion | Page 187 |
| | Bibliography | Page 194 |