Lectures Tuesday 10:00 a.m. Broad Room  Spring 2019

Apr 9  Introduction how and when Aborigines/Indigenous people reached Australia; Dreamings and myths; Aboriginal art for decoration and ceremony; rock art.
Apr 16  BBC Documentary - The Art of Australia 2 of 3 Coming of Age  58 minutes; History of Australian Art Part 1 - Colonial Art 1788-1888  20 minutes.
Apr 23  Indigenous art-producing communities; Albert Namatjira & Hermannsburg school 1940s & 50s; symbols used in painting; bark & sand painting; dots & rarrk (hatching); David Malangi, George Milpurrurruru, Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri.
Apr 30  Contemporary Aboriginal Artists; Commercialization of Aboriginal art style; “Lost Generation ” art; Warlimpirrnga Tjapaltjarri, Emily Kngwarray, Michael Jagamara Nelson
May  7  Art of Colonial Australia 1788-1885; Heidelberg School 1885-96; Likeness and Unlikeness: The American-Australian Experience.
May 14  Post-Impressionists 1913-38 de Maistre, Cossington Smith, Heysen, Preston, Wakelin; Archibald Prize for portraiture
May 21  Postmodern: Angry decade 1938-47 new tone of discontent, art as a tool of protest; Dobell, Drysdale, Boyd, Counihan, Nolan, Tucker, Bergner, Mack, Vassilieff; Social realists 1940; Expatriates: Philips Fox, Jeffrey Smart
May 28  Antipodeans 1959 (pro-figurative art): Boyd, Blackman, Brack, Dickerson, Perceval; Sydney 9  (pro-abstract art) Olsen, Crowley, Fairweather, Williams;
Jun  4   Commercial art: Ken Done; abstract art: Senbergs, Lynn, Dawson; Jørn Utzon and Sydney Opera House.
Art of Australia

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Chronology of Australian Art

1. Aboriginal Art/Terra Nullius ("nobody's land") from ~40,000 to present

2. Art of Colonial Australia 1788-1885

3. Nationalism, Federation & the Question of Modernism
   Grand nature landscape painting
   Heidelberg school Australian Impressionism 1885-96
   Post-Impressionists 1913-38
   The “angry penguins/decade” 1938-47

4. Postmodern and Postcolonial Australia
Australian Art: Definition

Australian art is any art made in Australia or about Australia, from prehistoric times to the present. This includes Aboriginal, Colonial, Landscape, Atelier, early twentieth century painters, print makers, photographers, and sculptors influenced by European modernism and by contemporary art.
Is Australian Art unique/separate?

- Aboriginal rock art dates back to somewhere between 30,000-50,000 years and is unique.

- Whether art created by Europeans who colonized and now live in Australia (non-indigenous) is separate from art works from Europe or North America is debatable.
Aborigine

• **Latin:** *Aborigines (ab origine)* those who originally inhabited Latium

• One of the earliest known inhabitants of a country; one of the native race, esp. as contrasted with an invading or colonizing race

• Australian Aborigines do not use this term when referring to themselves, preferring designation by *tribal language group* use e.g. Koori (south-east), Murri (Queensland), Noongar (West Australia), Nunga (South Australia), Palawah (Tasmania), Thaynakhwith (Northern territory).

• The preferred usage when referring to them as an entity is “Aboriginal people”.

• They resent the epithet “Abo”.

• Indigenous (latin: *indigena*=*in*+*ginere*) be born in a particular place
Australia/New Guinea: during Ice Age
Maps showing extent of Sunda shelf (South East Asia) and Sahul shelf during Pleistocene period (Ice Age)
Aboriginal migration routes
During Pleistocene epoch Pacific was 400-600 ft. lower. Australia was chance terminus of a series of voyages.
Aborigine settlement of Australia

• Traditional belief: land & people were created by supernatural beings during *Dreamtime*

• Scientific evidence*: aborigines moved from southeast Asia ~50,000 years ago during ice age (sea was at lower level) land bridges connected New Guinea, Australia, Tasmania

• Reached Tasmania 20,000 years ago. Colonized most of the diverse regions of the continent 30,000-25,000 years ago

• ~8,000 years ago high waters cut off Tasmania & New Guinea
  *based on thermoluminescence & radiocarbon dating of archeological sites in northern Australia
**Dreamtime Myth in Perspective**

- A myth is a sacred narrative that explains how the world and human kind came to be in its present form.
- Creation epics existed in Mesopotamia before the Hebrew bible, in Greek mythology, in Nordic sagas and in many other societies including the Australian aborigines.
- A legend is a story invariably told as true. It may relate to humans or supernatural creatures.
The Dreaming, The Law: 
*Tjukurpa, Jukurrpa*

A period beyond living memory in which totemic ancestral beings were responsible for the genesis of the spiritual, physical and moral world, and for providing the laws and ceremonies which sustain contemporary existence. The law is eternal and transcendent. It is a fundamental concept of all Aboriginal groups. Their religion is polytheistic and animistic/totemic.
General Creation Myth

• In long-distant past, giant, semi-human beings, resembling one or other creatures in appearance, but behaving like humans, rose out of the featureless plains, where they had been slumbering for countless ages, and started to wander aimlessly over the country side. They camped, made fire, dug for water, fought each other, or performed ceremonies.

• Dreamtime ended, where these creators had been active some hill, mountain range, valley or watercourse now marks the place.

• Dreamtime heroes decreed the laws that govern all aspects of secular and sacred life of the tribe.

• The myths of these ancient times are accepted as absolute truth and dominate Aborigine cultural life.
Aboriginal art

- Dates back thousands of years as cave paintings and rock carvings
- Most Aboriginal art was part of ceremonial and rock carvings and body paint, was transient sand painting and body decoration
- Weapons such as spears & clubs, utilitarian objects were also engraved for decorative purposes
- Contemporary Aboriginal art (since 1970s) has been one of the great success stories of modern art. Sales exceed work by non-Indigenous artists by 3 to 1, >$100 million
Didjeridu

- Is an aerophone: player produces sound by blowing air into the hollow tube while buzzing the lips. Combination of the fundamental tone & overtones with vocalizations, diaphragmatic movements & circular breathing creates complex sounds & rhythms.
- Origin: northern Australia ~ 1500 years ago; widespread used with clap sticks as accompaniment to singing & dancing. In secret-sacred context, only men play it.
- Decorations often similar to body painting & those on hollow log coffins or other ceremonial items.
Major Aboriginal Art sites

Sites are hundreds or thousands of miles apart, naturally art will vary with site.
Panaramitee style rock carvings

At Cleland Hills Thomas Reservoir in central Australia, thought to be ~20,000 years old.
Rock engravings, Mount Cameron West, Tasmania

Geometric pattern at least 1,400 years old
Aborigine Rock Art in late Wandjina style

~ 3800 to 4000 years ago
Dream-time stories

Kimb-erley Region
Kuringai Chase National Park

Aboriginal people of the Guringai language group or Guringal clan occupied this part of coastline

- Soft sandstone, common around Sydney, was very suitable for engraving purposes. Figures include fish, whales, wallabies, footprints, mythical beings.

- There is no way of finding out how old these engravings are, they could be anywhere between 200 to 5000 years old. Suggested they were made by a series of holes around the outline, before joining them
Rock Carvings
Kuringai Park

• Left: Wallabies or kangaroos in motion. Also possibly a wombat
• Right: Spirit figures, male and female
Rock Carvings Kuringai Park

Gigantic size engravings in soft Hawkesbury sandstone. One whale engraving is more than 65 feet long. More than 4,000 figures have been recorded in this area.
Kakadu (Gagadju=language spoken)

- National Park since 1979, lies between South Alligator & East Alligator rivers in the Northern Territory, Australia. The park is ~ 140 miles east of Darwin & has an area of ~ 2,315 square miles.

- famous for its Aboriginal cave paintings, which rank among the world's finest examples of ancient cave paintings. In 1981, UNESCO accepted it for inclusion on the World Heritage List.
Rock painting
Kakadu National Park

Depiction of a man spearing an emu with a barbed spear. Dynamic style figures represented by small, exquisitely painted figures with an array of body ornaments and weapons. Considered to be at least 10,000 years old. In Kakadu alone it is estimated there are at least 5,000 individual rock art sites & these vary in age from less than a few years to 18,000.
Ubirr Rock Aboriginal Cave Drawings

Kakadu National Park
Cave paintings
Kakadu National Park

- Left: Painting of humans and fish
- Right: Rock art on cave overhang
Cave paintings

• Left: Najombolmi, Bininy and Mythic beings, Nourlangie Rock, Kakadu National Park. The human anatomy is depicted in basic but exaggerated stylized form. “X-ray art” shows internal and external anatomy of living subjects including a range of animals and fish

• Right: Rock painting, Kakadu National Park with human-like figures, animals and fish
Cave paintings, Kakadu

- Left: Yuwengayay gallery. Fish are the most frequent subject of the yam style/simple human figures dated about 8000-6000 years ago (Estuarine period)
- Right: paintings depict Darwin wharf and several boats from beginning 1900s superimposed on earlier works
Rock painting

• Left: Gwion Gwion figures, King Edward River, North Kimberley, W.A. Finely executed images of men in attire of head-dresses, belts, tassels. This art differs fundamentally from rest of continent.

• Right: Typical geometric art, Simpson Desert, N.T.
Kimberley Region

north eastern part of Western Australia
Variation in Rock Art

Engraving, Black Range
Wandjina painting of
mythical figures,
Kimberley, W.A.
Hand stencil, everywhere
Hand stencils are not unique to aborigine art.
Aboriginal Wandjina rock art on the Barnett River, Mount Elizabeth Station
Petroglyph

North American, present day Arizona
~100-1500 CE
Sandstone
Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco