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**Framing Culture:
Indigenous Fine Art in Far North Queensland**

Submitted By

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B. A. (Hons), M. A. (Anthropology)

**Thesis submitted for the research degree
of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Arts
and Social Sciences, Department of
Anthropology, Archaeology and Sociology.**

**James Cook University, Townsville, Queensland,
Australia.**

November 2013

Statement of Sources

Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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Statement on the Contribution of Others

In undertaking research for this PHD thesis:

I recognise the Australian Government for the granting of a scholarship, which covered my living and research expenses for the time of my candidature.

I recognise James Cook University (JCU) for providing assistance in the conduct of my PhD research and in the completion of this thesis.

I also recognise the Graduate Research School at JCU for granting me relevant research funding for airfares, accommodation and other expenses.

I recognise the School of Art and Social Sciences for providing me with professional support to ensure the best possible assistance and relevant advice.

Most importantly, I recognise the tremendous contribution of my principal supervisor, Dr Allison Craven, who provided editorial, critical feedback, guidance understanding and academic support for the duration of my PhD candidature.

Recognition must also go to my co-supervisor, Professor Rosita Henry for her support and theoretical comments that aided in the completion of the thesis.

Coral Neave

Date

Declaration of Ethics

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Humans* (1999), the *Joint NHRMV/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997), the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics, Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001).

The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (Approval Numbers H3802 and H3712).

Coral Neave

Date

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My first acknowledgment is to my principal supervisor, Dr Allison Craven who has provided me with trenchant observations, continued support and encouragement, additional references to examine, commented on my field and theoretical approaches and read and advised on all drafts as to their strengths and weaknesses.

During most of my time with James Cook University I was a remote student, choosing to live in Melbourne, which at times was both isolating and frustrating at not being able to ask the simplest of questions in the region of my field research. However, Allison's willingness to provide intensive periods of supervision via the telephone and email went some way to closing that gap.

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Fieldwork was a large component of this thesis, especially the interviews with the Indigenous artists and arts coordinators from communities who were wonderfully straightforward and candid with their opinions. I found the buyers through a social network and they were patient with my questions. The commercial and public gallery curators gave up their busy work schedules to answer my long list of questions and I thank them for their patience and understanding. The locations of my fieldwork included the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, Cairns; commercial galleries such as Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne; Pizzi

Gallery, Melbourne; KickArts, Cairns; Melbourne Museum and the Townsville Cultural Centre. Arts Queensland staff from Cairns and Brisbane helped with the facts and figures pertaining to the management and economics of the art centres in the communities and with information on the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. It was also necessary to follow-up with all my participants by email and telephone for extra information as the project progressed.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to all of these people for their assistance with my research and for sharing their time, knowledge, and patience and for their interest and encouragement of my project.

Framing Culture: Indigenous Fine Art in Far North Queensland

Abstract

The thesis arises from ethnographic research with artists and arts coordinators from various Indigenous communities and urban centres in Far North Queensland. Over an extended period, I gained access to some of their views and perspectives on the relationships that exist between artists, arts coordinators, gallerists and buyers of Indigenous fine art in Far North Queensland, and in metropolitan galleries in Melbourne, Victoria, and on the role of the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF) in the art network. While there is a large and growing body of knowledge and research on Australian Indigenous art there has been limited attention to the region of Far North Queensland. The approach to the research is based on the notion of art as a social mediator that brings people together for exchange and collaboration across lines of difference. I present an account of an emergent art and business practice that is conducted around the sites of remote Indigenous communities and in urban centres where Indigenous artists perform the labour of art production. The analysis is therefore not of an aesthetic discourse of artwork, but of the dialogue, spaces and means by which the participants in the arts practices interact, and whereby a cultural product – the Indigenous art of Far North Queensland – is produced and exchanged. Art cannot be produced, distributed and consumed without dialogue, collaboration and interdependency which, I argue, constitutes and effects intercultural exchange, and occurs at each stage in the trajectory of an art work from maker to market. I argue that the character and dynamics of intercultural exchange are dependent on the context or conditions of ‘contact zones’ and subject to the

dynamics of friction (Tsing, 2005). The contact zones are the abstract spaces of intercultural negotiations, comprising; dialogue between people, which may occur anywhere; literal spaces of cultural coexistence such as galleries, museums and art fairs that are sites of production and consumption as well as conduits of cultural convergence; and the hybridized arts practices that emerge in community art centres in the processes of production and distribution of art. Within these contact zones I bring the gaze directly to the spatial and interpersonal dimensions of intercultural exchange, and through ethnographic description of the spaces, reflect on the dynamics of friction and trust, and the implications for the habitus of those involved in art production, distribution and consumption. The notion of habitus, an actor-centred concept devised by Pierre Bourdieu (1992) assists in understanding communication as relative to the field where it is enacted and embedded in specific social power and dominance relations, dynamics that are at the heart of my inquiry into the Indigenous art of Far North Queensland.

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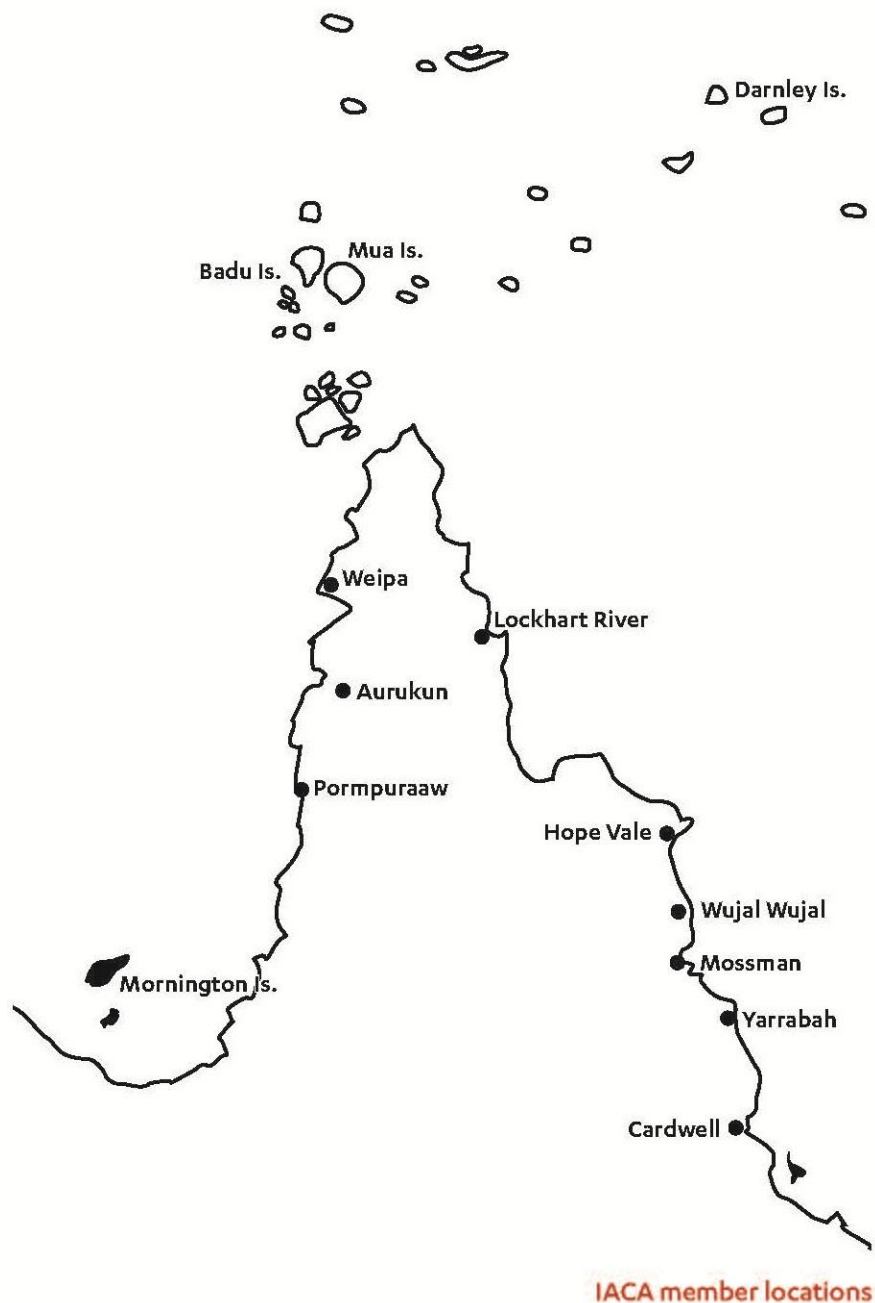
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Figure 1. Map of the Indigenous Art Centres in Far North Queensland

(Source, IACA Newsletter, 2013) http://www.iaca.com.au/wp-content/gallery/map/iaca_map-for-web2.jpg Accessed 25 October 2013



Chapter One

The Frame: Researching Intercultural Art in Far North Queensland

The abiding interest of this research concerns the communities, participants, conditions and circumstances of fine art production and commerce in the region known as Far North Queensland, and in the locations external to that region where the artworks are also exhibited and traded. These elements, in a general sense, are the objects of study in this dissertation. This is not an historiography of an art form or of a regional art formation so much as an account of an emergent art and business practice that is conducted around the sites of remote Indigenous communities, regional art hubs and in urban centres where artists who identify as Indigenous people perform the labour of art production. The analysis is therefore mostly not of aesthetic or mythographic discourses of the art works, but of the dialogue, spaces and means by which the participants in the practices interact, and whereby a cultural product – the Indigenous fine art of Far North Queensland – is produced and exchanged. In these processes of production and exchange, I argue, intercultural experiences and phenomena are generated, with effects and implications for all of the participants. I suggest that this intercultural practice is a further and much transformed stage of the long-standing production and trade between Indigenous peoples and Europeans in the geographic region, even if the experience today for these parties is regarded as the outcome of more recent cultural and political histories, in modern (and arguably post-colonial) Australia. In the over-arching narrative of this thesis, I

contend that recent movements for reconciliation coupled with decades-long struggles for self-determination by Indigenous people frame the contemporary partnerships between artists, government agencies, gallerists and arts coordinators, whereby all the parties seek to rewrite the parameters for intercultural exchange, either consciously or unconsciously.

My argument is premised on my ethnographic research in which, over a period of years, I interacted with participants, and gained access to some of their views and perspectives on the relationships that exist between artists, arts coordinators, gallerists and buyers of Indigenous fine art from communities and urban centres in Far North Queensland, and in the metropolitan galleries of Melbourne, Victoria. I experienced these diverse encounters as a researcher who is essentially an outsider to the fine art industry and who learned to conceive of relationships in art matters through the idea of an art network. An 'art network' is a concept described by Howard Becker (1982: 86) to explain how people are linked within a constructed network of activity (the agents or actors in the field) all of which contribute to the practices of the art network but do not need to be aware of the activities of the others, yet have a common goal to bring artworks to an art market. I also interpolate that the art network can be seen as a 'field' (Bourdieu, 1986: 257) that comprises 'sub-fields' such as those of artists, arts coordinators, gallerists, buyers, art fairs (my case study is the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, or CIAF), community art centres in Aboriginal communities, and commercial galleries as well as many other individuals and institutions - art dealers, art journalists and so on - that make up the art network. According to Colvin et al (2012: 13): "Field is the context for the action, habitus the disposition to engage in the action and capital refers to the tools, skills, knowledge and

resources available to the individual to help them engage in the interaction”.

Pierre Bourdieu’s concept of ‘capital’ (1986: 257) explains how certain contexts such as cultural, social, economic, historical and political influences affect the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, which may be equally important, and can be accumulated and transferred from one arena to another. By connecting intercultural exchange with the concepts of field, habitus and capital I seek to explore the cultural and economic synergy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the art network.

In earlier work (Neave, 2011), I presented some preliminary conclusions on my field research with the Indigenous artists of Cairns and the Community-artists of Far North Queensland. I argued that intercultural exchange was the key ingredient in fostering relationships and thereby bringing art works to an art market. I emphasised the importance of face-to-face interactions, training and expert advice. In this dissertation, I expand on the argument, and present a more complex narrative of the dynamics of intercultural exchange, and in the theorisation of this concept, which is various. In other settings, many terms may be said to euphemise or allude to intercultural exchange, including communication (Neuliep, 2012: 32), human interaction (Keesing, 1974: 75), cultural interface (Nakata, 2002: 281), contact zone (Pratt, 1991: 30), dialogue (Lane and Hays, 2008: 1) and cultural convergence (Smith, cited in Izett, 2005). As I argue that the character and dynamics of intercultural exchange are dependent on the context in which it occurs, I composed my approach in terms of what I call three ‘contact zones’. These contact zones are the abstract spaces of intercultural negotiations; those of dialogue between people which may occur anywhere; the literal spaces of cultural coexistence such as galleries and art fairs

that represent both sites of production and consumption as well as conduits of cultural convergence and hence hybridized arts practices that emerge in community art centres as sites of production and distribution. Later in this chapter, I shall elaborate the way the methodology adapts and materializes these tripartite contact zones.

A key paradigm that is challenged in this process is the business model known as the commodity chain, which is used to represent the trajectory of the art, an approach prompted by publications of the art industry, for example, *How to Buy and Sell Art* (Caruana and Reid, 2004) or *The Art of Buying Art* (Bamberger, 2007). Such publications advise on how to buy, sell, evaluate, appraise, collect art, and the use of art for taxation and superannuation purposes, which is modelled on commercialism above any notion of social interactions and social policies. What the commodity chain does not show is the interactive processes that of necessity result in dialogue between the various actors in the art network that help move the product, the artwork, along the chain. Neither does it explain the importance of Indigenous culture as a product to be used in the selling process of an artwork. The commodity chain model assumes that each actor must play their part in the stages in which an artwork transits through the art network. While the commodity chain is presented as a linear template, I highlight how it requires collaboration and interdependency to work towards the common goal to distribute and sell artworks. But I point to the qualitative distinction to be made between ‘interdependency’, which suggests reliance of players on others, from ‘collaboration’, which more purposefully concerns active linkages to events, decision-making processes and activities that

bring people together in the art network. Thus, in the thesis, I refer to the getting together of people to discuss, create, circulate and view art with the aim to realise its value at each stage in the trajectory of an artwork through the network, a practice I identify as intercultural exchange.

I was attracted to the study of the Indigenous fine art network in Far North Queensland because at the time it appeared relatively new and unexplored in the available literature. Art and artists from Far North Queensland seemed to accrue the least media attention compared to those of other regions of Australia, or international recognition and status for the artists. However, I was aware from my own travel in the region of Cairns and further north to Weipa, of the vibrancy of the art communities and the energy of production in art centres. In my informal encounters with artists and industry participants, I became aware of the extent of the activity. In visits to local galleries in Melbourne, I witnessed the corresponding spectacle at exhibitions of valuable artworks by Indigenous artists. In fact, according to Arts Queensland (Arts Queensland, 2009b: 4), Queensland has more Indigenous Australians whose main occupation is visual arts or craft than any other state or territory. In the last ten years, Far North Queensland art has become more visible in the art market because of concerted efforts by state and federal governments that have injected funds into community art centres, the employment of arts coordinators and the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair and the influence of commercial galleries that specialise in Indigenous art. Originally, in proposing my doctoral research project, I sought to more closely examine the conditions and relationships involved. But the challenge of coordinating access visits to remote communities with the timescale

of my doctoral research, given the distances and infrequent communications prompted revision of the approach and by 2010, the Cairns Indigenous Arts Fair (CIAF) offered a more ready centre for concentrated interaction with players in the fine art network as it drew exhibitors from Far North Queensland communities and interstate galleries to present their works for a diverse audience of locals and tourists.

But even the designation 'Far North Queensland' is a scaled account of the region as my research does not include the Torres Strait, simply because the logistics were too demanding in terms of access, and the sensitivity required to relay findings on peoples of different cultures, languages, histories and art practices as is the case in comparing the practices of mainland artists and Torres Strait Islander artists. In this contracted imagining of Far North Queensland, then, the title of my thesis, 'framing culture' represents a window 'frame' on Indigenous culture that replaces 'context' as a more active term and which emphasises agency and the process of bringing artworks to an art market. Howard Morphy (1998: 21) describes: "A 'frame' as the encompassing set of cultural practices and understandings that defines the meaning of an object in a particular context". When he applied this concept to his study among the Yolngu People of Arnhem Land he was doing so in an 'intercultural frame' that included both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants and interests. Morphy (1998: 141) says: "Once Indigenous artists produce art for sale in the fine art context the artworks become both Indigenous and non-Indigenous", which means that they are still connected to Indigenous knowledge but are produced quite separately from any rules that apply to ceremonies and any sacred/secret stories. By leaving out the religious or sacred elements from their artwork and

concentrating on what can be included for commercial reasons, Indigenous artists have found a way to adjust to new circumstances and in the process the artworks become a product of two worlds. Indigenous visual arts continue to be framed by government policy agendas that measure success through economic outcomes rather than by the balancing of cultural activities such as cultural revival through art, the opportunity to make political statements about rights to land or the expression of Indigenous identity in a way that brings together Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences in the experience of consuming 'culture'.

The very term 'culture' is fraught in this debate about fine art. The population of critics and art buyers today is presented with an enormous range of artworks from different regions of Australia, some of which have variable presence in the academic literature on Indigenous fine art. There is a significant body of knowledge and research on Australian Indigenous art, particularly that of the Western Desert and Arnhem Land (Morphy, 2008: 28, 54), which has enjoyed national and international success. These two locations enjoy distinct artistic styles, which have dominated the public perceptions of Australian Indigenous art as leaders in the market place. The cross-hatched clan designs and X-ray styles of Northern Arnhem Land and the dot styles of the desert regions have come to define Indigenous art in Australia and overseas. As a generalised construct, many see the commercial challenge for Indigenous art to expand, or at least, maintain its share of the market (Tucker, 2007: 8). It would seem, from my studies that the manner of expansion is by regional designation. To that extent, Far North Queensland has no doubt benefitted from coverage and publicity surrounding 'Aboriginal Art', whether positive or negative, but it has

not been accorded the same level of attention and market success as the more established regions that produce contemporary Indigenous art. The artists of Far North Queensland do not as yet sell their art at the record levels of the high profile and expensive artworks from the Western Desert and Arnhem Land but prices are on the rise for several of the established artists, such as Sally Gabori, Paula Paul, Thelma Burke (Mornington Island), Rosella Namok, Samantha Hobson, Irene Namok, Patrick Butcher (Lockhart River) and Jack Bell and Craig Koomeeta (Aurukun).

In the first instance, the place of fine art in cultural discourses of national identity has fluctuated in prominence since white settlement, and possibly figures a colonial precedent that might stir unease among those conscious of the sensitivities of the politics of Indigenous advancement. Art as culture becomes 'commodity culture' as the production of fine artworks for export seems to model one that might stir contestation through any of the paradigms of value in canonical art discourse. Add to this that 'Indigenous culture' is not one homogenous culture as there is in reality considerable diversity among Australian Indigenous peoples from different kinship affiliations and regions, as well as many different languages. To take just one sub-region, Cape York, in Far North Queensland, for instance, the diverse number of Indigenous groups, the languages, the communities and cultural practices are as varied and complex as any in Australia, with many language groups and diverse environments from rainforests to savannah, saltpans and mangrove deltas and a colonial history which differs in many aspects to the rest of the country (Fitzgerald et al, 2009). Added to this is the reputation that might be characterised in settler discourse as

‘frontier’ because of the relatively small numbers of the non-Indigenous population in the region and the scope represented for minerals development, an issue that remains in contention between Cape York Indigenous communities, the Queensland government and industry stakeholders.

Of course, this situation is complicated. Communities struggle to maintain equity with their negotiating partners as many continue to experience welfare dependency and social disintegration. Employment is limited, motivating young people to move away. For those people that remain on their traditional lands, art production is a possibility, not only economically but also for cultural survival. Not everyone can be a successful artist, or even moderately successful, but there are opportunities for some to ‘close the gap’ through art production. This socio-economic gap has been largely created by the “[c]olonial encounter, historical legacies, cultural differences, intergovernmental buck-passing and decades of neglect” (Altman, 2005: 15). But art production is as much about cultural revival and expression and spreading cultural awareness to the public as it is about earning a living, and community art centres offer spaces for ‘escape’ from the squalor and hardship of home life in some communities. Camaraderie and relationships are forged to promote learning that involves artistic skills, the business of being an artist and how the art network operates. By comparison to other industries, art production has flourished in this region and can be seen as relatively cohesive and uncontentious. Therefore, with deep respect for the diverse and multiplicitous significations of culture, in both the European and Indigenous milieu, the project of examining *interculture* is one that seeks to mobilise the already complex significations of culture in the cultural

linguistic frame. The limited aim of the research to contribute to the expanding knowledge of Indigenous art practice, is therefore one that simultaneously challenges the view of culture as ever originally unique phenomena and proceeds on the assumption that cultural reproduction is never singular in outcome. It is the condition that might once have threatened to stigmatise the fine art trade as neo-colonising. This sense is possibly enhanced by the continuities I perceive in the fine art network and trade today, if compared to the evidence of colonial and pre-colonial times.

My research suggests that intercultural exchange -- as we might now term it -- is revealed in the relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people involved in art making even in pre-colonial times. In the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there was trade between the Indigenous people of Cape York and the Torres Strait Islanders with Melanesian people for utility and everyday items. Sayers' research into Australian Indigenous art "focused on the artists as individuals, their drawings and their life circumstances" (cited in Coleman, 2009: 15). In Sayers' book, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, there is a portrait of Johnny Dawson a Kirrae Wurrung man from the Western District, Victoria, produced in 1855 by Eugene von Guerard, and Johnny himself produced the second image, also in 1855. Sayers (cited in Coleman, 2009: 15):

Notes that a similar encounter is recorded much later (1901-2) about an Indigenous informant, Erlikilyika accompanied the explorers F. J. Gillen and Baldwin Spencer through Central Australia. Erlikilyika was invited by Gillen to fill in some pages he had missed in his drawing book that he had missed with examples of his artistic skill. Erlikilyika filled the pages with depictions of hunting scenes, animals, ceremonies and botanical drawings for the explorers. (Coleman, 2009: 15)

For Sayers, Guerard and Johnny are linked by the status of the word 'artist' (1997: 3). According to Elizabeth Coleman (2009: 15), "[t]he strong impression one has reading Sayers's history is that he understands nineteenth century Aboriginal drawings to be communicative, an exchange between peoples as equals".

In 1906, Paddy Cahill, a buffalo hunter set up permanent residence in Kunbarlanja, Arnhem Land and stayed for fourteen years developing a close liaison with the Kunwinkju people based on mutual respect and exchange (McLean, 2005: 50). Cahill's excellent relations with his Indigenous hosts made his station an ideal staging post for anthropological research. From 1912, for eight years, he assisted the anthropologist and Chief Protector of Aborigines, Baldwin Spencer, in commissioning local artists to copy, on bark, examples of their rock art (50). The facilitating role of commerce in intercultural exchange is also suggested by Russell McGregor's (2011: 137) view that in the 1950s and 1960s artists from Arnhem Land stepped up their production of bark paintings due to the demand by commercial galleries. No doubt the most famous recorded relationship was between Albert Namatjira and Rex Battarbee who was his teacher, mentor and friend throughout his career. Indeed, Ian McLean (2010: 79) observed that throughout the history of Indigenous art there have been relationships established with sympathetic intermediaries. "Aboriginal artists acted as if aesthetic communication between the two cultures was viable" (McLean, 2010: 79). For example, in Far North Queensland's art history the major collections of Wik material culture came from Ursula McConnel, an anthropologist who visited Aurukun five times between 1927 and 1934. Her

collection is now held by the South Australian Museum. In the 1930s, another anthropologist Donald Thompson working in Arnhem Land suggested transferring rock and bark paintings to larger bark panels for commercial sale. Thompson also studied the Wik people of Aurukun between 1932 -1933 and his collection of Wik sculptures is now held by the Melbourne Museum. In the 1970s and 1980s, it was the partnership and friendship between brothers, Dick and Lindsay Roughsey (Mornington Island) and Percy Trezise that helped the brothers become established artists (Memmott, 2008:22). Trezise encouraged Dick Roughsey to write his autobiography, a first for an Indigenous person. The book *Moon and Rainbow* was published in 1971 (Roughsey, 1971).

Since the 1980s many non-Indigenous writers such as C. D. Rowley, Henry Reynolds and Peter Read have offered complex and contested readings of Australian history that suggest there were relationships formed between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in many industries (Kleinert, 2005: 30). Throughout the twentieth century anthropologists worked and lived in communities establishing alliances and friendships with Indigenous people that were crucial to their research. For example, Peter Sutton, an anthropologist resided in Aurukun, Cape York for long periods, which saw him acquire many ethnographic items that were ultimately donated to the South Australian Museum and is testament to the harmony of some such relationships. Paul Memmott trained as an artist and architect and branched into the research disciplines of people and environment studies, and social anthropology. He has a close affiliation with the Lardil, Kaiadilt, Yangkaal and other peoples of the

Wellesley Islands since 1973, including as expert witness anthropologist in their Native Title sea claim in the early 2000s (Memmott, 2008).

There are also other relationships struck between artists and anthropologists in the last thirty years or so, which are important to Indigenous artists and often occurred at their instigation because outsiders (non-Indigenous people) are required as trusted mediators. McLean (2010: 19) writes: “In this sense the art world revolution is the culmination of a conscious convergence initiated decades earlier by Aboriginal artists with sympathetic ‘whitefellas’, rather than an act of cultural imperialism on the part of the art world”. Morphy (2008: 19) also describes the theme that runs throughout the recorded history of Yolngu art as a: “Dialogic relationship with outsiders who enter their country, specifically centred on the idea of a two-way education”. Francesca Tamisari (2006:66) suggests that, “Indigenous people have always used art to negotiate their place in Australian society. Art production is often understood by Indigenous people as a form of ‘diplomacy’, and as such, should be understood as a tactic of survival” (66). Indigenous commentators have also drawn attention to these patterns, such as when, in 2004, Hetti Perkins, the curator of the *Crossing Country* (Kuninjku people of Western Arnhem Land) exhibition held at the Australian Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) commented:

You don’t need a forensic mind to see the evidence of a well-planned strategy laid down decades earlier. Central to its success were two achievements by mid-twentieth century anthropology; the demonstration

of the central role that art played in the maintenance of evolution of Indigenous cultures and convincing the art world that Indigenous art was fine art and should be exhibited as such. (Perkins cited in McLean, 2010: 49)

According to McLean this gave Kunwinjku Indigenous Elders the prestige they needed to engage with the Balanda (white people) from a position of strength. It also laid the ground for the strategic alliance entered into some forty to fifty years earlier by Elders and anthropologists to counter the deleterious effect of colonialism through developing a fine art market for Indigenous art (McLean, 2010: 49). McGregor (2011: 137) characterises the more recent expressions of such relationships as “symbiotic”, with “both groups contributing to the growing public appreciation of Aboriginal aesthetics”, drawing clear attention to the active role of Indigenous people in the commercialisation of their art, even if, regrettably, forms of conflict or tension existed between the parties.

Fine Art and Friction

It would be naive to present an intercultural account of Indigenous art production as one free of tensions or dissent, even though, as I shall argue, my experience of researching the art network in Far North Queensland was one of relative harmony and conciliatory sentiments. But the very nature of the tensions that abide, which intermittently emerge in my research, are, I argue, not only organic to working relationships in context, but also structure a view of the network as intrinsically composed of a dynamic of friction. In this view, I follow the work of Anna Tsing (2005), developed in an account of the logging industries of South East Asia, in sites fraught with historical abuse and hostility between Indigenous and colonial interests. While this may seem a far cry from fine art production, the dynamics Tsing describes are comparable and can be patterned on her idea of the “zones of awkward engagement” (Tsing, 2005: 5), which are

“shared space[s]” in which “the contingency of encounters makes a difference” (3). There will be disagreements or what Tsing calls ‘friction’, which has the potential to cause a breakdown in the dialogue and may stop or stall artworks from going to the next stage of the art’s trajectory. Friction, she suggests, not only is felt as a constraining force but also can be productive in that friction can instigate dialogue between people in such a way as to promise reformulation as collaboration and interdependency. I particularly make reference to Tsing’s concept of friction (in my Chapters Four, Five and Six), in discussing interview data gained from artists, arts coordinators and gallerists to assess whether Indigenous people have agency to deal with conflict that may arise in their interactions in the art network. I argue that while outright conflict is undesirable and the evidence of my interviews is that there is a concerted effort by artists and arts coordinators, in particular, to work supportively, the art network will always have a degree of friction between people because without it there would be no need for change. Friction arguably is intrinsic to the habitus of the participant in the exchange of fine art, where habitus is the structure of internalised principles from one’s upbringing (structured structures) (Bourdieu, 1992: 5), which results in an agent’s action of continually interpreting and understanding their world, reflecting on and learning from others, and transitioning to new ways of being. Whenever dialogue and collaboration is present between people there is the potential for friction to occur. But the evidence of my interviews and the thrust of the analysis suggest the presence of a counter-force, trust, which ballasts the tensions in intercultural friction. Within the spaces of engagement, friction evinces potential for tension, and also potential for trust and collaboration. I canvas several key areas of frictional

intercultural exchange and communication, namely the conversion or transformation of traditional art to fine art; and in production of culture as a (state-driven) business; the distance between community and urban artists; and in the sometimes abrasive debate regarding whether -- in the terms coined by Richard Bell -- Indigenous art is a non-Indigenous business.

Yet there is friction also in the very definition of 'fine art' when applied to the works of Indigenous artists. In the past the work of an Indigenous artist was defined against its anthropological framing as primitive, traditional or ethnographic. Instead today, it is defined by its aesthetic, rather than its ceremonial function. According to Morphy (2008: 12), (visual) fine art is considered to be for aesthetic purposes and judged for its beauty and meaningfulness, specifically, painting, sculpture, drawing, watercolour, graphics and architecture. The word 'fine' does not so much denote the quality of the artwork in question, but the purity of the discipline, suggesting that some visual arts are considered craftwork (such as tourist art and utility items) and are excluded from the category of fine art. In this way fine art maintains its exclusiveness and in turn its value (12). This notion is presented in simpler, even crude, terms in state discourse, typically in the Queensland Government's Senate Standing Committee (Senate Standing Committee, 2006: 26), which defined fine art as: "Works above a nominal value by a specified list of known artists". Thus, the transit along the commodity chain involves an initial set of processes of creation, definition, appraisal and valuation to be made ready for exhibition and sale (either in commercial galleries or art fairs), and therefore undergoes, it seems to me, a series of transformations that nonetheless depend

and are limited by the structuring mechanisms of the art industry and its parameters (in Bourdieu's terms, the rules of the game) in accordance with western art conventions. The first transformation is by the artists who have to be willing to create high quality, innovative saleable art. A second transformation occurs with the critical assessment by arts coordinators who oversee that enough high-quality artwork is produced for an (often distant) art market in a city, before it is accepted and exhibited by a gallery (or art fair), which in turn transforms its meaning towards the eye of potential buyers, and critical audiences. But there is a sense also in which these artworks are interlocutors in a public discourse of transformation of Indigenous communities, and in adaptation in public commentary, the meanings and histories of each work may be subject to further transformation oriented to that public discourse. Potentially any artwork -- by any artist, Indigenous or non-Indigenous -- undergoes this transformational series, and yet I suggest that there are some distinct aspects with Indigenous art that endow a duty to serve a public discourse that is invested in intercultural meaning. In Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven, I address these transformational stages more directly in conversation with artists, arts coordinators, gallerists and buyers and to analyse the frictional dynamics that pervade the responses, some more overt than others.

The art of Far North Queensland is intercultural in an aesthetic sense, in that the artists -- like many Indigenous artists in Australia -- combine western materials and techniques to develop their art to appeal to a wider audience and in the process the art is repositioned into a global art system. This does not mean that artists forfeit their traditional cultural memories or storytelling even though much of the art is concerned with day-to-day events and issues in the

communities that can be read in less obvious ways as intercultural. But the contingencies of culture are explicit and most apparent in a debate that has resurfaced from time to time, especially in the voices of urban Indigenous artists, notably, now 10 years ago, of Richard Bell. Bell won the 2003 *Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award* with a painting entitled, *Scientia E Metaphysica* (Bell's Theorem). The painting was noticeable for the striking representation of the words 'Aboriginal Art – it's A White thing!'

Figure 2. *Scientia E. Metaphysica (Bell's Theorem)* or *Aboriginal Art – it's a White Thing!* 2003. Synthetic polymer paint on canvas.
<http://www.kooriweb.org/bell/>. Accessed 08 November 2013



Bell's artwork has been labelled provocative, uncompromising and controversial because it concerns race politics. I suggest that Bell is more an activist than an artist that always wants to challenge the status quo by shocking the establishment and inspiring discussion for change. One of his later artworks had the slogan, *I am Not a Noble Savage*. In Bell's Theorem (see Neale, 2010: 34) he expresses his view about the enduring inequities for Aboriginal art in the market place because non-Aboriginal people "define and control the market" for which

Indigenous people produce the art. As a founding member of proppaNOW, an art activist collective based in Brisbane, Bell's artworks could be described as "more akin to sloganeering and graffiti" (Neale, 2010: 35) that belongs to a tradition associated with protest art and political activism. According to Margo Neale:

They are either slashed across the surface with a directness born of anger embedded in flung paint or scrawled atop appropriated patterning from European modernists, at other times they are in a more subdued note-taking style. Emotion and intellect collude in an exploitation of sources ranging from Western art, political and legislative texts to history. (Neale, 2010: 38)

Indigenous art is recognised for its strength and vitality in the art world but Bell wants the public to understand that the art is much more. For Bell it is about the plight of Indigenous people, in particular urban Aborigines that live in towns and cities where issues of land, history and culture have been marginalised or even erased. In his painting, *'If I don't paint my story they will steal my land?'* Bell demonstrates that there has been no fair and just treatment for Indigenous people in regard to issues that matter in life, such as oral traditions, land ownership, Aboriginal law and inheritance. In *Bell's theorem* he laments the fact that:

Aboriginal Art has become a product of the times, a commodity, which is the result of a concerted and sustained marketing strategy, albeit, one that has been loose and uncoordinated. There is no Aboriginal Art Industry. There is, however, an industry that caters for Aboriginal Art. The key players in the industry are not Aboriginal. They are mostly White people whose areas of expertise are in the fields of anthropology and Western Art. (Bell, 2002: 1)

Although Bell's comments suggest the dominance of (and perhaps domination by) non-Indigenous people in the arenas of distribution and reception in the art

network, his words are potentially divisive, especially of the relationships between city-based urban artists and community-based artists. Bell's views have been used, however, in this thesis to posit a key expression of friction, and the contingencies implied in a range of intercultural aspects of the art network. In a regional sense, I argue, Bell represents a specific group of Brisbane-based (proppaNOW) activist artists whose views are in contrast with the less outspoken urban artists based in Cairns, who are less protest artists and pursue a different agenda to those of their colleagues based in city locations. Then there is the friction surrounding the distinction between the community-based artists and the Cairns-based urban artists that is arguably sourced in a prejudicial public perception, explained by Margo Neale (2010: 34-36) that artists residing and working in communities are seen as more authentically Indigenous than their counterparts that live in cities. Doubtless an outgrowth of dated prejudices, this view has some traction in that community artists also receive funding for their art centres through Federal and state funding along with the employment of arts coordinators, while the Cairns-based artists do not and this creates a kind of unspoken friction, even though urban artists may have access to funding in other forms (such as grants). I did not question my interviewees specifically about this as the distinction came to light in more informal ways, but I probed the whole sensitive terrain of racial difference by adapting the question of Bell's protest in my interviews with artists and arts coordinators (see Chapters Five and Six) and found a less critical perspective on the 'black-white' 'thing', to use the term of Bell's polemic.

Methodology and Research Settings

My field engagement commenced in 2009 with travel and preliminary informal meetings and in 2010 and 2011, I progressed more formally with ethics clearance to interview artists, arts coordinators, gallerists and buyers. Ethics approval for the research required dual clearance to interview Indigenous and non-Indigenous subjects. The first clearance allowed me to interview Indigenous artists at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair and the Cairns-based artists in 2010 and 2011. The second ethics approval allowed me to interview all non-Indigenous people, such as arts coordinators, gallerists and buyers in Cairns, Sydney and Melbourne in 2010 and 2011. Altogether, I conducted formal interviews with twenty-six people including artists, arts coordinators, gallerists and buyers. I recruited the subjects over a lengthy period, beginning with the artists. In 2009, I visited three art centres in Far North Queensland at the invitation of the arts coordinators to observe the workings of their centres and to talk informally with the artists, and it was from these visits that I initially sought interview subjects for my research. The communities I visited were: Wei'Num (formerly Western Cape Indigenous Arts Hub), Weipa; Hopevale Arts and Cultural Centre; and Yarrabah Art Centre. In 2010, I conducted fieldwork at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF), The Tanks, Botanic Gardens precinct, Cairns. I visited the stalls of the Wik and Kugu Art Centre of Aurukun; the Wei'Num Aboriginal Corporation, Weipa; the Girringun Art Centre, Cardwell; Hopevale Art Centre; and Lockhart River Art Centre. At the Aurukun stall I interviewed Guy Allain, the arts coordinator and Craig Koomeeta, an artist. At the stall for Wei'Num, I interviewed three artists, Daphne De Jersey, Margaret Mara and Kassandra Savage. I interviewed the Girringun Art Centre arts coordinator Valerie Keenan, but no artists were present. At the Hopevale stall I interviewed Troy Dennis the

arts coordinator and three artists, Evelyn McGreen, Harry Bowen and Derek Rosendale. I also interviewed Robbi Neal the arts coordinator of Lockhart River, but no artists were present. In the discussion in this thesis these interviews are referenced as individual personal communications, and cited by name and by year. In June 2011, Mornington Island artist Emily Ngarnal Evans held her solo exhibition at Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne and I was able to meet with her and the arts coordinator Brett Evans prior to the opening night exhibition. Overall the interviews included five male and five female artists in the age range of late thirties to late sixties, and the arts coordinators were comprised of three males and two females in the age range of early forties to late fifties.

At CIAF, I sat at each art stall and interviewed the artists and arts coordinators individually for approximately one hour each and once finished we spoke collectively about informal matters, which lasted approximately two hours. The informal conversations included everyday things such as the chaotic life in communities, the lack of employment, the problems with youth, how many times artists go to the art centre a week, how much time they spend there, how difficult it is to make a living from art and what hopes they have for the future. But, mostly the artists were trying hard to sell their art at CIAF in the hope that the exposure would lead to 'bigger things' such as being noticed by a gallerist from a major city. When the staff were busy attending to potential buyers I observed the interactions between artists, arts coordinators and buyers. For artists to be chosen to represent their community at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair is seen as a 'first break' in a long career. When I interviewed the participants I typed their answers while we sat face-to-face and then I read back

the answers to each person and if I had misinterpreted their answers they could correct them immediately. Once home, I was able to print out and mail the interviews to each participant asking if changes, deletions or additions were necessary. Some participants did this and in the process expanded on their original answers. The artists and the arts coordinators were very forthright in their comments and I am grateful for their generosity and their candour.

Immediately after CIAF 2010, I arranged to meet with two Cairns-based artists, Arone Meeks and Zane Saunders and the curator, Samantha Creyton of KickArts. KickArts Cairns is a not-for-profit gallery that nurtures new, emerging and established artists from Far North Queensland. I also interviewed Trish Barnard, the curator of the Museum of Tropical Queensland, Townsville by email with a series of questions. The Museum of Tropical Queensland, Townsville is a public museum that offers Indigenous narrative on current issues of importance to the people of the region. I also conducted fieldwork in Melbourne with commercial and public gallerists, such as: Beverly Knight, Alcaston Gallery; Rod McLeish and Grant Smith, Pizzi Gallery; Philip Batty and Lindy Allen both of Melbourne Museum. I chose the galleries on the basis of their involvement in Indigenous art. The commercial galleries of Alcaston and Pizzi in Melbourne have been involved in exhibiting and selling Indigenous art for more than twenty-years and represent the top echelon of Indigenous established artists. Melbourne Museum is a high-profile public museum that displays its exhibits in a narrative format beginning with ethnographic artefacts from one hundred years ago and, if appropriate for the story, concludes with commissioned artworks to showcase the art of today.

My analysis of data through interviews with artists, arts coordinators and gallerists was examined through the micro ethnographic method postulated by Erving Goffman (1971). Due to a limited time-frame and a small number of participants available for research this method allowed me to address social issues that can be analysed through certain interview texts and human activities that were associated with particular research sites, such as the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair, commercial and public galleries and art centres. Goffman (1971) established the 'interaction order' as a legitimate topic of study; in doing so, he provided the logic for why, and the method for how to study face-to-face behaviour. According to Goffman, individuals construct the social world through language and interaction, so if we are to understand the social world, we must examine the act of social construction. His method involved careful attention to details of naturally occurring contexts of co-presence (when people are physically together). My method of data gathering was through observations and interviews, with attention to the participants' talk (who says what, when, and how), their intercultural exchange moments with other participants, along with other kinds of information including anecdotal and informal conversations with many of the participants, providing a variety of macro and micro views. It is through this research method that I hope to show how people actively create and sustain the social realities that they inhabit, in a similar way that Bourdieu describes habitus.

Another focus of my research was with buyers, and this was more diffuse. I first sought buyers to be research subjects at the opening of gallery exhibitions, but I was unable to find anyone willing to participate, so I turned to a social

media outlet. I sent out twenty requests for people who had had bought Indigenous art to participate and comment on the experience. I received five replies. I knew only one person from this buyers group and never met face-to-face with the other participants. The personal details of the five buyers revealed that they were all over forty years of age and tertiary educated. All the buyers were from Melbourne and Sydney. Although I emailed this question to both male and female participants only five females answered. The buyers were Valda Craig, Karen Croke, Joanne Taylor, Felicity Wright and Cynthia Merrett. From this small number of participants I was able to gather qualitative data. I used a modified version of the discourse analysis method as a way of analysing the written texts in an attempt to identify features, such as recurring themes that could explain why Indigenous art is highly valued (see Chapter Seven). I coded the contents of the data and I present a summary in tables (see Appendix 1) to show how many times each theme was mentioned.

Beyond the Frame: Engagements in Intercultural Art

The conventional history of contemporary Australian Indigenous fine art is seen as beginning in the small community of Papunya in the Western Desert when Elders were asked by the art teacher, Geoffrey Bardon to translate their designs into permanent portable art. Papunya's art history is a watershed of sorts in the national view of Indigenous fine art, so in the next chapter I retell the story with a critical lens towards the rather different background in Far North Queensland. In approaching an account of the emergence of an art formation in

Far North Queensland (FNQ) I argue that the particular character of FNQ art today has come about through a long series of initiatives by various governments and individuals and through a gradual transformation of the artistic culture in Queensland that has resulted from a blend of state, commercial and cultural interests. Far North Queensland is no stranger to relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the production of arts and crafts. Early trading with other cultures was followed by the Christian mission stations in the late nineteenth century that taught Indigenous people to manufacture curios for sale and then the government agencies in the mid twentieth century sought more arts and crafts for their tourist souvenir shops. Throughout the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries there is evidence that there were relationships (McGregor, 2011; Sayers, 1997; McLean, 2010) with Indigenous people that resulted in non-Indigenous individuals assisting artists in their quest to produce and sell their art. The account presented in Chapter Two is adumbrated with reference to the social policy towards Indigenous people throughout the period; a process that I suggest represents intercultural activity of a contingent kind. Thereafter, in Chapter Three, I revisit the theoretical framework outlined in the present chapter, to widen the sense of ambit in what might be understood as intercultural exchange, drawing attention to rival paradigms (intercultural competence, intercultural communicative competence, transcultural communication, cross-cultural adaptation, and intercultural sensitivity, among others), all of which suggest there are transitional interactions between individuals from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. My objective, however, is to draw intercultural exchange more deeply into Bourdieu's concept of habitus, field and capital (Bourdieu, 1984) with specific

reflection on the discussion of the advent of Indigenous fine art.

In Chapter Four, I turn from history to the contemporary arts culture as it is performed at CIAF, an intercultural space, I argue, in which is nested both community arts and established galleries. CIAF is a spectacle constructed within Western art conventions that allow artists and their artworks to take centre-stage in a public place. CIAF provides spaces where a range of arts-related activities occur such as learning, discussing, networking as well as selling and purchasing. CIAF is presented as a case study, in which comparative case studies are embedded: those of the community arts represented, and the stand of one of the nation's more prestigious galleries, Alcaston, Melbourne, which is attended each year by its proprietor, Beverley Knight, who has represented Indigenous artists from the region of Far North Queensland since CIAF's inception in 2009. CIAF can be considered an intercultural space of exchange and of cultural coexistence because all the parties involved in the art network meet and discuss art in one place albeit for three days a year. At the heart of the event, there is a chance for artists to meet other artists, exchange ideas, learn and refine their own styles, and in this way it fosters and supports a process of socialisation, which encourages new contacts, trust, interactions and reciprocity between individuals, groups, galleries and institutions. Friction is implicit but masked. The event exudes harmony, even mateship as my analysis of the publicity suggests, albeit I raise and highlight aspects that would seem to harbour friction.

Unlike at CIAF, where artists are in a sense on their 'best behaviour' in front of a crowd, they can be themselves at home in their community or art studio and friction can arise at any time. Chapter Five relates to the artists'

views and perspectives on their relationships with arts coordinators and gallerists and how much agency they have in these exchanges. This increasing entanglement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is due to their mutual interest in producing, distributing and consuming fine art. My two interests in this chapter are, firstly, in the action of intercultural exchange and whether within the space of engagement there is collaboration and interdependency to ensure that artworks reach their destination to be sold. Alternatively, if friction exists between the players it potentially could cause inequality, animosity or unhealthy working arrangements that may be difficult to resolve. Secondly, there is a division between the community-based artists and the Cairns-based artists because the community art centres receive funding through the Federal and state government (its department Arts Queensland) along with the employment of arts coordinators, while the Cairns-based artists do not and this creates a kind of unspoken friction.

If artists represent the Indigenous interface of intercultural exchange, I present art centre coordinators in Chapter Six as the non-Indigenous interface. Federal and state government funding has enabled the setting-up of community art centres most often in places of geographic remoteness, economic disadvantage and intense marginalisation. The art centres are hubs for art production, and pathways for people wishing to be artists. I argue that an arts coordinator can be considered an intercultural mediator because he or she acts as the intermediary between the Indigenous artist and (typically) non-Indigenous gallerist. At the time of writing, the arts coordinators in Far North Queensland were all non-Indigenous. They cannot achieve the desired goal to

produce and distribute artworks, unless there is intercultural exchange in the forms of collaboration and interdependency by artists and gallerists. My research with the five arts coordinators revealed that they are multi skilled arts professionals that not only manage the art centre but also perform an advocacy role by conducting ethical partnerships with commercial galleries for the wider distribution of the artworks. An art centre has the dual purpose of being an art school and a cultural activity hub, so the coordinators are responsible for acting as the artists' agent, artistic director and administrator as well as the marketer for the artworks with galleries and art fairs. In order to carry out all of these duties arts coordinators must employ certain strategies to build relationships with artists. For arts coordinators there will be times that friction and possibly resistance to the demands of life in a community could see them fail, but they are expected to overcome the shortcomings, poor living conditions, poor pay and constant demands of the artists, arts workers, executive board and the community citizens to be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. I posed to coordinators the same questions as to artists, and compare the responses in Chapter Six.

I move in Chapter Seven from the established intercultural spaces to canvass the ideas and experiences of buyers of Indigenous art, their motivations and expectations. In a small sample, I found that a distinct group of attractions emerged that could be said to be typical of any art purchase such as investment and aesthetics. Some people are also apparently motivated by cultural knowledge (the sense of cultural awareness and appreciation gained by owning Indigenous art, as well as an appreciation of the stories implied in the artworks,

and knowledge of the artist responsible). Artists may never meet gallery staff or potential buyers yet in the eyes of some buyers, the artworks have the power to bind the artist to the buyer through a combination of Western and Indigenous cultural values. This desire for empathy and cultural awareness, I argue, bespeaks an underlying sensitivity and knowledge that Indigenous community life is fragile, even as art making has the potential to bring purpose, cultural prestige, income and opportunities to Indigenous artists. In a small way, I suggest, this distant relationship between buyers and artists bespeaks a consciousness and a contribution towards the processes of reconciliation.

In the final chapter (Chapter Eight), I used the combined outcomes of my field research to suggest four salient points to consider for successful relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people involved in the art network. Firstly, the role that intercultural exchange can play cannot be underestimated because dialogue (between people) and the physical spaces of art making (art centres) and display (commercial outlets) offer a way for Indigenous culture and western commerce to meld together and become a product on the world stage. Secondly, this process is not possible without the transformation of individual habitus of each player, taking from their knowledge and education base and adding new experiences, new knowledge and expanding their way of being. Thirdly, any friction between people is most likely to occur 'off stage' away from the public spaces 'on stage' where art is exhibited. Friction can lead to resistance or it can allow for a space of engagement where a margin to compromise is possible, which can cause dialogue to be redirected towards new connections and outcomes. The fourth and final point is trust, which was

mentioned repeatedly throughout the interview process. Trust has to be earned through relationships that are both professional and friendship based in which collaboration and interdependency requires that each person is trustworthy and honest. If trust between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people is not secure, and regarded as a long-time investment, then the mistrust that is detailed in much of Australia's Indigenous history would have every reason to surface again.

The next chapter concerns the history of Queensland's development of fine art, especially in Far North Queensland and its direct and indirect connections with the art produced in the community of Papunya, Northern Territory. Papunya has been recognised as the birthplace of the Indigenous contemporary art movement that went on to change the way Indigenous art is seen and appreciated. Instead of ethnographic items studied by anthropologists, the paintings, which were made by use of acrylics on wood, paper, canvas and other materials were displayed in art galleries, and spawned the creation of art centres in remote communities everywhere except Queensland until the 1980s. Although Queensland was slow to change its policies to be more in line with the other states it did eventually recognise the importance of an income stream and cultural revival for its Indigenous inhabitants, and more recently their work has gained ascendancy largely through the network of art centres. The implications have benefited contemporary art, and the profile and identity of individual artists, and also assisted in bringing wider public awareness of the conditions of Indigenous life in Far North Queensland.

Chapter Two

Queensland, FNQ, and the Western Desert: Mapping the Intercultural history of Indigenous fine art

In Queensland today, the industry of fine art production by Indigenous artists is now fully developed through the state and commercial sector, with growing critical infrastructure among the bureaucracy and academic institutions. In Queensland alone, there are at least four organisations that merge the interests of state and commerce in scaffolding the advocacy, support and promotion of Indigenous art in the region of Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait. Arts Queensland is the key state body, established in 1997 as part of the Department of Science, Information Technology, Innovation and the Arts, which is responsible for the development of the arts and cultural sector across Queensland. Its Backing Indigenous Arts Programme (BIA) was announced in 2007 with funds rolled out in 2008 to build skills and opportunities for Indigenous artists in Queensland (Arts Queensland, 2009a: 1). BIA is the only state government initiative of its kind in the country. The International Arts Partnership Program (IAPP) founded in 2011 replaced the Queensland International Arts and Marketing Export Agency (QIAMEA) and is a government agency that promotes artists and their artworks through marketing and export initiatives.

The Indigenous Art Centre Alliance (IACA) in partnership with The Cairns Institute at James Cook University has operated since 2010 with the intention

that it be Aboriginal-owned and managed into the future. This is modelled on the success of the peak agencies of the Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists (ANKAAA, founded in 1976), and Desart (founded in 1993), for artists from Central Australia. In 2010 there were ten art centres represented but by 2013, the total is thirteen including managers, art centre directors and artists from Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait. Artists are represented in the management team with the President, Solomon Booth (artist from Moa Island, Torres Strait); Harold Bowen (artist, Hopevale); Daphne De jersey (artist, Wei'num, Mapoon) and Laurie Nona (artist, Badu Island, Torres Strait). Arts coordinators, Brett Evans (Mornington Island) and Tara Zaicz (Hopevale) and the manager of Girringun Art Centre, Phil Rist are also part of the 2013 Management Team (Indigenous Art Centre Alliance, 2013). Their roles as committee members are to be active in decision-making, and strategists in the direction of art centres (Acker and Congreve, 2011: 3-12). New initiatives have been implemented to include, rolling out legal and governance training to art centre boards and artists, implementing the new art centre record-keeping database SAM (Stories Art Money), new IT hardware and software support for community art centres and the development of a human resource policies and procedures manual to achieve a consistent approach across the IACA membership (Indigenous Art Centre Alliance, 2012). In March 2013, IACA was independently incorporated and is now moving ahead to grow the organisation to include a team of support staff that specialise in a variety of areas to further assist its members. Finally, UMI Arts, Cairns, funded through Arts Queensland is a not-for-profit organisation that has an Indigenous Arts Board that wants Indigenous involvement in managing art centres, in particular the employment

of Indigenous arts coordinators. UMI Arts was established in 2005 and holds exhibitions at its office in Cairns and also runs a course called 'Exhibition Ready', which helps artists through each step of preparation for gallery exhibition, presentation and promotion at their arts space in Cairns (UMI Arts, 2011: 1).

The material history of the art production, however, appears to have been largely based in the communities of Far North Queensland, that is, the regions of Queensland from north of Ingham to Cape York Peninsula, more than 1400 kilometres north of Brisbane, and west into the towns and settlements of the region of the Gulf of Carpentaria, and north and east of the islands of the Torres Strait. Numerous Indigenous communities exist in these expansive mainland regions and a significant number as I have already indicated are active in the production of fine artworks for the national and international market as well as maintaining more localised art sales. With the growth of the bureaucratic infrastructure described above, the governance of these practices can be seen to be extended into the home regions in patterns that still resemble the colonial past, while the cultural policy environment is transformed from those times, notwithstanding the concerns raised earlier as to the extent to which Indigenous interests have autonomy or control in that environment. In the remainder of this chapter, I outline the events and influences that have brought about this set of conditions. In particular I seek to locate the relationships developed in Far North Queensland with regards to the more prominent history of Papunya Tula as the main watershed art movement in the rise and establishment of the work of Indigenous artists in the national art canon. Far North Queensland, with its

diverse communities, is an example of the regional patterning of identity that is mirrored in the genres of forms and styles with which it is associated.

In the previous chapter, I outlined a few of the relationships that were formed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. In 1971, a new era in art production would change how the public viewed Australian Indigenous art and its part in forming an Australian identity. The remainder of this chapter is an account of the rise of the art of Papunya in (dis-)junction with the history of social policy toward Indigenous people since the nineteenth century and the influence of various arts policies in Queensland since the 1980s. The emphasis on latter day government policy is not so much to suggest that only governments were responsible for the emergence of Indigenous fine art in Queensland but to map some milestones whereby the question of artists' agency might be evaluated. Also it is worth reflecting on the varying levels of intercultural exchange and engagement that have occurred over a long period and in various conditions ranging from control of Indigenous people to a relative degree of autonomy today. I argue that these developments stemmed -- albeit indirectly -- from the influence that Papunya artists had on the art market and therefore I offer a brief overview of the early years of the Papunya art and its perceived effect on Indigenous art in Far North Queensland.

Papunya Tula: Not Entirely a Story of Origin

In hindsight, Papunya Tula can be seen as formative in establishing the art centre model of art production, which was later adopted more widely, especially

in the state of Queensland (but as I shall show, not for a considerable period of time). Accordingly Papunya was also modeled on the vision for economic development of communities in remote regions through art production. Directly and indirectly, the success of the Western Desert artists stimulated attention to this potential in a period, the early to middle 1970s, of rapid growth in government support for arts in Australia more generally, under the federal Labor government led by Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam. The Papunya Tula artists' Dreaming designs were generally reserved for ritual purposes such as either body or sand designs and therefore were ephemeral in their manifest forms (Hoban, 2002: 180). The shift began in 1971 when the men around the Papunya community school were asked by the art teacher Geoffrey Bardon to apply their designs to portable media such as board, linoleum, packing cases and later canvas with acrylic paint, giving the designs permanence and making it possible to place them within the realm of western art presentation (Anderson and Dussart, 1988: 140). Bardon's idea was that artworks should be abstract and new looking but the content traditional. In 1972, Bardon (1991: 34) took the paintings to an art dealer in Alice Springs, creating the opportunity for the paintings to be contextualized as art. The success of that first sale led to an increased output and the establishment of an artists' cooperative -- Papunya Tula Artists -- to oversee the collection of works and their marketing (Berrell, 2009: 5). "Further north, in Arnhem Land, artists painting on bark also saw changes in support; government grants were made available for the purchase of art materials, and community art centres were established with arts coordinators employed to administer them" (Berrell, 2009: 5). The combination of improved circumstances and political conditions including the passing of the

Aboriginal Land Rights, Northern Territory Act, 1976 led to what Altman (2005: 4) later described as a: “Cultural renaissance spearheaded by a visual arts practice”.

In 1971, the first organisation specifically established by the Australian Government to build a market for Aboriginal arts was the Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Pty Ltd (AAC). The federal office of Aboriginal Affairs set up the AAC following the release of two tourist industry reports, *Australia's Travel and Tourist Industry* (Harris et al, 1965) and *Tourism Plan for Central Australia* (Harris et al, 1969), which outlined the potential contribution that Aboriginal arts could make to the national tourist industry. The reports recommended moves to expand the production of Aboriginal arts and crafts and to improve the ways in which they were marketed. “The formation of the AAC, with its aim to develop a market through the establishment of retail outlets in major cities, was seen in government circles as a step towards achieving several goals within the new political paradigm of Indigenous self-determination” (Peterson, 1983: 60-1).

¹ The expectation was that its operation would contribute to the economic development of geographically remote communities, and generate an income for Indigenous artists and craftsmen (1983: 60-1).

In May 1973, the newly elected Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, articulated his government's supportive vision by creating the Aboriginal Arts Board (AAB) within the Australia Council as part of its new policy of self-determination.

Consisting of fifteen Indigenous members, it promptly employed art advisers in

¹ “Self-determination was introduced as policy by the new Labor government in 1972. This era of political change can be traced back to the referendum of 1967, when an affirmative vote brought about changes to the constitution, which had previously excluded Aboriginal people from the national census. Legislative changes made in August 1967 opened the way for changes in Indigenous welfare and for the advancement of human rights” (Berrell, 2009: 14).

Northern Territory Indigenous communities (Peterson, 1983: 61). The AAB's director and administrative staff were drawn from the non-Indigenous population but major decisions about the direction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts were instigated and authorized by the Board's Indigenous members (Kleinert and Neale, 2006: 16-17). "The role of the board members was to stimulate audiences in the broadest of context, engaging the international community as well as the wider Australian population" (Berrell, 2009: 2). One of the chairmen, Dick Roughsey from Mornington Island, Queensland, sourced funds for his artists and dancers from South Australia and the AAB (Cleary, 2011) and in this way the artists and dancers could draw on a wider audience and not be locked into the production of curios that was part of Queensland's profile at the time. This might be said, therefore, to be one of the first direct influences of Papunya Tula on Indigenous arts in Far North Queensland, an effect moreover of a federal stimulus to national arts culture.

Throughout the 1970s, art exhibitions were the means to promote a broader public interest in the diversity of Aboriginal art and culture, but it proved difficult to find Australian galleries willing to mount such exhibitions (Berrell, 2009: 6). With sales through Australian commercial galleries static the AAB decided to buy bark paintings, carvings, weavings and fibre works from Arnhem Land, the Tiwi Islands, Croker Island, Elcho Island and Groote Eylandt in the Northern Territory. Paintings were also acquired from Mornington Island, Queensland; Ernabella, Fregon and Amata in South Australia; and Papunya, Northern Territory. It was also during the 1970s that the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory started its collection of Papunya and Arnhem Land artworks. None of the other state galleries and museums or the National

Gallery, Canberra, acquired that first wave of Western Desert acrylic paintings as they were executed (Johnson, 2007: 15).

As the art centres and the AAB had a stockpile of artworks the AAB members decided to bypass an unsympathetic local market and set up alternative programmes to exhibit internationally. “Between 1974 and the early 1980s the board initiated nineteen exhibitions in approximately forty countries, in regions including Africa, Asia, Europe, North and South America, the British Isles and the Pacific Islands” (Berrell, 2009: 2-5). The strategy of sending artwork overseas worked Australian Indigenous art into a more globalised perspective as many shows, according to Berrell (2009: 2-5), were tactfully inserted into international cultural agendas in national events and arts festivals, or were shown in conjunction with artist exchange programmes. In 1983, for instance, the *Festival d’Automne*, a large international contemporary art festival welcomed the first Aboriginal delegation to France (Morvan, 2011: 102). For a period of a month, cultural events took place across France in major contemporary art locations (Morvan, 2011: 102). One of the events was held at the Musee d’Art Modern de la ville de Paris, where twelve Warlpiri men from Lajamanu in the Tanami Desert were invited to create a traditional ground painting at the exhibition *D’un Autre Continent: L’Australie, le reve et le reel*. While in Paris the Warlpiri men joined a group of Yolngu dancers from Yirrkala in eastern Arnhem Land for a series of performances at the Theatre Des Bouffes du Nord (Morvan, 2011: 103).

The domestic challenges persisted, however, and attracted responses in broader forums. In the 1980 Boyer lectures, Bernard Smith called for ‘cultural convergence’ or proposing a meeting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous minds:

“Identities would not only be maintained and even developed, but also relationships would become more complex and fruitful, and beneficial to the Australian culture as a whole” (Smith cited in Izett, 2005: 26).² According to Berrell (2009: 4) in 1981, an industry study commissioned by the Australia Council, *The Pascoe Report* divided Aboriginal arts into four categories, ‘ethnographic’, ‘bi-cultural’, ‘decorative’ and ‘tourist’ and evaluated the market appeal of each. Pascoe according to Berrell reported these as ‘decorative’ and ‘bi-cultural’ artefacts, which were described as having some aesthetic value, whereas ‘ethnographic artefacts’ and ‘tourist artefacts’ were classified at the other end of the spectrum as having low aesthetic value and crude and unappealing to westerners. “The acrylic paintings of Papunya were excluded from this analysis altogether” (Pascoe, cited in Berrell, 2009: 4).³ Bernard Smith’s suggestion from the Boyer Lectures may have seemed to have been dismissed by the established art world, but, according to Erica Izett (2005: 26): “Little did Smith realise that a new generation of city-based Indigenous artists were graduating from Australia’s art schools that would take him at his word”.

By the early 1980s, the first wave of Indigenous arts graduates started their careers in fine art, although they struggled to gain public recognition of their existence and the merit of their work. The mainstream art world perceived that Indigenous urban artists were less authentic than their colleagues living in geographically remote communities, and the issues they addressed were ‘too

² “Local art exhibitions were meant to broaden the public interest in the diversity and depth of Aboriginal art and culture, but it proved difficult to find local art galleries to mount such exhibitions. Aboriginal artefacts were still viewed by the galleries as tourist souvenirs or ethnographic objects rather than works of art” (Berrell, 2009: 4).

³ Pascoe, Timothy. (1981). *Improving Focus and Efficiency in the Marketing of Aboriginal Artefacts*. In, unpublished Report to the Australia Council and the Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Pty. Ltd, pp: 20-2.

hard' or 'too political' or too caught up with western influences to fit within the public's perception of Indigenous art (Neale, 2010: 36). In 1984, frustrated by the refusal of galleries and cultural institutions to embrace their work, a group of Sydney-based artists came together to stage an exhibition, *Koori Art '84*, at Artspace in Sydney and this was followed two years later by an exhibition at the Workshop Arts Centre in Sydney, entitled *Urban Koories*. The artists were Avril Quail, Gordon Syron, Raymond (Arone) Meeks, Euphemia Bostock, Fiona Foley, Michael Riley and Jeffrey Samuels. They were seen as the first wave of a contemporary urban Indigenous art movement in Australia. While they encountered resistance from the art establishment, they shared in the groundswell of optimism and excitement in the wider Aboriginal community (Neale, 2010: 36). In 1987, these artists and others founded Boomalli Aboriginal Art Residence Cooperative in Sydney. They had their own studio that was open to the public and in this way the artists could control the representation of their artworks. As Geraldine Le Roux (2011: 128) notes: "They understood how the world of art worked and were aware of the way eurocentrism had transformed Aboriginal art into an object of fetishism".

On the international scene the late 1980s marked the first stirrings of interest in the possibility that the art could be exhibited without an attachment to another country's cultural agenda. *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia* was held in New York in 1988 (Myers, 1991) to high acclaim and triggering the first wave in a ripple effect of international interest. By 1989, and arguably as an effect of so-called economic rationalism, the AAB programme was deemed too expensive and logistically demanding, and as a result was scaled down (Myers, 2007: 136). "The agency of the artists and the support systems of the AAB had

firmly positioned Aboriginal art on the international stage and strengthened the confidence and future direction of those who contributed” (Berrell, 2009: 13).

Luke Taylor, curator at the National Museum of Australia in 1990, specifically acknowledged the contribution of the AAB to Aboriginal art:

It must also be said that exhibitions (such as *Dreamings*) follow in the footsteps of years of promotional work by other organisations such as the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australia Council. The Aboriginal Arts Board was responsible for numerous exhibitions that toured overseas, for publications, and for the purchase of works that were given as gifts to overseas institutions in an effort to develop interest. (Taylor, 1990: 33)

The Venice Biennale of 1990 duly included artworks by Rover Thomas (Turkey Creek, Western Australia) and Trevor Nickolls (Adelaide, South Australia) who were the first Indigenous artists to represent Australia in the Australia Pavilion. In 1993, *Aratjara: Art of the First Australians* attracted record-breaking crowds during its tour of Europe. While artists from the Northern Territory and Western Australia attended their exhibitions overseas, the Indigenous artists from Far North Queensland, in spite of the presence of some players in the first AAB initiatives, continued to be managed in much the same way as they had for the previous one hundred years.

Colonial Arts and Crafts in Far North Queensland

It is perhaps fraught to identify parallels between the pre-history of fine art in Far North Queensland and the various eras of social policy towards Indigenous people, given the dim regard in which some of these phases are now

held. I argue, however, that relevance lies in the history of relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, which existed for trade in utility and souvenir items long before any talk of the modern era of contemporary Indigenous art. Since Federation in 1901 Queensland has passed through four distinct policy phases towards its Indigenous inhabitants, all of which covered periods of arts and craft production of some kind. The first, known as Protectionism (1904 – 1951) placed all Indigenous people under the office of the Chief Protector of Aborigines (Frankland, 1994: 3). It was the passing of the *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897* that resulted in the appointment of a Chief Protector who by law was the legal guardian of every Aboriginal and ‘half-caste’ child under sixteen years of age. The first method of control was through the establishment of Indigenous reserves and the appointment of local protectors for each reserve who oversaw and implemented the rules governing Aboriginal people (Uwe-Korff, 2010: 1-9), which gave the Aboriginal Protection Board power to remove children from their families. The second method was through the establishment of Christian missions that were to provide sanctuary, shelter and food. However, it was more the imposition of a foreign (colonial) belief system and the active repression of traditional customs, cultural authority and power relationships that changed the communities. The forced movement of Indigenous people away from their traditional lands and onto mission stations had a devastating effect, and it was in these circumstances, from the late 1880s, that the missionary superintendents recognised opportunities for local people to manufacture curios for economic remuneration (Uwe-Korff, 2010: 1-9).

The replacement of Protectionism by the Assimilation Policy, between 1951 and 1965, saw Aboriginal people of mixed descent moved involuntarily into white society, irrespective of their will, and those not living on reserves or missions were required to be educated (Frankland, 1994: 9-10). The Queensland Government's Department of Native Affairs (DNA) 'curio section' which had been established in the 1920s to manage the curios made on mission stations and government reserves was ramped-up in order that these items could be sold through mission shops and retail outlets in major cities (Uwe-Korff, 2010: 1-9). By the late 1950s, the department expanded to include a wholesale-retail outlet. In 1959, H. R. Pascoe (Department of Native Affairs Report, 1959) a former arts teacher from the Indigenous community of Cherbourg headed a project for the department called 'The Curio Project'. He travelled to many reserves and missions throughout Queensland undertaking research into the viability of sustained production and sales of Queensland curios, which indicated strong potential for the industry. The objective of the Curio Project was to coordinate the manufacture and sale of Aboriginal arts and crafts from government reserves and missions throughout Queensland. The Project was originally linked to communities as far apart as Thursday Island and Cherbourg but favourable reports by H. R. Pascoe prompted a letter to all Indigenous communities in Queensland strongly urging increased curio production (Department of Native Affairs, 1959). At the time the missions were located at Mornington Island, Doomadgee, Edward River, Mitchell River, Aurukun, Weipa, Mapoon, Lockhart River, Hopevale, Bloomfield, Mona Mara and Yarrabah. It appears that there were ample responses to Pascoe's request for more curios to be manufactured because an era of more intensive production of Indigenous arts

and crafts began under the DNA to supply its shop in Brisbane, known as Queensland Aboriginal Creations (Anderson, 2000).

The suggestion here is that many Indigenous people were willing participants in the manufacturing of arts and crafts, which in a sense was the continuation of artistic traditions dating back centuries. When this policy was devised the craftspeople were to be paid, but in reality their wages were siphoned off into the government coffers (Sarra, 2011: 2). This signalled a lack of belief in the capacity of Indigenous people to spend their own hard-earned money, despite being considered capable of working as skilled artisans. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the artists were often the creative and innovative source of styles and new items among the souvenir objects. Aurukun seems to have been one community that took up the challenge because photographs from the 1940s, held in the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) in Canberra, show men applying their carpentry skills to produce wooden sculptures as tourist souvenirs (National Gallery of Australia, 2000: 1). Today, in Aurukun wooden sculptures in the same style are still produced that can be described as highly figurative representations, and with a strong use of bush colours. Each object is given its own character by the artist. The difference is that today such items are considered fine art and can be highly prized. Items such as wooden sharks, birds, figurative people and dogs decorated with acrylic paints are sold for thousands of dollars each (as evidenced from my personal observation at CIAF and Alcaston Gallery in Melbourne in 2010, and 2012).

Queensland Aboriginal Creations (QAC) in George Street Brisbane, began selling all manner of items sought by the tourist market such as grass skirts, shell

souvenirs, boomerangs and didgeridoos, as well as bark paintings, pencil sketches, watercolours and oil paintings with many of the items acquired from places outside of Queensland, such as Yirrkala community in the Northern Territory and the Solomon Islands (Anderson, 2000). Sallie Anderson's (2000) research into QAC suggests that the cultural products of places outside of Queensland were considered more exotic or traditional than items derived from local sources. According to Anderson (2000) there was concern for the preservation and perpetuation of traditional Indigenous culture in Queensland because it was perceived that there was no clear idea of what represented Queensland Indigenous culture.

The introduction of the Integration Policy (1965-1972) was intended to give Aboriginal people more control over their lives and society (Frankland, 1994: 9-10). However, in Queensland the *Aborigines' and Torres Strait Islanders' Act of 1965* gave the Director of Native Affairs considerable power over 'assisted Aborigines', who could be detained for up to a year for any number of reasons. Within this era, the economic benefits of craft production continued to be promoted, such that, in 1968, the state government initiated a profit-sharing arrangement with the communities to produce curios that would be distributed to tourist shops, mainly on the east coast of Australia (Butler, 2003: 197). Integration was fairly swiftly succeeded, in 1972, by self-determination (self-management policy) (Uwe-Korff, 2010: 1-9), the impact of which differed between states, and Queensland lagged. With self-determination on the agenda this should have been a time for Queensland's Indigenous art industry to develop along similar lines to the Northern Territory where art centres in remote

communities were being established. Instead, the Queensland government chose to maintain its tourist arts policy.

Although there was every indication that federal funding for the arts was given to Queensland, from my research to date there is no mention of any funds reaching Indigenous communities for arts and craft production.⁴ Even if evidence was found that funds were received in communities, it seems that Community Councils managed the funds rather than the residents, who were not granted choice over the type of arts development they wished to pursue (Glowczewski, 2011: 8). By 1975, the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA) was established in all states except Queensland to transfer the major responsibilities for Aboriginal policy and administration (Uwe-Korff, 2010: 1-9). Not only did the Queensland government maintain this control but also in the same year, the last of the mission stations in Queensland relinquished their control giving the state government responsibility for Aboriginal Affairs. It was therefore still a time of crafts for Queensland Indigenous artists and its QAC shop. This method of arts and craft production continued until the government-run tourist shop in Brisbane was wound down in 1991.

The intervening years in the 1980s as I suggest in the next section formed a period of uneven change, with a mix of initiatives by the state and federal governments. The main pattern to be observed is the tendency of the Queensland state government under the National Party Premier, Joh Bjelke-Petersen, to maintain a tourist-oriented economy that included arts and crafts.

⁴ AIATSIS is a department within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and has an extensive library containing both history and current events, but I could not find any mention of federal funds reaching art centres in the communities of FNQ.

Arguably, the tourism-art nexus ultimately delivered change for art in Indigenous communities in Queensland but it was gradual, over a lengthy period, and not without the stimulus of government change and an associated renovation of Queensland's culture policy as well as the positive, if distant influence of activist Indigenous arts movements interstate. A further influence was the transformative success of the Mabo Native Title case in 1992 that resulted in the decision of the High Court of Australia to declare the foregoing legal concept of terra nullius invalid, a decision, according to Morvan (2011: 110), that "brought new possibilities for economic and political development for Indigenous people". The purpose in focusing on arts policy influences in the following section therefore is not so much to directly attribute the outcomes wholly to governmental processes, as this is to overlook the many unnamed influences of lobbyists, activists and public demand in provoking change, which are beyond the scope of this research to identify in detail. Instead, the aim is to highlight and illustrate the many layers of policy instruments that represent, at times, inattention, and later milestones of attention to Indigenous art that have resulted in a view – intentional or otherwise -- of the collaborative role of government in this passage of change.

Far North Queensland's Time for Art

As argued earlier, Papunya, or any other arts community did not directly influence Far North Queensland arts but the phenomenal growth of Indigenous art, particularly in the Northern Territory could not be ignored because of the media coverage and international exhibitions throughout the 1980s. Historically, the Northern Territory and Queensland are somewhat comparable

in that many of the missions produced arts and crafts, 'curios' that were sold through mission shops, which indicates that both Queensland and the Northern Territory transited from a tourist art economy to a fine-art economy albeit in different timeframes.

In 1985, *The Report on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Industrial Relations and Department of Aboriginal Affairs* (Miller, 1985) (known as the Miller Report) emphasized Indigenous arts and crafts as a priority industry above tourism ventures. For example, Papunya and other arts communities in the Northern Territory and Western Australia had been operating for some years with the assistance of federal government funding that were not attached to tourism. But the Queensland Travel and Tourism Corporation (QTTC) continued to bundle tourism and arts and crafts together because it was thought that art as an industry could not stand-alone. In 1986, the *Report on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Sport, Recreation and Tourism* (Kennedy, 1986) (known as the Kennedy Report) reiterated the same view as Miller. Also in 1986, the federal Hawke Labor government commissioned *The Report of the Australian Government Inquiry into Tourism* (Whitford et al, 2001: 154), which among other things identified the untapped source of employment opportunities gained by the participation of Aborigines in cultural tourism (again, at the forefront was art and craft production).

In Queensland, during the 1980s tourism was taking giant leaps especially in Cairns and surrounding areas because of the concerted efforts by the governing Queensland National Party to increase tourists to the region. Indigenous souvenir art was part of that development and if anything, the

tourism industry in Far North Queensland was a catalyst in the development of Indigenous fine art in the region. But this was not straightforward as a cultural strategy and therefore induced some debate as tourism is often regarded as negative and degrading, and something that depletes cultural authenticity (Butler, 2003; 195). Tourist art is said to rupture cultural traditions because of the priority given to commercial concerns above genuine cultural expression. The reality of the situation is far more complex (195) and hypothetically one could equally argue that missionaries were responsible for introducing Indigenous people to commerce by having them produce curios for the mission shops, which helped the artists understand what makes an item saleable. Nevertheless, tourism to Far North Queensland exposed visitors to Indigenous artworks, even though it was still a time of arts and crafts production for the tourism market, with artworks headed for tourist shops in Brisbane, Cairns and Kuranda. The funds for these small cottage industries were sourced through Community Councils, which had reputations for withholding or delaying funds for any numbers of reasons, and making consistent supplies to tourist shops difficult (Cleary, 2011).

In 1989, *The Report of the Review Committee into the Aboriginal Arts and Crafts Industry* (Altman, 1989) (known as the Altman Report) was released. The report revealed that in comparison to Aboriginal arts and crafts in the Northern Territory, arts and crafts of the Indigenous people of Queensland were largely unknown and unappreciated owing to the underdevelopment of the industry within the state. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the federal government funded individual craftspeople in communities through its Community Development Employment Programme (CDEP) to make people work at art

production two days a week in exchange for welfare (better known as ‘work for the dole’) (Cleary, 2010). The work produced was not of a professional standard or market oriented, and was rather the produce of effort for regular welfare payments. There were no proper art centre spaces for artists, who in the main worked in abandoned buildings or tin sheds with earth floors (Neal, 2011). Yet, such places were known as art centres.

Milestones in arts culture in both Indigenous communities and in Queensland more generally can be seen to have come about through the period of dramatic change following the retirement of Joh Bjelke-Petersen from politics in 1988. Following interim National Party premiers, Mike Ahearn and Russell Cooper, the Labor Party, led by Wayne Goss, won government in 1989. Goss sought a reputation for sound economic management with greater transparency to overcome the financial excesses and allegations of corruption in the National Party in the 1980s (Fitzgerald et al, 2009: 194-95), and an arts policy was a key plank of the Goss government’s programme of renewal. In 1991, the *National Arts and Crafts Industry Support Strategy* wound down the government-supported wholesaling and retailing operation of the Queensland Aboriginal Creations shop and invested in fostering “more substantial and consistent support of community-based art centers” (Altman and Ward, 2002: 68). Subsequent attention to Indigenous Arts policy in Queensland must therefore be seen in the context of a more general cultural change and arts consciousness in Queensland. In 1991, the Goss government used the federal funds of the National Arts and Crafts Industry Support (NACIS) programme to support cultural retention and economic independence for community-based artists.

However, the money to support the artists was obtained through an application process, which created concern that some applicants might be advantaged, for example, those with good English skills (Fitzgerald et al, 2009: 194). Initially, in the early 1990s, the arts focus was on southeast Queensland and the mainstream population because the region was the highest populated area in the state, and there were more university graduates with higher disposable incomes. Thus, most of the funding was directed to southeast Queensland due to heightened public interest in arts and culture. Many unskilled workers, unemployed and Indigenous people seemed overlooked, and these state government initiatives were out of step with the then federal government's stand on equity, multiculturalism and Indigenous rights (Fitzgerald et al, 2009: 194-95).

In 1995, the Goss government released the *Building Local, Going Global* programme, which celebrated local diversity and international horizons (Fitzgerald et al, 2009: 205-06). Some funds were made available to the Lockhart River community to start a school leavers' programme. These funds were supplemented with the personal funds of two experienced non-Indigenous arts people, Fran and Geoff Barker, who mentored several teenagers in the art of printmaking (McCulloch-Uehlin, 2001). The outcome of this experiment resulted in three young women, Samantha Hobson, Rosella Namok and Fiona Omeenyo selling their prints to prominent curators, Betty Churcher and Margo Neale from the National Gallery of Australia and the Queensland Art Gallery respectively. It is difficult to say whether this small success of The Lockhart River Art Gang, as they became known (McCulloch-Uehlin, 2001: 21-2), directly influenced other communities but it appears that the state government was beginning to understand the role that art could play in the lives of Indigenous people. This is

also evidenced by the commissioned research project instigated in 1995 by Arts Queensland called *Arts, Business, Culture - A Research Report on an Indigenous Cultural Industry in Queensland*, (Bell, 1997) (known as the ABC report).

Sharenne Bell argues:

Research reveals that Queensland's Indigenous arts and cultural industry is largely home-based, unstructured and unsupported by any sustained or accessible infrastructure. Queensland does not have a network of Indigenous arts and craft centres, neither are there any Indigenous state wide arts service organisation, equipped to serve the needs of artists, particularly in remote areas. (Bell, 1997: 121)

Bell's report suggested that funding should go directly to art centres rather than waiting for applications from individual artists and Community Councils.

However, prior to this report being published in May 1997, the government of Wayne Goss lost office to Rob Borbidge and the National Party (1996-1998).

Funding continued but only three art centres received federal funding through NACIS; Mornington Island, Aurukun and Lockhart River with each receiving \$15,000 (Cleary, 2011). The Labor government was restored in Queensland after Borbidge lost the next election to Peter Beattie in 1998, and one of Beattie's platforms was the renewal of the arts policy.

The Beattie government adopted a Culture and Communities policy, which included an arts portfolio that encompassed various Indigenous and non-Indigenous creative arts such as festivals, dance, music, film and art making (Glover and Cunningham, 2003: 23-26). Through the arts portfolio Beattie's government sought to transform the Indigenous sector (23-26). Funds from NACIS were channeled through Arts Queensland into communities, mostly to Community Councils who were to distribute funds to the art centres, and in turn

employ arts coordinators with experience in marketing or visual arts with the aim of carving out a new direction for art making. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this happened inconsistently.

The growing significance of Cairns as an arts hub in Far North Queensland was reflected by the publication in 2000 of *Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art* (Eglitis, 2000). This catalogue, which was written and compiled by the Tropical North Queensland, Technical and Further Education (TNQ TAFE), Cairns, staff member, Anna Eglitis, and two graduates -- the now prominent artists, Arone Meeks and Ken Thaiday -- featured artists from the region. Also in 2000, Beattie commissioned a promotional art book and exhibition under the title *Gatherings*, for the 2001 Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in Brisbane (Demozay, 2001: 11). It displayed Queensland's Indigenous artists with photographs, back-stories and their contemporary artworks. The Premier used this book as an official gift of state, circulating it widely around the world (Demozay, 2001: 11). The book also featured many female artists who were advocating for economic independence by excelling at art making within a modernist progressive approach. By exercising freedom to do as they pleased women began painting and pottery. For these women this could be read as the direct influence of the success of the Lockhart River Gang in 1997. Yet, with more artists involved in art production, and an ever-increasing glamorous portrayal of art in such books as *Gatherings*, the reality was that the working conditions in communities were still appalling as there had been very little building undertaken to house the arts coordinators and to build proper art centres (Demozay, 2001: 11).

In 2002, when Premier Beattie proclaimed, “Queensland is a state for the arts”, in announcing yet another policy boost, it would seem that the scale of arts production was indeed growing and becoming more genuinely representative of the state of Queensland as a whole. In his announcement, he said:

Queensland is a state for the arts. *Creative Queensland – The Queensland Government Cultural Policy, 2002*, is a blueprint for a significant investment in arts and culture. The policy aims to encourage departments to work together to increase employment and training opportunities in the cultural and creative industries. The State budget of \$196 million dollars is allocated to the Arts portfolio. (Beattie, 2002: 1-2)

While this policy does not explicitly name targeted regions, the Far North gained a benchmark profile the following year, in 2003 with the exhibition *Story Place; Indigenous Art of Cape York and the Rain Forest* and the accompanying promotional book (Queensland Art Gallery, 2003) held at the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. The art book featured photographs of the communities, the artists, and the artworks. According to Lindy Allen, senior curator of the Top End and Northern Australia at Melbourne Museum (Allen, 2010) *Story Place* was the turning point in the emergence of Far North Queensland’s arts and culture and identity.

In 2004, a group of Indigenous Brisbane-based artists formed proppaNOW (similar to Boomalli, Sydney 1987) with independent interests and non-state based funding. The organisation included Richard Bell, Jennifer Herd, Vernon Ah Kee, Fiona Foley, Bianca Beetson, Jenny Fraser, Andrea Fisher and Tony Albert (Neale, 2010: 34-37). Later the group included Gordon Hookey and Laurie Nilsen after Fiona Foley and Jenny Fraser left (Neale, 2010: 37). The

name proppaNOW refers to the Murri way of doing things that references the Indigenous colloquial expression 'proper way', that is, to do things with due regard to appropriate protocols and community respect (Neale, 2010: 36). With Richard Bell as a founding member of the group, it gave certain notoriety to the group. They produced artworks that were statement-driven, political and controversial, which highlighted the problems of Brisbane-based Indigenous artists and I suggest that this had a positive effect of profiling them and their art to a wider audience through the media. Perhaps the presence of this group had the effect of a stimulant towards change in the art field. But the presence of such groups alerts us that the rolling path of positivity of culture initiatives for Indigenous communities is not necessarily smooth.

Also in 2004, there were two federal initiatives that garnered support for Queensland Indigenous artists in the Federal *Visual Arts and Craft Strategy* (VACS) for the period 2004-2007 (Senate Standing Committee, 2007). The report notes that Queensland received funds for individuals, cultural infrastructure, Indigenous infrastructure and the expanding of the art market. Under VACS, the funds were channeled through Arts Queensland to UMI Arts (\$150,000), Dreaming Festival 2006 (\$75,000), Queensland Indigenous Arts Marketing and Export Agency (\$350,000 over four years) and Indigenous art centres in communities. The other source of funding was the federal Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA). The Centres reported to be supported were in: Aurukun, Kowanyama, Lockhart River, Mapoon, Mornington Island, Napranum and Pormpuraaw.

Indigenous art production in Far North Queensland appears to have reached an interim high in this period. In the national frame, there was increasing concern about exploitation in the Indigenous arts sector with some specific attention drawn to Queensland. Janke and Quiggin (2006) note that the Australia Council raised issues such as payment of royalties, copyright, lack of appropriate remuneration to artists and unethical practices, sweatshops, payment in alcohol, non-Indigenous reproductions, forgeries, fakes and unscrupulous middle men. These revelations led to the establishment of the Federal Senate Standing Committee Inquiry into Australia's Indigenous Visual Arts and Craft Sector, Chaired by West Australian Liberal Senator Alan Eggleston, to investigate and identify: "Strategies and mechanisms to strengthen the sector" and "build a more sustainable Indigenous arts industry" (Kemp, 2006). In particular, the committee was charged with investigating unscrupulous and unethical conduct in the sector (Kemp, 2006). The report of the inquiry – *Indigenous Art, Securing the Future: Australia's Indigenous Visual Arts and Craft Sector* – published in June 2007 led to the establishment of an Indigenous Art Industry Code of Conduct. The federal report also identified the absence of Indigenous representative bodies, especially at the regional level in Queensland, and that the lack of accountability mechanisms within the communities was of concern (Senate Standing Committee, 2007).

State and private interests have combined in more recent times to sponsor and support Indigenous arts. In 2006, the state spent a further \$196 million in southeast Queensland on non-Indigenous art; in particular, the funds went to the upgrading of the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. The Queensland

Art Gallery launched a major initiative in conjunction with a corporate sponsor, Xstrata Coal, named the 'Emerging Indigenous Art Award', which provided an annual \$30,000 prize aimed at supporting emerging artists (Jonathan Jones of Sydney was the inaugural winner) (Demozay, 2006: 11). Also in 2006, *Gatherings II*, an exhibition at the Queensland Art Gallery and a promotional art book was launched to showcase Indigenous artists from Queensland (Demozay, 2006: 11). In the same year the Queensland's *Senate Standing Committee*, noted:

This submission seeks to highlight the unique and distinctive styles of Queensland's Cape York and urban Aboriginal artists and its Torres Strait Islander communities, and to canvas the steps necessary to build an industry, which has the potential to confer economic, social and cultural benefits on Indigenous communities. (Senate Standing Committee, 2006: 1)

The submission recommended improvements in the current arrangements for support of the industry but fell short of explaining how remote communities would benefit, instead focusing on Brisbane-based artists such as Judy Watson, Tracey Moffatt, Gordon Bennett, Richard Bell and Fiona Foley. Only one artist from Far North Queensland, Rosella Namok of Lockhart River, was mentioned in the submission as a 'successful artist'. The submission reflected, belatedly perhaps, that Queensland's broader arts industry development had progressed more slowly than that of other states due to the differing levels of funding provided to the sector in the past (iii). It also noted that data collected on art production was piecemeal and anecdotal, and thus not able to be compared with other states.

Peter Beattie stepped down from politics in 2007, and was succeeded by Anna Bligh. Under Anna Bligh's premiership the *Backing Indigenous Arts*

programme was announced to fund community art centres with a combination of state and federal funds. This policy has been sustained over some time, and has coincided with the so-called new era of social policy in Queensland, which is briefly discussed in the next section. While the nexus between arts and social policy is perhaps contentious, the period from 2000 to 2007 can be seen as a key one in which the identity of Far North Queensland as a diverse source of fine art production became established. Just as Western desert canvases and bark paintings from Arnhem Land revealed the cultural vitality of the Northern Territory, the work of Indigenous artists in cities and communities would bring in a new era that defined the profile of Queensland and its regional dimensions especially in the Far North.

Towards Interculture: Queensland's New Era in Art and Social Policy

The current era is one in which sustained attention to Indigenous art production has been set against a growing reflection on the destructiveness of past social policies. In February 2007, the four-year programme devised by the Queensland State Government (2007-2010) known as *Backing Indigenous Arts* (BIA) earmarked \$11.93 million (Arts Queensland, 2009a) to fund art centres. This figure reflected a combination of state and federal funding. The federal funding was obtained through NACIS, now known as Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support (renamed in 2011, IVAIS). Other funding was also available through a series of grants on application from both state and federal agencies. The BIA arts policy was designed to upgrade the skills, the materials and the

buildings of Indigenous communities along with a federal push for changes to other social policies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

At the federal level these policies coincided with the *Closing the Gap* report released in February 2008 in conjunction with the *National Apology* by the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in the Federal Parliament. The Apology was a formal acknowledgement of the injustice of past government practices and provided an important foundation for a new relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians based on mutual respect and responsibility.

Queensland's past approaches have been abandoned, largely as a result of the agitation from Aboriginal groups, notably Noel Pearson's Cape York Institute (Davidoff and Duhs, 2008: 7). Pearson claimed that passive welfare spending facilitated a dissolute lifestyle in which welfare dependence was normalized and in turn fed domestic violence and an abandonment of traditional value systems and did not provide anything viable to replace those systems (Davidoff and Duhs, 2008: 13). Since 2008, four communities in Far North Queensland - Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge - have been trialing a move away from 'passive welfare' (Davidoff and Duhs, 2008: 26) whereby welfare payments are conditional upon performance obligations. This programme has the endorsement of Noel Pearson and involves 3000 people. On 24 March 2012, Campbell Newman of the Liberal-National party (LNP) was elected as Premier of Queensland. In spite of a brief threat, the programme continues although with a revised timescale.

While the social policies in Queensland are still in transition, the second instalment of BIA continues for the period 2011-2014 with a further \$13.2 million added to continue developing a sustainable and ethical Indigenous arts

industry in Queensland (Arts Queensland, 2011a: 1). The second BIA initiative has five programmes, which support Indigenous art centres; building skills and opportunities; the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair; and the International Arts Partnership Program (IAPP) (Arts Queensland, 2011a: 1). The expressed aim of these initiatives is typically presented as follows:

We want more of these talented artists to create careers in the arts. We want to see new and emerging artists developing their skills through training and industry partnerships. We want to showcase their work and expose them to new audiences, here and overseas. This will allow artists to tap into all art forms and encourage artists to tell their own stories with traditional techniques and new technologies. (Arts Queensland, 2011a: 2)

In 2013 there were five major overseas exhibitions supported by the Queensland government that included Indigenous artists with each exhibition receiving \$95,000. The exhibitions were Richard Bell's (Brisbane-based) *More Light*, which was held at the fifth Moscow Biennale of Contemporary art in Moscow from September 20 to October 20, 2013 (Tolstova, 2013: 1). Vernon Ah Kee (Brisbane-based) represented Australia's entry in the exhibition *Sakahan*, which was held at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa from 17 May to 02 September 2013 (Adams, 2013: 1). At the same time Ah Kee had another exhibition, *Peripheral Visions: Contemporary Art from Australia* held at the Garis and Hahn Gallery, New York from May 08 to 15 June 2013. Lastly, for Ah Kee and Judy Watson (Brisbane-based) their artworks are currently exhibited at the Theatre Du Monde, Paris from 18 October to 12 January 2014. The artworks of Brian Robinson (Cairns-based), Danie Mellor (Canberra-based) and Christian Thompson (Amsterdam-based), were exhibited at the Berlin Art Fair under the title *Every Where at all Times: Bringing the Archive into the Contemporary* from

17 September to 22 September 2013 (Cloney, 2013). Fiona Foley (Brisbane-based) delivered the keynote address in London at the conference, *Origins: Festival of First Nations*, on 30 October 2013, with the festival events taking place from 23 October to 03 November 2013 (Woodrow Arai, 2013: 1). What is noticeable here is the lack of community-based artists nominated for these major overseas exhibitions funded by the state government. Instead the community-based artists will have to rely on the support of commercial galleries to take their artworks overseas. However, this year the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane showcased one hundred and thirty community-based and urban-based Indigenous artists in a feature exhibition of Queensland's leading Indigenous artists: *My Country, I Still Call Australia Home: Contemporary Art from Black Australia* (Queensland Art Gallery, 2013), from 01 June to 07 October 2013.

The working model of art production today represents symbiosis between government policy and commercial practices, suggesting that the combination of traditional techniques and new technologies implies an intercultural art form. The producers aim to market Indigenous art via art centres, galleries and art fairs, which supports the agency of artists to create cultural renewal (inside the communities), and cultural awareness (outside of communities), and an income stream for artists. Since the Backing Indigenous Art programme began to roll out funds in 2008 the number of artists and artworks has increased considerably. Figures to quantify the number of sold artworks from Far North Queensland are difficult to obtain or calculate as is the number of artists currently working through art centres because there is a constant flow of newcomers trying their hand at art-making, but not necessarily

staying on to forge a career as an artist. The situation now established has the potential to yield intercultural exchanges of a new kind and it is these interests that I turn to in the following chapters.

So far, I have attempted in this chapter to relate the history of arts and crafts and its importance in the development of fine art and in expansion of the Indigenous arts industry in Far North Queensland. I argue that there is a long history of relationships between Indigenous artists and non-Indigenous people, and that even during the dark days of the mission era when Indigenous people were not allowed to follow their traditional cultures, craft production was seen as a viable income stream (even if little of the money from sold items was given to the artists), targeting the tourist market, with Indigenous people often making innovative suggestions as to what should be manufactured. Through this process, it could be speculated that Indigenous artisans learned skills in identifying what makes an item saleable and that this knowledge has been passed down through the generations. The one exception is Lockhart River because there was no background in trading artefacts or utility items and it was not part of the mission era craft production yet several of their artists are internationally recognised. I take from this that art making learned generationally is not necessarily a prerequisite for a future as an artist.

Recent arts policy in Queensland could be described as one of the more successful policy frameworks of recent decades in the relations between governments and Indigenous communities in Queensland. For Indigenous artists and Elders, art has strengthened their social, political and spiritual life as well as their personal prestige and influence. Art is universally a means for

intercultural exchange and political power. In Queensland it has been a source of positive contribution for artists and a reciprocal benefit through state and federal funding, expert advice and a ready market of buyers. The artists of the Western Desert and other regions did the groundwork by establishing an Indigenous art industry in the 1970s and 1980s that has enabled the artists of Far North Queensland to enter into an already structured national Indigenous art scene. But when viewed in broad perspective, it would seem that for decades Queensland's state politicians were reluctant to become involved in upgrading the products from tourist souvenirs to fine art.

In the following chapters, I focus more directly on the contemporary experience of artists and arts coordinators in participating in the art network they now occupy with regional identity. But at first, it was the federal government initiatives that established the key support for Indigenous art centres in Queensland communities where employment was scarce. How much the federal government attempted to persuade the Queensland Government to open-up avenues for the development of Queensland's Indigenous arts industry, is difficult to evaluate. In Queensland fine art has been influenced by the arts and crafts movements of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but if anything, it was the success of tourism in Far North Queensland, the very business that the state had tried to keep together with arts and crafts that influenced the split because tourists were seeking an Indigenous cultural experience, which demanded better quality art items for purchase.

In Chapter Three, in moving towards a contemporary focus I will develop a theoretical and practical framework to enable exploration of the concepts of

culture and commerce in the production practices of the Indigenous art industry. No product can be produced, distributed and consumed without dialogue, collaboration and interdependency between the artists, arts coordinators, gallerists and buyers. Taken together, I argue, these processes constitute and effect intercultural exchange, which occurs at each stage in the trajectory of the art from its production to market. Intercultural exchange is the ability to interact effectively and appropriately in situations in which multiple cultural traditions are active, and entails specific attitudes, knowledge, skills and reflection. Throughout the scholarly literature on intercultural exchange there is a range of related terms, such as intercultural competence, intercultural communication and intercultural sensitivity, among others. In addition, I discuss Bourdieu's (1991) social theory of habitus and capital as a framework to analyse responses from the interviews conducted in the field with participants in the regional art formation in Far North Queensland.

Chapter Three

Reframing Interculture: Habitus and Arts Practice in Far North Queensland

In the previous chapter I outlined the history of social and arts policies that impacted and stalled the development of fine art in Far North Queensland. The art making process has grown out of the colonial history and the present political-economic situation in which artists' own choices must be read in conversation with arts policy agendas and their social aspirations. Since the BIA

was announced in 2007 the number of artists producing fine art has increased giving opportunities for some to become serious contenders in the global art market. The artworks become globally celebrated products that also become media for exchange and collaboration across lines of difference. The combination of government support and the individual agency of the artists has resulted in a particular set of practices involving exchange that can be looked upon through a contemporary lens of relationship building between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who share a willingness to succeed in the art industry, which is a difficult goal whether artists are Indigenous or non-Indigenous. Relationship building plays out in the physical spaces of art centres, art fairs and galleries, which act as spaces for engagement and where dialogue between people is guided by their own expectations, which are in turn affected by past experiences. In this sense at least artists are active agents in the relationships in the art network through their sense of belonging at a local level and through the possibilities they create for new relationships to be formed.

This view is the initial premise of my research into Indigenous fine art in Far North Queensland, and in this and the remaining chapters I consider the situation of artists and their colleagues in the art network as subjects of culture, cultural exchange and the commercialisation of Indigenous art. In *Frame Analysis* (Goffman, 1974), Goffman observed that social interaction offers detailed insights as to how cultural contexts are produced, embodied and enacted in verbal and nonverbal communicative acts, which suggests then that relationships and social interactions that comprise the art network constitute a case study. Participation in the art network involves a range of practices some of

which are sourced in Indigenous cultural traditions and some of which are sourced in western commercial and artistic practices, and all are influenced by the diversity of individual cultural backgrounds of potentially infinite variability. It is in these separate and yet interconnected axes of practice possibilities that Indigenous art is situated. The processes needed to bring artworks to an art market require the interactions of all the participating parties through the various stages of the art network whereby subjects communicate and interact with each other through a variety of cultural influences irrespective of each subject's original cultural identity. Therefore, in this chapter I contend more explicitly with the theoretical architecture of intercultural exchange, and highlight how this influences my approach to the research in later chapters.

At the centre of this discussion is culture, which according to Clifford Geertz (1973: 89) is an: "Historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbolic forms by means of which men [sic] communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge and attitudes toward life". Culture also acts as an unconscious model or template in interaction with others. Culture, according to Roger Keesing (1974: 75), provides people with an implicit theory about how to behave and how to interpret the behaviour of others, in the sense that "[p]eople from different cultures learn different implicit theories. . . . [which] are learned through socialisation and also through learning the value of the 'particular culture' and the 'self-identities' of the subjects formed in the culture". Culture figures significantly in face-to-face encounters between people in any situation, including virtual encounters, in the art network. The expectations that are held in entering into any conversation or meeting arguably have cultural sources, or

at least are influenced by an individual's personal background, including the "thoughts, values, emotions and behaviours that were planted and cultivated in their own culture" (Neuliep, 2012: 32). In cross-cultural encounters, an individual's cultural 'lenses' influence meaning as it is made from the communicative acts of others (Neuliep, 2012: 35). So, when a person enters into conversations with people from cultures other than their own, the differences can potentially become a source of confusion, misunderstanding and at worst, conflict. Awareness of such differences and a willingness to assume that there are different cultural perspectives is key for the process of intercultural exchange.

As indicated in the first chapter, culture is a polysemous construct. Cultural identity is understood to figure in interpersonal communication but is different from the notion of consumer culture that is generated in retail trading spaces or in profit making commercial activities, or in the fine art exhibition spaces such as art fairs or galleries, where there is a risk that the artworks that represent both fine art and Indigenous culture might be questioned as the expressions of authentic culture of Indigenous people. The sense of complexity is suggested by Don Slater (1997: 70), who argues that culture takes on a very different meaning when contrasted to consumption, in that "[c]ulture is defined separately from commerce and manufacture because culture is not consumed but it is appreciated by a cultured audience; art is not manufactured, it is created and thus 'true culture' is something that cannot be bought, mediated, or ruled by money because it was defined that way".

The notion of intercultural exchange therefore is one that can potentially embrace the multiple dimensions and complexities of culture, the processes and effects, in interactions between the subjects and processes of various cultures, including the diverse forces of tradition and consumerism. In the Indigenous art network, the particular players involved in the “spaces of engagement” (Hinkson and Smith, 2005), or what Mary Louise Pratt (1991) calls “contact zones” includes artists, arts coordinators, gallerists and buyers in their activities to bring artworks to an art market. The contact zones in the art network involve people – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – who represent many cultures, customs and practices in the processes of coming together in the art network to create, discuss, view and buy art. Therefore, in mobilising the notion of intercultural exchange, attention must be drawn to the manner in which it is typically theorised in anthropological and affiliated sources.

Russell Taylor (2003: 45) suggests a theoretical conceptualization of intercultural exchange in its simplest sense as “the meeting of two distinct cultures through processes and interactions, which retain the distinctive integrity and difference of both cultures and, which may involve a blending of elements of both cultures but never the domination of one over another”. Taylor thus models interculture as a ‘blending’ of only two distinct cultures that implies and assumes non-dominance of a single cultural tradition in any exchange. In terms of the Indigenous art network, I question this dualist model because potentially there are more than two distinct cultural groups involved at any one time in the contact zone, and the intercultural exchange action between people is ongoing, ever changing, continuous, and dynamic and can be further defined as

flexible, adaptive and fluid. Intercultural exchange is interactive and trans-active because it requires the active participation of people sending and receiving messages that are constructed with verbal and nonverbal symbols. Through symbols, meanings are transferred and the shared meanings are only gained if the subjects have learned the same associations of the symbols (Neuliep, 2012: 14). As Gudykunst and Kim (1997: 327-329) assert, during intercultural exchange, culture acts as a filter through which all messages, both verbal and nonverbal, must pass, and all intercultural exchanges are to a greater or lesser extent, potentially charged with ethnocentrism, so that, in intercultural exchange, the message sent is not necessarily the message received.

In the context of the contact zones of the art network, the views of Johnson et al can assist in analysing the factors of variability. Johnson et al (1998: 4) argue that there are “three essential exchanges necessary for effective working relationships”, which are, they posit: “the construction of knowledge (new ideas, new materials), positive interpersonal relationships and a rich discourse among participants in the promotion of art”. In turn, they argue, “these social relationships make people care about each other and the more committed they are to each other’s success, the greater will be the productivity of the individual or group goals” (4). However, I suggest that these three factors are more deeply varied in the sense that individuals may have different understandings of what is rational or desirable, and they may make use of different ways to fulfil their objectives. In order to be recognised, understood by others and produce social agreements, people have to negotiate with others and make mutual adaptations. For instance, Peter Sutton (2009: 147), reflecting on

the intercultural dynamics of cultural identity observes that: “most Aboriginal people in 2009 move in what is sometimes called an intercultural space that is also an inter-ethnic social space, and an economic and political space, where nobody’s relationships are entirely with members of a single race”. Coleman (2009: 21) suggests that “[A]boriginal art, as currently recognised, is an intercultural object because it addresses a contemporary audience”. Added to these dynamics are engagements with the new ways of doing business and political connections, which require the need to take seriously not only the intercultural exchanges between individuals but also with the state and the arts industry whereby cooperation is pursued with respect for differing modes of vision and action. These exchanges might be undertaken out of a limited set of choices and opportunities for Indigenous artists, who are living and working in remote communities, compared with urban-based artists living and working closer to the mainstream in diverse societies. Intercultural exchange and the spaces in which this occurs can be seen to resemble the postcolonial environment modelled by Homi Bhabha (1994: 18), who argues that “[c]ontact between cultures results in fluid and ambivalent cultural difference, which is ultimately manifested in a ‘third space’, a hybrid space, where culture is never pure or original, but is influenced by other cultural meanings and identities”.

Theory and Practice: Friction and the Bond of Trust

In this hybrid space, theoretical modeling of interculture is formed in uneven correspondence with practice. In the art network, in Australia, there are currently no protocols, procedures or policies that explicitly foster efforts to

bring people together in meaningful exchange of diverse preferences and contradictory interpretations. The practice occurs by open invitation to something that all sides wish to take-up, 'situation normal', so to speak. In the context of the art network, the aim of intercultural exchange is to bring artworks to an art market based on assumed respect for Indigenous peoples' rights to self-determination and maintenance of culture and heritage. Practice is informed by notions quietly assumed to be culture-neutral, such as mutual respect, inclusive and consultative practice, meaningful engagement, or reciprocity between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, all underpinned by Indigenous decision-making based on free and fully informed consent. Indeed, as I relay in later chapters, I found that effective collaboration is valued and practised between the Indigenous artists, arts coordinators and gallerists that I interviewed, which is based on the willingness of participants to share goals, respect for Indigenous culture and a passion for art. In advancing a deeper understanding of how these relationships can be understood as interculturally conscious, I examine in this section a set of strategies and practices from the literature of intercultural communication that are pertinent to the relationships I observed in the art network. The practices of communication and dialogue are intrinsic to collaboration, and also to understanding and counteracting the forces of friction that exist, both between cultural groups, and within groups.

Chen and Starosta (2000: 139-145) pose a model of intercultural communication that is comprised of three strategies: intercultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and intercultural adroitness. Intercultural awareness is seen as the cognitive dimension of competence that refers to a person's ability to

understand similarities and differences of others' cultures. This includes two components: self-awareness and cultural awareness. Intercultural sensitivity refers to the emotional desire of a person to acknowledge, appreciate, and accept cultural differences, and this is seen to comprise six component practices: self-esteem, self-monitoring, empathy, open-mindedness, non-judgmentality and social relaxation. Intercultural adroitness is a behavioural dimension that refers to an individual's ability to reach communication goals while interacting with people from other cultures based on: message skills, appropriate self-disclosure, behavioural flexibility and interaction management (139-145). This (somewhat bureaucratic) vision of managed compatibility is of interest for the assumed culture-neutral template of action implied: self-disclosure and flexibility, for instance, are potentially laden with learned values. On the other hand, the long history of engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in trading and exchange of goods (referred to in the previous chapter) should at least alert us to the long-established practices that, if not identical with the template, might be equally entrenched, and enable the relative harmony of the art network in the present day.

In my research interviews, however, the task was not to evaluate these paradigms but to engage initially in observing dialogue, communication, some interaction and collaborative practice, especially at CIAF. Dialogue or communication is fundamental to the ways in which people can work collaboratively (Johnson et al, 1998: 4-7). Collaboration is based around the theory of social interdependence, which seeks to explain how individuals interact with each other and how that in turn influences the outcome. Positive

interdependence is sought when individuals encourage and facilitate each other's efforts to achieve the required individual or group goal (4-7). The term 'collaboration' conveys the idea of sharing and implies collective action oriented toward a common goal, in a spirit of harmony and trust. The concept of collaboration is commonly defined through underlying ideas of sharing, partnership, power, interdependency and process. The basic premise of social interdependency theory is that the type of interaction that individuals will have with each other will determine the outcomes (4-7). These interactions can be informal where social exchanges can have the potential to alleviate some of the misunderstandings and misinterpretations that can occur from a lack of social cues and face-to-face interactions.

Dialogue is a critical element of face-to-face interactions in collaborative intercultural exchange. Dialogue can be seen as a highly developed form of communication (Lane and Hays, 2008: 1). It is a process of communication aimed at learning about and sharing between persons or groups. Dialogue is communication with the goal of mutual understanding, which ideally operates in an environment of mutual trust and respect and the avoidance of hidden agendas. David Bohm (1996: vii) conceived of dialogue as a "multifaceted process" whereby participants (perhaps unconsciously) "[e]xplore... closely held values" and "the nature and intensity of emotion". From a more clinical perspective, dialogue can reveal "the patterns of thought processes, the function of memory, the import of inherited cultural myths" and even "the manner in which neurophysiologic processes structure moment-to-moment experiences"(vii). Bohm refers to the neurophysiological concept of

proprioception, or self-perception and highlights the problems that arise when individuals are not proprioceptive in their efforts to communicate. He postulates that if certain thoughts and assumptions could be suspended and we could share our opinions without hostility, then we would be able to engage in 'collective thought', that moves more creatively in new directions. Arguably, these definitions concern dialogue as a potential democratic process that acknowledges and respects all parties, creates a context that reinforces the notion that change is possible, and transforms relationships toward positive social change.

There will be times within these face-to-face interactions when harmony, trust and collaboration will give way to what Tsing (2005: 5) calls the 'intercultural zone' where disagreements, conflict and friction occur. It is in the art network of artists, arts coordinators, gallerists, government agencies and Indigenous organisations that we can adapt Tsing's concept (xi) of: "zones of awkward engagement where words mean something different across a divide as people agree to speak", but it is not necessarily a sign of incompatible agendas or missed opportunities. Tsing sees these moments as defined by 'friction', the unstable dynamic process where: "heterogeneous and unequal encounters can lead to new arrangements of culture and power" (5). She describes and interprets connections in a way that efficiently illuminates why understanding friction is as helpful as understanding harmony. Friction does not mean a clash of cultures; instead Tsing uses the word 'friction' as a metaphor for the diverse and conflicting social interactions that make up our contemporary world. In these "zone[s] of awkward engagement" (5) there is the potential for

unpredictable and messy encounters but there is also the opportunity for most of these engagements to work out because in the main there is a willingness by all parties to resolve matters. Friction can provide the impetus for change whether it is political or social as well as the roadmap for newly formed collaborations and interdependencies while acknowledging the structures of power that remain.

Friction between people of different cultural domains can be described as tense moments, compromises, hopes and fears, negotiations and trade-off as each person surveys the other and gauges whether the other can be trusted to understand the cultural rules and reciprocate appropriately with the offering of peaceful solutions. Trust is the main currency here because it is the glue in the relationships between people. Trust is a form of social capital, a building block of any society. Trust can be given concrete form through people communicating in the mediation spaces of art centres, CIAF and galleries that serve to create one or both major types of social capital, that of bonding and bridging (Daniel, 1996: 783). Without bonding capital individuals remain isolated and alienated with no sense of belonging. Bridging capital enables people to link together through a range of interactions.

The art network requires each participant to share in a sense of common purpose that helps people feel a bond with others, which can foster a willingness to treat others with respect because trust has to be earned, it is not a given and without it one cannot disagree respectfully (Uslaner, 2000: 569). Trust matters a lot because reaching collective decisions places a high-value on compromise and productivity, rather than any notion of a conflict or tension. Building trust in

people helps them to be more tolerant, less cynical, and to connect to others and to test the veracity of their own views, whether in the give-and-take of casual conversations or in more formal deliberations. Having different opinions does not necessarily lead to breakdowns or tension in conversations but instead by accepting others' attitudes there is grounds for compromise and better relationships.

If friction is to be negotiated in the space of engagement new collaborative agreements need to be constructed for an Indigenous future with the help of mediating spaces such as art centres and CIAF, where the various parties can discuss, negotiate and find ways to communicate. For example, in art centres, the arts coordinator or an employee cooks lunch every weekday for everyone that works there with the understanding that they all sit down together as friends and colleagues to joke, talk and discuss art or community issues. If friction exists between people there is the likelihood that it will surface in such an informal setting and can be resolved quickly. Robbi Neal, Lockhart River's Artistic Director gives an example of friction in the art centre:

I recently had to sit everyone down (all the artists) and explain that certain behaviour in the art centre was unacceptable and that I needed support. The artists bought me chocolate biscuits, which cost them far more out of their pensions than it should. The gesture was really lovely. For two days they were careful to behave appropriately and on the third day everything went back to normal with me being constantly humbugged. (Neal, 2010)

The friction created by 'humbugging',⁵ so called, as a localised form of harassment towards community members by their kin also can be seen as "a

⁵ Humbug is a term applied to various forms of requesting food, goods and money in rural and remote Aboriginal communities. It is discussed further as 'demand sharing' in Chapter Six.

constant process of testing and renegotiating” (Scott, 1985: 255) each other’s position in the community. According to James Scott (255): “There is a never-ending attempt to seize each small advantage and press it home, to probe the limits of the existing relationships and to see precisely what can be gotten away with as part of an accepted, or at least tolerated, territorial claim”. This form of friction occurs within relationships in communities, and is arguably a form of resistance to intercultural practice, with the details of the (putative) resistance, “confined to the backstage of community life, while in public life – that is to say, in power-laden settings – a carefully calculated conformity prevails for the most part” (xvii). Public life or the ‘front stage’ for community-based artists is the art gallery and CIAF, while the ‘backstage’ is the community art centre in the home culture.

Artists’ Agency, Art Centres and the Hybrid Economy

The community art centre is a centre in many senses, and is liable to channel friction at a community level, as everyone that works in an art centre is likely to be involved in negotiations and gossip, or in ‘bad behaviour’, such as reduced effort, or selling small art items ‘on the side’. Equally, the art centre is a crucible of artists’ agency, which is expressed in numerous ways, including the capacity to cope with difficulties, to create selective skills of perception, and sources of resistance to ongoing challenges; these strategies form the habitus, or ways of being as artists. Some communities are known through media reports

for violence in and between families, alcoholism, unemployment and so on (Davidoff and Duhs, 2008), which do not start in art centres but spill over into the centres because kin and family connections permeate communities. Art centres are meant to offer a peaceful space, a type of sanctuary away from many of these problems so that artists can concentrate and find solitude to create art.

But friction is assumed to be environmental in community art centres as this is where Indigenous cultural knowledge and western art skills converge in the making of art for sale. The goal is to sell artwork, spread awareness to the public, find employment as an artist and be financially rewarded. There has been debate over the years (Altman, 2005; Myers, 2007; Langton, 2003; Perkins, 2003) as to whether Indigenous art production is cultural or commercial.⁶ Jon Altman (2005: 11) says: “There is a strong Indigenous sentiment that as Aboriginal art embodies living cultural heritage, its integrity must be protected at any cost”, yet, “there is public policy pressure to interpret the marketing of Aboriginal art as commercial”. Therefore, the art centre has all the hallmarks of being: “an unusual intercultural mediating institution because it is dependent on public patronage and active brokerage between Aboriginal artists and the fine arts market” (1).

The commercial or market stage of the processes of production of artworks – whether produced in art centres or by urban artists in their studios – is commonly known by the term or business model, the ‘commodity chain’ (Latour, 2007). The commodity chain has been defined as a “network of labour

⁶ Elizabeth Coleman (2009: 18) wrote: “An Aboriginal artwork is an intercultural object, not merely in the sense that they are objects that mean one thing in one culture and yet are used differently in another, but also in the sense that they ‘belong’ in both cultures. Indeed, one might describe such paintings as creole paintings. They belong in both cultures not only as art, but as a communicative, and highly political act”.

and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity” (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1986: 159). It is also what Tsing (2005: 51) calls a supply chain, which represents: “the material good of capitalist production and the object the consumer’s desire”. The commodity or supply chain models the stages that a product (an artwork) must travel through before reaching its destination of being sold. This model is really nothing other than a template for the business of selling art.

Figure 3. Buying Aboriginal Art Ethically (Aboriginal Art Online, 2008)
<http://www.aboriginalartonline.com/resources/buying.php> Accessed 01 April 2012



In the graph above the commodity chain model has been adapted to reflect the many possibilities for the trajectory of an artwork from its creation to its eventual sale. The commodity chain is unidirectional with each stage related to and dependent on the next step in the process. “For an art network to function we need to link sites and people to one another without missing a single step” (Latour, 2007: 173). Each link forms part of the process of transmission. What the graph does not show is how the dialogue between the actors influences the potential for the product to move or not move along the chain, or what other spaces might open for interaction or dialogue between the artists, arts

coordinators, gallery staff and various audiences and buyers who might enter the process of transmission. In other words, I suggest that the 'hybrid economy'⁷ poses various possibilities for mediating relationships, or what Bourdieu (as cited in O'Brien and O'Fathaigh, 2005: 65-66) describes as "(s)tructured space of forces and struggles, consisting of an ordered system and an identifiable network of relationships that impact upon the habitus of individuals". Focusing only on production or consumption does not constitute a realistic (or chain-like) passage as it takes dialogue and negotiation between the interested parties to move the product towards potential buyers. Neither does this business model reflect how the appeal of a product will impact diversely on potential buyers. For instance, the commodity chain cannot reveal if the Indigenous cultural content of the artwork is of importance to its eventual sale or some other quality.

The selling of artworks relies in part on commercial gallery curators and staff members using Indigenous culture to generate saleability and, hence, profit. The western economic paradigm has made Indigenous culture into a commodity, into 'art' to be bought and sold, hung on gallery walls or critiqued in magazine reviews (Cherney, 2012: 2). Buyers, if they are not themselves Indigenous, or culturally aware, may not necessarily understand the culture encoded in what they are buying; they do not always see, let alone understand the stories within the art. It becomes part of the selling process to evoke the distinctiveness, or even mystery. The artwork might speak of Indigenous relationships to land, heritage, oral traditions, or the struggle for survival, or everyday issues of life in communities, and some artworks particularly those of city-based artists are

⁷ 'Hybrid Economy' is a term coined by Jon Altman (2005: 6) to describe both Indigenous art centres and art production that reflects a hybridization of culture and commerce that operates with Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants.

saturated with political dimensions.

Anthropologist Sue Kesteven (cited in Layton, 1994: 155) objected to the way that the monetary value of fine art, for example Papunya acrylics, rose dramatically after they received approval from art galleries and festivals. Kesteven argued that Aboriginal culture possesses no category of 'fine art' as distinct from functional design, and that gallery owners create 'Aboriginal fine art' to increase their profits as middlemen (155). While there is truth in Kesteven's argument that Indigenous art has been marketed as a product on the world stage as a way of increasing its value, market wisdom is that the art buying public decides whether the high prices for 'fine art' are worthwhile and gallerists can do no more than try to influence the public to buy art. The market can be fickle, artists can be in or out of fashion, or prices can go up and down depending on world financial concerns. Galleries that specialise in Indigenous art sell at higher prices than community art centres and they have the ability to sell more artworks because of their cosmopolitan locations.

The artworks objectify, romanticise or idealise the Indigenous culture as separate from mainstream Western culture but Indigenous people are active members of modernity coping with all the destructive forces and social prejudices that have stemmed from the idealisation of the 'noble savage'. Artists are conscious of these overtones and might be seen as complicit with these expectations and the driving-force of the international art market by participating in the cultural economy. In this way, culture becomes a mode of production in which the labourer directly benefits from its exchange value (Cherney, 2012: 2). The exchange value for artists is also the sharing of cultural

knowledge as a genuine means to maintain and preserve Indigenous culture through a concerted capitalist method of labour use – value – commodity – exchange system (Cherney, 2012: 2). A two-fold exchange happens, economic and cultural; essentially artists have recreated their cultural traditions through merging ancestry with modernity giving gallerists leeway to use the ‘exotic other’ or ‘noble savage’ to their (mutual) advantage through promotion and in the selling process. In this way, Indigenous art invites potential buyers to celebrate Indigenous heritage as something exotic while at the same time rewarding artists for showcasing their culture. According to Rosita Henry:

Yet this opportunity to achieve ‘freedom’ by ‘showcasing’ culture arises out of – and is structured and limited by – the political and economic constraints of the bureaucratic state and of private enterprise, as well as the demand of audiences who seek the experience of cultural ‘otherness’ and exotic primitive worlds. (Henry, 2012: 213)

Artists perhaps take pride and agency in this ‘new awakening’ of the Indigenous subject of postmodern ideology as well as part of their own exclusive cultural identity, so that they perhaps do not so much sell out but sell *in*, reinforcing their past into the present day commodity culture. The dichotomy here is that the contemporary culture of artists is balanced with a remembered past but stimulated by the reality of their material economic survival. Therefore the end products, the artworks, whether produced by urban or community-based artists must be considered in terms of the value derived from both culture and economics, or rather the economics of commerce.

Field, Habitus and Capital

The theoretical convergence of culture and commerce can be observed in social practices, which can be best explained through the use of Bourdieu's social theory that refers to individuals and institutions and which breaks social phenomena into three seemingly separate, yet dynamically interconnected, constructs: field, habitus and capital. According to Colvin et al (2012: 12): "Bourdieu conceives of social activity as practice that occurs between actors in social spaces called fields". Field is the structure and environment wherein social activity occurs. Fields are autonomous spaces that have rules and roles that inform social behaviour, which distinguishes them from other fields; in Bourdieu's (1992) words, they have their own logics. In order to succeed within a field, an agent needs to understand what the rules are that govern social behaviour within it. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 98) extend the analogy of a field to that of a game: "we can, with caution, compare a field to a game...it follows rules or regularities that are not explicit or codified". However, all agents within it do not experience the 'game' equally. Rather, a field assumes inequality between agents. This inequality can be due to different positions held by agents in the fields, which are determined by the resources of capital and dispositions (habitus) that agents have access to, and how these 'fit' the rules of the game (Colvin et al, 2012: 12). Bourdieu (1992) argues that fields are contested spaces, in which agents seek to either improve or retain their status through strategies known as position taking.

The second construct, habitus is a concentration of the broad underlying patterns of habit in a macro-social arena. However, this is not to suggest that detailed observations of micro behaviours should be overlooked. Bourdieu employed ethnographic observations to witness the macro spectacle in micro-scope. Regardless of scale, habitus is human action in practice and is influenced by one's socialisation, culture and history. It is essentially: "(t)he mental structures through which individuals apprehend the social world" (Bourdieu, 1996: 18); or the "(p)redisposed ways of categorising and relating to familiar and novel situations" (1990: 53). The habitus also provides a framework that will embrace subjective and objective realities by influencing how one perceives or sees surrounding structures that influence and engage with a particular social situation.

At each stage in the trajectory of an artwork the artists, arts coordinators, gallerists and buyers undergo forms of social conditioning that influence their habitus or 'ways of being' in an intercultural frame that is generated in the interactions between, around, and through the exchange of artwork. Habitus is defined as a kind of interplay between free will and structure where dispositions influence individuals to become who they are, and yet also include the conditions of existence that affect individual everyday activities (Bourdieu, 1984: 170). Dispositions include habits, beliefs, values, tastes, bodily postures, feelings, and thoughts that Bourdieu argued were socially produced. In this sense habitus is created and reproduced unconsciously, "without any deliberate pursuit of coherence, without any conscious concentration" (170). Bourdieu refers to the human capability to switch from an unconscious/automatic to a

conscious/deliberate thought mode. We do not think about every small step in our everyday routine tasks but we do make conscious decisions based on a multiplicity of complex circumstances. While habitus reflects the social position in which it is constructed, it also carries within it the genesis for new creative responses that transcend those social conditions. This concept is called agency. Webb et al (2002: ix) define agency as: “the idea that individuals are equipped with the ability to understand and control their own actions, regardless of the circumstances of their lives”. In the art network, agency sets a path for artists to strive for empowerment, choose their own identity and have a voice.

Capital, the third construct comes in many forms; social, cultural, political, historic, economic and symbolic, and implicit to these is value or worth. The field, and the agents within it determine the value of capital. Bourdieu’s insight revealed that while everyone holds capital, certain fields privilege certain types of capital, providing advantages for some sections of the community and disadvantages for others (Colvin et al. 2012: 13). Within Bourdieu’s (1984: 170) ‘field’: “It is a structured space of positions in which they and their interrelations are determined by the distribution of kinds of resources or capital”. The actors in the field compete for profits and capital. Capital might be specific to a certain field and relatively worthless in other fields. Bourdieu conceives of capital in terms of four fundamental types: economic capital (money, property, etc.), cultural capital (knowledge, skills and educational qualifications), social capital (connections and memberships of groups) and political capital (state intervention, financial support). At the same time, according to Bourdieu (1986: 257), these forms of capital may also be symbolic capital (prestige, honour,

reputation). Social capital, always functions as symbolic capital because it is: “(g)overned by the logic of knowledge and acknowledgement”. It is the concept of ‘cultural capital’ that has attracted the most attention from cultural theorists (Beasley-Murray, 2004: 2). In the first instance, this is probably because the term opens up new ways of discussing high and low, ‘mass’ and ‘elite’ cultures without prioritizing either, in other words, avoiding both elitist defences of high culture and populist celebrations of low culture. The opposition between high and low within the field of culture replicates, or is homologous with a wider opposition that pits the holders of cultural capital against the holders of financial capital. However, at any time cultural status can be converted into financial rewards and therefore designates the results of cultural and economic valorisation alike with the same word: they are both forms of ‘capital’, whether cultural or economic.

Put simply, in the economic field agents struggle to acquire money, to ensure the value of their assets and to maintain their capacity to continue to own and acquire things. In the cultural field, people compete for cultural capital, or the ability to appreciate, produce and understand forms of knowledge (Bourdieu, 1996). As a result of meshing together cultural capital and economic capital there are changes in artistic possibilities from alterations in the power relations between those involved in defining art and its value, such as artists, bureaucrats, patrons, critics, producers, arts coordinators, viewers and consumers. However, none of this is possible unless there is collaboration between artists, arts coordinators, gallerists, critics and audiences that make up the art network.

In applying Bourdieu's social theories of field, habitus and capital, I draw on the work of Karl Marx (1954) who argues that actual value is not simply a question of supply and demand but of human needs, which must be met. Therefore labour costs have never been simply an economic or commercial matter but also a moral, cultural and political issue that are derived from a complex set of interconnected social relations. Social relations are essential in the art network (field) because the art process has several steps such as creation, distribution and finally reception that represent a cycle, with each stage related to and dependent on the next. Bourdieu's (1996: 229) notion of the field modifies Marx's model, which can be adapted to the art network and seen as a large social field: "The producer of the value of the work of art is not the artist but the field of production as a universal belief, which produces the value of the work of art as a *fetish* by producing the belief in the creative power of the artist". Within this large social field there are subfields (artists, gallerists, buyers, dealers, communities and fairs), which are always sites of struggle because the distribution of capital is an expression of power relationships.

For Bourdieu, then, it is the intersection of the artist's social position (embodied cultural capital) and the artworks (objectified cultural capital) that are produced for art galleries (institutional cultural capital), which gives any art object its value (de Bruin, 1996). These three elements of cultural capital can offer a viable framework for analyzing the relational ways in which cultural activity is produced, circulated and received by others. However, unlike economic capital, people accumulate cultural capital only through the process of acculturation, or the set of experiences by which a person acquires values and

beliefs. Bourdieu calls this habitus. Along with economic capital, cultural capital is transmitted through privilege; the privilege of being exposed to a set of experiences that acculturates a person to succeed (de Bruin, 1996). For example, community-based artists learn new art techniques and are exposed to outsiders (outside of their communities) by visiting Cairns, attending gallery exhibitions and CIAF where socialisation with a diverse group of people is possible. If this capital translates into ongoing employment and income it may ensure future economic sustainability for artists. As a result of increased sales, cultural capital will enhance social networks and grow social capital for Indigenous people, and in this way might ultimately empower Indigenous groups to be more active in the formal political process. This could be by way of activism in the region to create more arts roles for Indigenous people, or influencing changes to arts policies, or becoming an Indigenous spokesperson or training to be an arts coordinator in a community art centre.

Bourdieu considers habitus, field and capital to be dynamic constructs, shaping and being shaped by each other. These of course are processes of continuity and change that have always set the stage for societies to move forward. This is why I am drawn to the idea of habitus, because it historicizes the new by drawing attention to the practices that connect it to the present. These practices are reflective of habituated predispositions of the past, and the development of expectations for the future. The problem is that the conceptual framework of habitus is vague, although perhaps intentionally so. The concept is meant to help overcome the dualism that is invited by structure versus agency analysis, by placing emphasis on a set of habituated predispositions and

practices. These generate comfort and homogeneity for the individual by pointing to what is commonplace and expected. But, as practices, these phenomena attain meaning as they are enacted, because the habitus is reflexive, which is what Bourdieu refers to as both 'structuring structure' and 'structured structure'. I understand this as something that attains meaning to the extent that it becomes embodied in individuals through thoughts, ideas, actions and habits.

The current structure of the art network is based on a western cultural construct that limits change to its parameters (the rules of the game) and therefore all the actors must 'play the game'. To be successful in the field (the art network) one must effortlessly and effectively follow the rules and/or strategically use the rules to one's own advantage. In any given field, agents struggle to maintain their position by having knowledge of the 'rules of the game' or 'how the game is played' that enables the creation of strategies for an agent to 'play the game' and/or take advantage of the opportunities that come along. Such strategies can only become meaningful if they exhibit symbolic power. Symbolic power is said to have its greatest expression in the general acceptance that 'the rules of the game are fair'. *Misrecognition*, a concept Bourdieu derives from Marx's idea of 'false consciousness', occurs when those in more disadvantaged contexts 'play the game without questioning the rules' (O'Brien and O'Fathaigh, 2005: 65-66). This amounts to what Bourdieu terms 'symbolic violence'.

For Indigenous fine art to be included in the same 'field' as Western fine art it must be recognised as art. Edward Said (1978) exposed the cultural force of representations as instrumental in the binary perception of culture into East and West, thereby constructing the 'Other' and creating imaginary geographies

such as the Orient. This difference in representations of artworks can be applied to the acceptance of Indigenous art as art. In Chapter Two, I proposed for instance, that Indigenous fine art had its beginnings in the early 1970s in Central Australia when many of the old aesthetic forms were transformed to better fit the criteria of the contemporary global art scene, even though, according to Sally Price (2001: 87), “aesthetic experience and beauty are not joined with ethnographic evidence and social curiosity, but opposed to them”. She argues that the transition from ‘traditional’ to ‘global’ aesthetic resulted in a need for money (economic capital) and an international art market, which came from the non-Indigenous sector. Arguably, it was during the late 1980s that Indigenous fine art started to be recognised in the same field as Western art. This was the timeframe that scholars (Morphy, 2008; Myers, 1991) suggest that Indigenous art was ‘upgraded’ from ethnographic museum-worthy artefacts and utility objects to gallery-worthy artworks that warranted a place in the field of Western art production. It was outside of Indigenous culture that the art was recognised. Bourdieu’s term ‘rupture’ is relevant to describe the way this recognition relates to both the break with Aboriginal art perceived as traditional and to the western notion of the avant-garde as a break with the past in the modernist paradigm (Hoban, 2002: 180).

I argue that in the case of art produced in Far North Queensland – or, for that matter, any Indigenous artwork -- it is the cultural identity of the artist that is the criterion for its inclusion in fine art. The production of western art is not subject to criteria of cultural identity for legitimisation within the field of art production because it is against western artwork that all other forms of artwork

are evaluated for their inclusion (Foster, 1985: 187). As a result of this reframing, the western influence in the production and promotion of Indigenous art has facilitated a re-coding of Aboriginal artworks that allows not just contemporary acrylic paintings but traditional objects as well to be appreciated for their aesthetic and commercial value. The provenance of Indigenous art thus requires proof that an Indigenous person created it, in order to be included in Bourdieu's field of art production.

Within this field: "Western culture views individual expression as the very definition of art" (Anderson and Dussart, 1988: 142), while the designs of Indigenous art are identified in collective terms as Indigenous cultural expression. Although the identity of the artist has always been an underlying issue in western art, the focus has been upon the work produced. Whereas the opposite is true for the production of Indigenous art because it relies upon the authenticity of the artist's identity to secure its position within the field. Cultural traditions are handed down from ancestors through generations and are reinterpreted to 'fit' into the contemporary criteria of art today. Through these elements Indigenous art has become integrated into the realm of 'fine art' within the Australian art scene as evidenced by Morphy's (2008: 20) conclusion that, "Indigenous fine art is the result of a process rather than a category with fixed criteria".

However, the analysis does not take into account the division that now exists along a North-South axis of authenticity. There is a perception in the art or general community that Indigenous artists living in geographically remote communities are the real artists (Neale, 2010: 34). Only Community-based

artists are perceived as leading authentic cultural lives with authentic cultural expressions (34). In addition the community-based artists have a structural advantage of being referred to as having a collective identity because they are named communities working in government-funded art centres with access to a range of networks not available to individual Indigenous artists. In Queensland, city-based Indigenous artists work independently and do not automatically receive government funding (although, like any artist, they are entitled to compete for grants) and are seen to not need the same degree of support as artists from communities. There is a presumption that as educated city-based artists they have better access to galleries, agents, studios and other sources of funding and infrastructure. It is for this reason that I find the terminology 'authentic' to hold a slippery connotation.

Intercultural analysis matters because it is arguably the only frame that explains the space of engagement that allows for agreement, disagreement, friction or resistance to be understood to be present between people of separately conceived domains. In an industry that is dominated by non-Indigenous people there must be a belief in the capacity and worth of Indigenous people for relationships to be mature enough for the understanding that there will be differences but at all times there must be an expectation that policies, programmes and processes shall be both fair and firm⁸. It is the outcome of such interactions that will be presented and analysed in the following chapters to explore themes, ideas, views, roles and inequalities between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous players.

⁸ This could apply to the structuring mechanisms of art institutions that include exploitation, provenance, copyright and so on.

In Chapter Four, I look at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair (CIAF) and Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne to evaluate whether they assist with the development of Indigenous art from Far North Queensland. CIAF is a spectacle, an event that highlights Indigenous culture as an adjunct to cultural tourism that exhibits complex individual, economic, social, cultural and political value because this is where the artworks are showcased to sell to a public that comes to see and to buy. There is reliance and responsibility on each person as performers to play their parts so that the event runs smoothly and the artworks are of a high standard and displayed properly. Intercultural exchange is pivotal within the spectacle of CIAF because it is a time for artists to sell their artworks, learn new ways of being an artist, in a space where people discuss art and issues that relate to the Indigenous people of Far North Queensland.

Chapter Four

The Spaces of Intercultural Exchange:

The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair

The theory of intercultural exchange and habitus discussed in the previous chapter is applied in the present chapter towards the Cairns Indigenous

Art Fair (CIAF) as it is a space in the art network that explicitly exhibits intercultural art and therefore cultural coexistence and exchange. It is a link in the commodity chain in which the business of buying and selling art relies on peoples' interactions and communication with each other irrespective of each subject's original cultural identity. In 2009, I attended CIAF as an observer and interested arts viewer. In 2010, I conducted my interviews with artists, arts coordinators and one gallerist. In 2012, I revisited CIAF, again as an observer, but this time attempting to assess the progress of the art, its quality, and of CIAF as a place of spectacle, socialisation, social drama, performance, commerce and intercultural exchange. In this chapter, I present background to the development of CIAF as a spectacle of Indigenous performance, its potential as a channel of friction, and of my micro-ethnographic encounters in the spaces of CIAF.

CIAF was conceived within the Western conventions of commerce and culture in that it is a space for exhibiting artworks within the boundaries of the rules that apply to the art network; it is staged as a spectacle in a public place. It is therefore a spectacle as defined by Guy Debord (1994), which is not simply a collection of images, but rather "(t)he modern spectacle is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images". I focus on CIAF as a site of social relationships because people meet, view, interact and discuss artworks for appreciation, and the event requires the collaboration and interdependency of hundreds of people for the art fair to be successful, and it is therefore potentially a space of friction. I argue that the dual forces of commercial obligation and personal trust amid the dynamics of performance mitigate this potential. Artists and other arts-interested parties come to the spaces of engagement with their

traditions, customs, thoughts, values, emotions and behaviours from their home cultures. The space of engagement becomes a place where some values – both non-Indigenous and Indigenous – are arguably subordinated to the commercial environment. Perhaps due to the practices of commercial exchange, CIAF is a space in which one is unlikely to witness artists, arts coordinators and gallerists ‘behaving badly’ during public viewing hours, if at all, because of the importance placed on selling art. Instead, if disputes arise (and I experienced no evidence of such in my visits to CIAF), these would more likely occur in community art centres or at the studios of the urban-based artists or in the back offices of commercial galleries, all away from the gaze of the public and others in the art network. Bringing artists, arts coordinators and gallerists together in one place to perform for a crowd requires that each person play their part in the process of intercultural exchange between colleagues and the visitors. Opportunities for public performance such as at CIAF provide a means for Indigenous people to be identified as individuals or as part of a community collective, or both. As Henry argues, with regard to various forms of cultural performance:

Aboriginal people, whose everyday lives are oppressively over-determined by bureaucratic process and the categorical relationships arising out of such processes can explore different possibilities of being. Aborigines are able to engage with dominating ideologies and to work new definitions of their situation and play their part in redefining themselves through performance by making themselves visible on the national and international scenes. (Henry, 2012: 212).

The particular conditions of performance at visual arts fair such as CIAF are placed in a convergence of western conventions of commercial art, bureaucratic interests and the emerging interests of artists of various cultures.

CIAF: The Combined Spectacle of an Art Fair and a Regional Art Formation

Commercial galleries and art fairs offer the physical spaces for mediating between people who share interests in the production and consumption of art. Most art galleries see themselves as engaged in two distinct forms of 'mediation', in providing an aesthetic or even spiritual experience for those potential buyers who possess the knowledge and skills to comfortably approach art, and also to provide an educational service to the general public, which assists them to acquire knowledge and skills (Burcaw, 1997; Duncan, 1995). Kevin Hetherington (2002: 189) describes this latter form of mediation as "educating the eye"; it involves a disciplining of the visitor's gaze to enable them to see art in particular ways. Notably, both forms of mediation aim to foster visitor experiences in exhibition spaces through encounters with original artworks, which is also the goal of art fairs such as CIAF.

Art fairs have been described as "museums with walls" (Dalley, 2008: 17), which allow layers of society to access the latest art. Fairs are partly market-driven -- but the works are not judged in the same way as the exhibits in a conventional commercial gallery -- and partly venue-driven because fairs are housed in public places. Whereas museums and galleries can be seen to elicit reactive desires from audiences (buyers and spectators must go to museums and galleries), an art fair can be seen as proactive by bringing art to the people in one or more public locations. The community-based artists that exhibit at CIAF do not typically visit major cities or even a regional centre such as Cairns on a regular basis to meet and hold conversations with members of the public. They

therefore have limited opportunities to interact in situations that help them to directly understand the interests or needs of buyers or the art market in general. Equally, few potential buyers have the capacity or opportunity to travel to Indigenous communities in Far North Queensland where they might learn directly from the artists about Indigenous culture and art. Artists and buyers can therefore commune at an art fair and leverage their respective forms of capital because community-based artists possess a great deal of cultural capital and a low level of economic capital, while buyers may have a low level of Indigenous cultural capital but a high level of economic capital.

In terms of the economic and critical dynamics of the art network, fairs are seen to generate positive impetus in several ways. According to Terry Smith (2009: 146-6), the art fair phenomenon has three specific features of interest. The first is that prices are reported quickly and become widely known making the private market more public in a similar manner to an auction house (145-6). The second feature is that the artists and the arts coordinators are able to set the prices at their stands while galleries set prices in accordance with the status of their established artists (145-6). The third feature is that collectors (including curators of public and private galleries) must exercise rapid judgment in their quest to find the next 'big star'. Smith (2009: 146) observes: "the consumerist hysteria is like attending sales day at a department store. Art that has immediate appeal and the strong possibility of rapid appreciation is valued highest and [is] bought instantly". This heightened atmosphere benefits the 'talent scouts' according to Meredith Goldsmith. Goldsmith (2006: 16) argues that art fairs are good locations for curators of public art institutions to watch for artists who sell

their artworks quickly and are talked about by other artists. In 2010 at CIAF, the curator of the Queensland Art Gallery bought twelve 'camp dog' sculptures by Aurukun artists for their collection of Indigenous fine art. This transaction apparently took place within five minutes of the opening event, and the price was reported to be \$77,000.00 (Allain, 2010). An art fair also presents many artists at the start of their careers, and as a rule of thumb, an artwork dated from the near beginning of an artist's career is often of greater interest to a public art institution than any number of later works (Caruana and Reid, 2004: 23). From an art history and theory point of view, an early artwork often tells the critic a great deal about the development of an artist's style, so art gallery curators will use their expertise to recognise an artist's potential (23). If chosen well, a public art gallery or museum curator can make a good investment, not only financially but also in artwork that will develop into an object of wider academic importance.

While these dynamics reveal the strategy of establishing CIAF as a significant boost to art and artists of Far North Queensland, it also appears to have originated as a strategy in bolstering the place of Cairns in the tourism and cultural economy. But CIAF would not go ahead without the political capital of the various commercial sponsors and the collaboration between Arts Queensland and the Cairns City Council. In 2008, the first funds from the Queensland government's 'Backing Indigenous Arts' programme were rolled out in communities across the region. In the same year, it seems, the city of Cairns was striving to develop as a cultural hub as an adjunct to its tourism policy. Cairns would seem the 'natural' hub for art distribution because it is the largest

city in the region, has an international and domestic airport, train and bus systems with all roads from the Gulf of Carpentaria, inland, Southeast Queensland and Cape York leading to Cairns. According to information gleaned from the Arts Queensland report on CIAF (2009b), Cairns Council asked its residents in 2008 what they thought was the ideal cultural profile for Cairns and its surrounds, in terms of festivals and events, cultural tourism and urban vitality. From the research undertaken it appeared that the local citizens wanted a way of celebrating their cultural diversity, the tropics and the geographic environment. Out of this research came the concept of making visible the Indigenous art and culture practised in Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands and in the urban areas of Far North Queensland. From this background, the idea to include a three-day Indigenous Art Fair as part of the annual Cairns Festival (which runs for two weeks and is a multicultural event) was born, and in the following year, 2009, CIAF was launched.

Modelled on the Melbourne Art Fair⁹ and appearing close on the heels of the Darwin Indigenous Art Fair¹⁰, CIAF drew buyers, gallerists, curators and art dealers from as far as Europe (Kuch, 2009). Melbourne Art Fair is a multicultural mix of art making, and Darwin's Art Fair exhibits Indigenous community-based artists and Darwin artists with no commercial galleries present. CIAF, 2009 to 2012 welcomed both commercial galleries and community art centres to sell and showcase Indigenous art. According to Ros Bates (as cited in Watts, 2012) in an interview with the Port Douglas News, the former Arts Minister for Queensland

⁹ The Melbourne Art Fair in August 2012 had 80 commercial galleries, 900 artists and more than 30,000 visitors.

¹⁰ The Darwin Art Fair is an annual event that began in 2007 as part of the Darwin Festival. The Fair represents more than 40 art centres from the Northern Territory.

said, “CIAF has emerged as Australia’s premier Indigenous Art Fair and a must attend event on Queensland’s cultural calendar”. As a centre for friction, CIAF also is diverse as it draws a range of interests and influences from beyond the region of Far North Queensland. As Jeremy Eccles (2012: 1) advises potential spectators: “Don’t expect any Territorians or Kimberlyites on show, but you do get a heavy proportion of those political Brisbanites that have so little in common with the Cape or the Torres Strait Islands, but complain bitterly if they get left out”, which suggests that the spectacle of Queensland’s regional dimensions is also an aspect of the show.

The concentrated spectacle at CIAF of Far North Queensland Indigenous art is distinctive from other regions of Australia because of the striking diversity of cultures in the region. At CIAF, this diversity is expressed as a regional formation under the banner of Far North Queensland, but in no way is the art from each community or the Cairns-based artists to be considered the same, similar or typical. The format at CIAF since its inception has displayed two streams of art presentation; the community art stands represent new and emerging artists, or artists not contracted to galleries, while the commercial galleries’ stands represent the established artists who are contracted to them. My case study on CIAF is based on fieldwork at the 2009, 2010 and 2012 fairs. Firstly, I canvassed CIAF as a large space that is divided into community art stands and the gallery spaces. Then I focused specifically on the allocated space of Alcaston Gallery, a respected interstate commercial gallery that has represented Indigenous art for more than twenty years. Within the Alcaston Gallery space at CIAF, I examined the physical space where artworks were

exhibited and communication took place between the gallery staff members and buyers. I interviewed the owner of Alcaston Gallery, Beverly Knight and followed this up with additional information obtained at her gallery in Melbourne. In particular, I asked Knight for her perspective on the relationships she has formed with the artists she represents and the arts coordinators from those same communities.

Sites of Intercultural Exchange: Showcasing Indigenous Art in Cairns

Clifford Geertz's (1973: 6) application of "thick description" informs my micro-ethnographic observations and analysis of CIAF starting with the noticeable differences between the locations, buildings and surrounding spaces of CIAF in 2010 and 2012. In 2009 and 2010, the event was held in the spaces known as 'The Tanks', three old but cleaned-out World War II petrol tanks, located next door to the Botanical Gardens, approximately three kilometres from Cairns city centre. The three grey concrete wall and floor round tanks made hanging art difficult. To counter this, the organiser (Arts Queensland) installed white straight temporary walls to display the art. The tanks were situated approximately some thirty metres apart, which required the viewer to enter and exit one tank and repeat the process in the next two tanks. Within each of the tanks, there were partitions that sectioned-off the spaces between each art stand. There were no windows, it was very hot and crowded, and there was nowhere to sit inside the tanks. However, I did observe that it was easier to discern who the potential buyers were because people were 'packed-in' often three deep and you could hear peoples' conversations with the gallerists, the artists and the arts coordinators. Outside the venue, there were food outlets,

which acted as informal gathering places where chatter and gossip were exchanged around tables and chairs housed under a row of trees. People could smoke, eat and drink coffee and soft drinks with the circle constantly changing as some people arrived and others left.

By comparison CIAF in 2011 and 2012 was held at the Cruise Liner Terminal in Cairns city centre. The building is very large with polished timber floors and very high ceilings made from old timber beams. The outer walls were painted white, and were mostly filled with windows, which remained open allowing the ocean breeze to circulate in the building. Inside the building, partitions painted white divided each art space and were placed perpendicular to the building, which allowed foot traffic to flow through the building and for people to move around and through the various art spaces without feeling 'crowded'. There was a bench along the waterside of the building, which allowed visitors to sit and view the art. Outside the building there were grassed areas for dance performances and where large sculpture pieces were also displayed. As a researcher, I found that people were dispersed both inside and outside the building due to its large size, which made it harder for me to 'eavesdrop' on conversations and discern who was being talked about or which artworks were being sold. But the visual spectacle was more compelling, and also more narrative in the sense that the partitioning between exhibits seemed to imply distinctions between the varied calibres of the works presented.

On entering the CIAF exhibition in 2012, I immediately felt the richness of what was in store and by moving through the spaces I found that an Indigenous art history mixed with contemporary western art techniques was revealed. It is

a story of movements across and beyond the borders of the region. How this mixture of art styles is created to appeal to a wider audience is the job of the CIAF artistic director. In 2009 and 2010, the artistic director was Michael Snelling. In 2011 and 2012, Avril Quail, a Goenpul and Nuigi woman from Moreton Bay South East Queensland (also a founding member of Boomalli, Sydney) was appointed artistic director of CIAF. The job of the curator is to design the displays so that each individual artwork is seen in its best light while maintaining a cohesive theme for the entire art fair. Some of the considerations in the hanging and display of artworks are: composition, judgements about colour, shape, space, balance, and presentation; and also to encourage the spectators to gain a sense of the difference in what might be termed high, middle and low level aesthetics, in Bourdieu's terms. This is a feature of the fair in the present location at the Ocean Liner terminal that was not so apparent in 2009 at the Tanks. A strategy seems to juxtapose products in such a way that consumers learn how to move from low-range items, to middle to high-end fine art fare. This reflects that CIAF caters for a range of visitors' tastes and budgets. Low-range art includes souvenirs such as necklaces made from seeds and shells, postcards, greeting cards, or screen-printed T-Shirts that most likely reflect new artists at the start of their learning process. Paintings or pottery produced by artists residing in communities that have had some exposure to the art world make up the middle-range category. While in the high-range category the commercial galleries exhibit the fine art by established artists. Established artists are the main drawcard to the fair to entice collectors, critics and journalists (most likely represented by galleries) to view, buy and critique the

art. There were also limited-edition prints, signed and dated by established artists, for sale through the community art stands.

Since 2009, the art spaces at CIAF have been allocated on a financial sliding scale which has resulted in the established galleries taking the larger spaces in prominent positions, simply because they could afford to do so, and leaving the community art stands to take the less prominent, smaller, and apparently less expensive spaces. However, this in no way stopped the potential for sales in the smaller spaces, because if anything CIAF -- or for that matter any art fair -- is a place, according to Nicholas Rothwell to find a hidden treasure. Rothwell (2010b: 1) commented that the Badu sculptures at the Girringun Art Centre's stand in 2009, which were tucked-away at the end of a corridor of white partitioning were the highlight of the event.

In addition to the feature artworks, visitors to CIAF can participate in a host of activities such as cultural performances of dance and film, workshops, presentations by both emerging and established artists, children and family programmes and the Message Stick Indigenous Film Festival. There is also a symposium, which attracts arts academics and industry aficionados from across the country to debate contemporary issues affecting Indigenous artists (Watt, 2011: 1). Two-days prior to the opening night, the set up time begins with each stallholder and gallery curator bringing everything, such as display tables, chairs, hammers, hooks and so on. Artists, arts workers and arts coordinators seek advice from the artistic director on how to organise the exhibits, experiment and exchange ideas as to the best way to display artworks. It is a stressful time that requires a high level of concentration and cooperation to ensure everything runs

smoothly. For many of the participants, including artists, this will be the first time to interact with curators and the public at an exhibition. Artists that live far away in communities rely on the artworks being assembled 'on the spot', which entails having paintings stretched and/or framed in Cairns and buying building supplies to complete the displays. Extra artworks are temporarily stored because when an artwork is sold, there needs to be an immediate replacement. After all, this is an event to sell as much artwork as possible and to be noticed by as many potential buyers and gallerists as possible, in the hope of furthering artists' careers.

At CIAF in 2010 the art centres represented were Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre, Cardwell; Hopevale Arts and Cultural Centre; Lockhart River Arts Centre; Mornington Island Art Centre; Pormpuraaw Art and Cultural Centre; Wei'Num Aboriginal Corporation, Weipa; Wik and Kugu Arts and Craft Centre Aurukun; and Yalanji Arts, Mossman. There were also four art centres from the Torres Strait and one more Aboriginal Art Centre from North Stradbroke Island (Cairns Indigenous Art Fair Report, 2010). In 2010, there were six galleries represented, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne; the Australian Art Network, Sydney and Cairns; Umbrella Art Gallery, Townsville; KickArts Contemporary Arts, Cairns; Pandanus Gallery, Palm Cove; and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne. CIAF excludes certain artworks such as video, installation and some types of sculpture because the shipping and/or installing of these works are economically and physically prohibitive, or the works do not show well in the environment. This is a commercial event so items such as traditional craftwork (utility bags, fishing baskets, sand drawings and so on) do not reflect the

postmodern styles demanded by the art buying public. Rather, these conditions seem to support drawings, paintings and pottery that capture more ephemeral and abstract visions of everyday life.

In July 2010, according to Rothwell (2010a) there was a crisis in the Indigenous art industry. He quoted figures compiled by the *Australian Art Sales Digest* showing sales of Aboriginal art at Australian auctions had plummeted from their peak at \$23.9 million in 2007 to \$10.9 million in 2009. The picture is a complex one, reflecting the deaths of Indigenous 'old masters', from the Northern Territory and Western Australia. These figures reflected Australia-wide sales with breakdown data by state non-existent, let alone by region. As a comparison the figures noted in Arts Queensland, Cairns Indigenous Art Fair Evaluation Reports for sales through CIAF were: "In 2009, over \$500,000 was spent (Arts Queensland, 2009b), in 2010, there was \$732,000 (Arts Queensland, 2010), in 2011, \$580,000" (Arts Queensland, 2011b). In 2009, 242 visual and performing artists participated (Arts Queensland, 2009b), in 2010 there were 266 (Arts Queensland, 2010) while in 2011, 331 were involved (Arts Queensland, 2011b). According to the Arts Queensland CIAF 2009 report public attendance was "more than 10,000 visitors" (Arts Queensland, 2009b), and in 2010 (Arts Queensland, 2010) there were 10,500, while in 2011, 13,000 people attended (Arts Queensland, 2011b), and in, "2012, 16,000 people attended" (Cormac, 2013: 1). However the revenue from sales did not increase. Journalist Bridget Cormack (2013: 1) reported that CIAF in 2012 cost the state government \$625,000 but the sales only reached \$600,000.

One view of this stagnant revenue was that in 2011 the artistic director

wanted a change in the marketing direction to try and give the community-based artists a more equitable cash flow by displaying less expensive items (Cleary, 2011). According to Peter Cleary (Arts Queensland project manager for community art centres) only the very top layer of artistic quality was sought after at CIAF 2010, while many of the new and emerging artists were missing out on sales. By making some artworks less expensive than the previous year (that is, 2010), there was the potential to sell more items, but it amounted to less revenue overall, albeit in a more equitable spread to artists. In the 2010 the Arts Queensland Cairns Indigenous Art Fair Evaluation Report noted that there was a strong suggestion that the benefits accrue in less material ways, in particular, the profile gained by artists. The following comments by artists, albeit without any individual attributions, are a way of illustrating this point:

“It is about opportunities to increase my profile and to see other artists.”

“Getting our name and face out there.” “Being able to talk about my culture.”

(Arts Queensland, 2010: 35-36)

The range of unattributed comments imply -- accurately or otherwise -- a consensus among artists that publicity, opportunities for interaction with peers, and the chance to talk with (presumably) non-Indigenous visitors to the art fair are more or equally valued as sales outcomes of CIAF. No one is quoted as saying what or how much was sold in dollar terms. The following comments attributed to artists associated with specific communities, reinforce and expand the views extracted above, and also represent a view that CIAF is as important to the future of culture as the value placed on public debate about issues for artists:

More than anything for us, it's about us having a presence, about us getting an opportunity to speak on panels and forums and to be able to talk about issues and talk about our art and promote ourselves. (Bianca Beetson, ProppaNOW, cited in Arts Queensland, 2010: 35-36)

For me as an elder to see lots of young artists come in from all over and some older than me, makes me feel very happy to be here in my heart. It means so much to see people like this come to work with us together, to share our cultures together. (Ken Thaiday Snr. Erub Island, cited in Arts Queensland, 2010: 35-36)

And the good thing about it, people coming together and you meet up with people that you haven't seen for a long-time. The whole thing, it's good for the future of our people. (Roy McIvor, Hope Vale, cited in Arts Queensland, 2010: 35-36)

The comment of Daphne De Jersey (Wei'Num, Weipa) suggests the aesthetic pleasure of the variety of works on display, and the inspirational value:

An opportunity to exhibit my artwork along with the other artists from all the different communities coming together and all the different types of artwork are just beautiful. Because we weren't aware of the types of art that was happening in different areas, it's just amazing and beautiful, very inspiring. (De Jersey, cited in Arts Queensland, 2009b: 30).

These comments are certainly reinforced by my own research (see Chapter Five) that suggests artists want to meet and network with other artists to support their artistic development by studying others' artworks, and to interact with gallerists and potential buyers because this is part of the learning process for the artists to interact with 'outsiders' (outside of the communities). As geographic distance is great and funds are limited and art making can be a solitary undertaking, with limited opportunities to discuss work, events, and practices. CIAF offers a space of engagement that Indigenous artists can in a sense own, at least for three days each year. The artists that I interviewed appeared to be very

willing to collaborate with arts coordinators, gallerists and potential buyers. I found that artists asked just as many questions as the buyers asked them. Buyers often asked for a story about the artwork and in that way the art would accrue meaning for them long after the transaction was finished. The artists who engaged in dialogue with potential buyers were more likely to sell their art even if it was a souvenir item. Evelyn McGreen from Hopevale (2010) said that her presence helps sell her art. There were buyers who asked if they could be photographed with the artist, which indicated that a memento of their time meeting the artist was important to them. In other words, the positive and harmonious perspective on the experience of participating in CIAF that is represented in the Arts Queensland, Cairns Indigenous Art Fair Evaluation Report (2010) is mirrored by my conversations with artists.

Nevertheless, the outcomes of CIAF that are emphasized in the Arts Queensland literature predominantly concern non-material benefits. Yet multiple forms of capital are mobilized among the participants in the art fair. The specific knowledge and practices of the organisers, artists, arts coordinators, gallerists and the potential buyers represent variable forms of social capital. Cultural capital is signified by the provenance (the validation of authenticity) of an artwork, which in the Indigenous art field must be certified as having been produced by an Aboriginal person. Artworks are converted to commodities for sale, and the sales generate economic capital. An art fair is therefore a combination of phenomena such as art market, meeting point, experiment, pedagogical workshop, and curatorial platform. One of the most validating events in the career of any artist is to have their work displayed in an art gallery

or art fair, but success is difficult to define for any artist, and harder still for emerging artists. Few emerging artists ever expect to break even, but most would like to at least have a sense of momentum, that their techniques are developing, and their ideas are progressing, and that their audiences are growing, so CIAF is an important starting point in an artist's career. Artists usually spend hours and hours, often in solitude creating their artworks, so displaying them for commercial sale provides an opportunity to show their hard work to the public and receive recognition. The community-based artists that attend CIAF are disconnected from their usual social space and thrust into a world that is not a regular event for them. However, by attending they are perhaps seen more as cultural ambassadors that are empowered in front of a crowd that wants to meet them and discuss art. In public commentary, the mediating power of art for insight into Indigenous trauma is sometimes exposed. Rothwell, for instance, has been a continual supporter of CIAF in the national press, and maintains his theme of discovery by alluding to what can be learned and found by engaging with the displays, in a review of CIAF, 2010 he wrote:

In its second year, CIAF once more demonstrates what lavish funding, creative curating and open-minded programming can achieve. Visitors to the Tanks art spaces beside the city's Botanic Gardens could inspect the latest painted and sculpted works from a whole string of state-funded art centres opened in the far north as part of a concerted state strategy to nurture and market Indigenous work. The immediate impression was of a jumble, full of disparate elements. But buried themes emerged: those themes were the key storylines of Queensland Indigenous life, full of dramas and sad complexities. (Rothwell, 2010b: 1)

Rothwell, like any critic, draws his reflections towards the assumed social context of the art works. Given the contention regarding the conditions of

Aboriginal people in the nation, the potential dynamics and relations of friction are to be discerned in CIAF.

Fine Art and Friction Revisited in CIAF

On the face of it, there was no obvious 'friction' or social tensions to indicate that any type of conflict or resistance existed in and around CIAF. My overall observations of CIAF, 2009, 2010 and 2012 were as favourable as the views represented in the media (cited above), with harmonious overtones, in keeping with the mission statement promoting reconciliation. In the exhibition spaces at CIAF, 2009, 2010 and 2012 there were no politically driven artworks (in the sense of Richard Bell's messages) displayed, and any notion of controversy or conflict was relegated to the symposium or outside (of CIAF) at art galleries, such as KickArts, Cairns. However, I wondered whether artists are competitive and whether rivalries typical of the arts industry more generally are present, especially as there are limited opportunities for community-based artists to exhibit their artworks. Arts coordinators choose the artists that they want on the art stands, who are usually their best-selling artists, speak English well and represent their respective communities in a positive light. I question how these decisions are made, and whether in the end, the apparent harmony bespeaks trust between arts coordinators and the artists. Artists can perform agency in spaces such as CIAF by using the situation to their own ends, and having their voices heard. While established artists might disagree with the arts coordinator about where and how artworks are to be placed and displayed, emerging artists who are still gaining knowledge of the art network would

perhaps be more likely to acquiesce to the expertise of others. The travel to Cairns also affords opportunities of a personal nature because artists may want time-off to see relatives or go shopping. Some artists, I am aware, take the time to seek out medical attention, which is difficult to combine with duty at an art stall.

I found that at CIAF, 2010 artists and arts coordinators worked side-by-side for three days, answering potential buyers' questions, working on rostered times in order to have 'breaks', they laughed, joked and drank coffee together, and during that time I found there were no disagreements or tensions between them. Instead there seemed to be mutual respect for each other's skills, knowledge and expertise. They talked as if they were all colleagues in a professional workplace. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Indigenous artists share a deep respect for the talent and generosity of other Indigenous artists they have worked with, or seen at CIAF. This appeared genuine, although I could not determine whether artists are committed to harmony to deflect the fragile politics that surround Indigenous social issues. In contrast, the symposium -- an event outside of the main fair but part of the spectacle -- provokes and channels as much friction as possible, and Vernon Ah Kee's outspoken comments at CIAF 2011 symposium are a case in point. With the ear of the audience attuned to debates and familiarity with controversial artworks the symposium provides a forum to take a position on racism, even offend the art industry, and discuss the perception of a black/white dichotomy and make no apology. However, in seeking to highlight Ah Kee's comments, I have found the speeches difficult to locate on the Internet, if at all and therefore I conclude that

any notion of negativity about CIAF has been silenced as only the positive messages are highlighted.

Another potential source of friction concerns provenance, something that might be in question in some tourist art markets (the idea that fake Indigenous items, made overseas are in the tourist marketplace). At CIAF, provenance of artworks is more reliable as experts are gathered, who are familiar with the technical skills of the artists in the region. The circumstances of an artwork in its journey from maker to market, the integrity of its creation and the equity of transactions along the way, ideally is in parallel to its aesthetic qualities, which are the main criteria for assessing its value and place in the commercial domain. Provenance is a key aspect of intercultural practice as provenance is a western art construct that privileges individualism over collectivism. For example, an artist cannot sign an artwork produced by another individual artist. From my interviews with gallerists and arts coordinators it is apparent how much time and effort is spent in face-to-face exchanges with artists to explain the reasons why provenance is important to the interests of artists and the community's reputation. According to John Oster (2012), a speaker at the CIAF Symposium, in 2012, on the topic of the Indigenous Art Code of Conduct, any evidence of doubtful trade in Far North Queensland is confined (so far) to the communities, where items are sold 'on the side' to visitors, mostly government employees, apparently. The only infraction that has occurred in Cairns was traced to two shops that sold 'factory art'¹¹ from Central Australia. I asked Samantha Creyton,

¹¹ This refers to backyard sweatshops that are run by unscrupulous white art dealers that pay the artists a pittance then make huge profits from city-based collectors and tourists.

curator KickArts, Cairns for her comment, and she responded from the point of view of her gallery:

Art centres should have good control over their art, all with labelling and numbering. KickArts feels a moral and ethical obligation to the buyer and the seller to be absolutely certain the selling of art without provenance does not happen in our organisation. Paintings and small sculptures do get sold to friends and to visiting government officials in communities, without documentation, but the items were more likely to be tourist souvenirs and not something that would be considered fine art. (Creyton, 2010)

Provenance is a concept that potentially represents a significant challenge in the art network as it is the basis of the value of established artists' works, and thus of commercial galleries' interests and reputations. But in this and other aspects of communities' participation in CIAF, the principles of collaboration are undertaken to maintain integrity, and this appears to be premised ultimately out of concern for artists and communities, rather than for any intangible gains. This prioritising of the interests of artists also seems to underwrite the approach of Alcaston Gallery, a long time trader in Indigenous art, and a regular stallholder at CIAF.

The Art of the Gift Exchange: Relationship-building at Alcaston Gallery at CIAF (2010) and in Melbourne

I interviewed Beverly Knight, the owner of Alcaston Gallery at CIAF, 2010 where she represented Mornington Island and Lockhart River artists, and then again in follow-up meetings at her gallery in Melbourne. At CIAF 2010, the physical space allotted to Alcaston Gallery was large compared to the community art stands. Knight and her staff members travel to Cairns to assist in the selling of art at CIAF. In Melbourne, Alcaston Gallery is housed in a three story Victorian

building with polished timber floors and white walls. The exhibition spaces are interconnected and flow from one room to the next, where different artists' works can be displayed separately (as opposed to CIAF where works of one artist are hung alongside those of others). There is a front and back door, which encloses the potential buyer, unlike at CIAF, which has no doors and the next gallery space is only metres away. I observed that a difference between an exhibition held in a gallery and one at CIAF is that potential customers are not 'shadowed' by a gallerist as in a commercial gallery, or in other words it is a space that seems less intimidating to buyers unfamiliar with the art network.

The artistic merit and value of gallery-worthy fine art must be conveyed to potential buyers. Value, in that sense, is not only to be found in the aesthetic qualities and provenance but is also, in a sense, performed by gallery staff. The authority and knowledge of the gallery staff members is central to the success of the performance to attract buyers. The displays of knowledge are not simply sales tactics, but opportunities for gallery staff members to share their taste in fine arts and to appear to take genuine pleasure in acquiring and displaying their cultural knowledge as part of the selling process. At CIAF and at Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, I heard artworks described by the gallery staff members as wonderful, beautiful or a favourite, when engaging with potential buyers. While these declarations can certainly be read as sales strategies, they might also be understood as performances of knowledge and taste that contribute to the maintenance of cultural capital. Bourdieu (1984: 5) argues, "Nothing is more distinctive, more distinguished, than the capacity to confer aesthetic status on objects that are banal or even common". While not denigrating the works discussed, retailing through CIAF or a gallery is as much about defining the

habitus of the gallery staff members as it is about profit or other organisational priorities.

Knight expressed the view that she has a responsibility to the artists she represents to be present at CIAF as Far North Queensland is their home and where they want their art to be seen. The cost of exhibiting at CIAF was mentioned as \$20,000, which is potentially difficult to recoup (plus the travel expenses for Knight and her staff to visit Cairns), but breaking even financially was the goal (Knight, 2011), and the additional benefit is the opportunity to reach a new audience that may lead to new markets in the future. At CIAF, visitors can take as little time or as long as they like to buy or view art and then move on (only a few metres) to the next art space. How the artworks are spaced and hung is the responsibility of Knight in conjunction with the CIAF curator because artworks must reflect continuity with other displays.

At CIAF, 2010 Knight and two staff members manned the gallery space for the whole three days of the event. There were no artists present in the Alcaston space and therefore I was unable to observe the interactions between them and Knight. I observed that all commercial gallery booths at CIAF had no artists in attendance, while at the community art stands there was a constant flow of artists on hand to assist. Caruana and Reid (2004: 120-123) suggest that gallerists only want to see three kinds of people at art fairs: buyers, critics and curators because they have spent a large sum of money to be present at the fair and are there to concentrate on the selling of artworks on display at their stands. Arts Queensland personnel at CIAF, 2009, interviewed Knight:

“The Art Fair is very professional. From a commercial point of view, we’ve certainly met new clients, new people, new art lovers, which has been really good. We’ve had fantastic sales and all the sales have been from people who have actually come to the Fair, so I think that’s probably a first for us. So this was a different way for us to approach it just to see whether the market really existed here and we can happily say, yes it does, which is great for the artists.”
(Knight, quoted in Cairns Indigenous Art Fair Evaluation Report, 2009: 36)

Knight’s expertise governs the overriding theme of a collection and informs what artworks will appeal to buyers. At Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne her regular buyers and collectors will, in a sense be matched to and targeted for forthcoming exhibitions, while at art fairs the audience is mainly of walk-in visitors who do not attend gallery exhibitions on a regular basis. In the time I sat with Knight at CIAF in 2010, the University of Queensland bought a painting by Sally Gabori from Mornington Island for \$6,000.

According to Caruana and Reid (2004: 120) most galleries are “businesses of passion” and are run by somebody very passionate about the arts and who is often driven by specific personal agendas. Knight commented that she is not an artist, but a passionate and committed viewer of art. With the comments of Caruana and Reid in mind I sought to understand why Knight became involved in Indigenous art and why her relationships with artists and arts coordinators are necessary to bring artworks to the art market. This is her response:

Indigenous art is not something you get into lightly; it is a passion and can be very complex. Distance and not being able to see the artworks in advance, except by email means that you have to trust in the art centre coordinator being able to pull all the artworks together at the right time. If I wanted to sell mainstream art (which I do, but it is not my main focus) then I would select artists that are down the street. And my life would be easier. I visit the artists in their communities at least twice a year, to view the quality of the

work and to better understand how I can market the artworks. I discuss with the artists and the arts coordinator themes for an upcoming exhibition so that the artworks relate to one another – colour, composition and texture. (Knight, 2010)

The opportunity to exhibit and communicate with buyers and viewers is the primary focus and this is what the gallerist has in common with the artist and the arts coordinator. Historically, museums and commercial galleries have been subject to curatorial procedures that tended to generate a fixed and single meaning, one that was interpreted by the curator. However, art is now positioned between the gallery culture, its space (at CIAF or at Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne) and the buyer/viewer and in this way, the culture and the space shift the ownership of the meaning of the artworks to perception rather than any imposed interpretation. In either scenario there is potential for intercultural engagement. In the Alcaston space at CIAF it appeared that intercultural exchange could be observed in several practices. Firstly, Knight's cognitive skill and knowledge of the art, and her capacity to be an authoritative voice on the art and the Indigenous artists she represents is intercultural because spectators and buyers ask questions and seek information about the works as well as experience stimulation of the senses. Secondly, the physical context, the safety and comfort of the space must be appropriate for the number of artworks and the number of viewers. Thirdly, the social context allows people to learn, view and buy art with friends in a social situation. Lastly, the emotional context relates to the connection of interests or what could be a resonance for buyers with the content in the artwork. With this information in mind I asked Knight how she begins her relationships with artists when they live far away from Melbourne:

It starts with the coordinators, but also with the artists I get to know. The sharing of knowledge about exhibitions is important. Politics is important – there must be open and transparent decisions. We know the prices through the gallery and discuss this with the art centre coordinator. We make decisions based on discussions between the parties involved. (Knight, 2010)

Being clear and open about expectations is really important if the relationship is to succeed. Conflict or friction in the relationships may arise but it can be overcome if there is a willingness to communicate and to resolve any differences or difficulties. Knight seems to suggest in emphasising transparency that trust is a key component of stabilising friction because if this is missing, relationships will fail. Throughout my research, all the participants mentioned ‘trust’ not only for the reason that there has to be a reliance on many people to bring artworks to an art market, but that individuals need to be trustworthy, keep promises and be truthful in their relationships with each other. Trust is the basis for professional working relationships between the parties because artworks need to be delivered on time, fulfill the brief, and comply with the base prices negotiated. In return, Alcaston Gallery must pay the art centre quickly for sold artworks as this creates trust and mutual respect. In fact, Knight commented that her relationships with arts coordinators and artists from Mornington Island and Lockhart River have exceeded the professional working relationship stage because these communities have been exhibiting at Alcaston for some years and each party trusts the other to play their part in the art process. Knight explains that these relationships have now developed into lasting connections:

I have long-term family commitments with the communities that I work with, such as Mornington Island and Lockhart River. I get telephone calls in the middle of the night for help and I deal with them because I am involved in their lives.

At first, the artists and arts coordinators were part of a business arrangement to buy and sell art, but then you get to know them better and the relationships deepen, and finally you get to know their families, then you become one of the family. (Knight, 2010)

There are many culturally sensitive issues to consider for a good rapport with Indigenous people, according to Knight, including being accepted as one of the family, which requires knowledge of her roles and obligations to the community. She sees it as important to play an active role in the community and to participate in as many community events as possible. Even when Knight is in Melbourne she contributes financially by way of a prize or setting-up costs for an event. These gestures can be understood as related to the notion of gift exchange. Marcel Mauss's (1954) most influential work *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* was an essay on gift giving and exchange in 'primitive' societies. Mauss argued that 'the gift' builds relationships between people in so-called primitive societies that have common practices centred on reciprocal exchange. He showed that the exchange system centres between the obligations to give, to receive, and, most importantly to reciprocate. It occurs between groups (communities), not individuals, and is a crucial part of building not just wealth and alliances but social solidarity because 'the gift' pervades all aspects of the society: politics, economics, kinship systems, religion, law, morality and aesthetics. Bourdieu drew on Mauss's idea by pointing out that a gift given in return is always delayed; it is thanks to this delay that the gift giving is experienced as free. By taking this concept of 'gift exchange' and applying it to the intercultural relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the art network the system can be used to benefit all those involved. For example, gallerists such as Knight practice gift exchange to build

reliable partnerships, in order to survive and accumulate capital in the art market where competition is fierce (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). The practice of the gift exchange enables gallerists to bear smaller losses in order to build a stable and long-term relationship with the artists they represent. In this way, the gift exchange builds stronger relationships, which may be beneficial in the long run beyond any transactions of buying and selling. The gift exchange may also enable dominance over other gallerists, and might be seen to have the effect of keeping artists indebted to the favour of the gallerist when the favour is granted in the form of the gift. Gift exchange becomes possible and reciprocally meaningful when the counter gift is delayed and different. Artists can use the delay effectively because they take on board advice from Knight, in conjunction with the arts coordinator, in regard to future exhibitions and matters such as themes, colours, sizes, layout of the artworks, numbers of artworks and continuity. Then there is the time factor in producing artworks and the freighting to the art gallery that may also form part of the delay device. The interactions between the artists and Knight are enriched due to her visits twice a year to the artists she represents, and long after Knight departs the community and returns to her gallery in Melbourne, the artworks arrive for the exhibition, which means that the counter gift has been completed. As Michael Schillo explains:

The results of gift giving increases social bonds that may not be (economically) rational but help to stabilise social systems in otherwise brittle environments, such as in the absence of formal rules. In economic exchange, goods or tasks are exchanged for money, assuming the value of both is of appropriate similarity. (Schillo, 2003: 346)

The reputation of a gallery is based on the spectacle of its exhibition programme. Gallerists are conscious of the responses to each show, both critically and financially. Knight told me that she listens to the comments of the buyers and passes them onto the arts coordinator, who in turn passes them to the artists. While Knight is able to 'cherry-pick' her artists due to her highly respected reputation in the art industry, Alcaston promotes Indigenous culture, technical art skills and stylistic influences and in doing so aims to demonstrate that the territory of a culture does not have a precise frontier, but one that is fluid, changing and developing to reflect the skills of the artists. In this sense the gallerist both at home and in CIAF participates with artists in bringing contemporary Indigenous culture to life.

Conclusion: Towards a Positive Future

The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair is a spectacle for the gathering of players in the art network in a public place. Artists take centre stage as stars of the show. The relationships that are formed are balanced against changing local circumstances, growing local and regional constituencies and evolving federal and state policies. Artists, arts coordinator and gallerists perform for the crowd out of an understanding of their roles in the selling process. CIAF acts as a catalyst in furthering the processes of interaction and cooperation that extend beyond the fair. As an event it has lifted the profile of Cairns and the region and acts as an adjunct to regional tourism.

My observations suggest that the commercial galleries stands at CIAF had no Indigenous artists present, while the community art stands have a constant flow of artists to assist the public. The reason given was that the event costs a

great deal and gallery staff want to be focused on selling to a new audience, and communicating with curators of public galleries from Australia and overseas. Instead, throughout the year, Alcaston Gallery owner Beverly Knight builds relationships with artists by visiting them in their communities where she cultivates both professional and personal ties by spending quality time, a process that is reciprocated with cooperation through the production of art, and is premised on mutual respect and trust. Knight is considered a family member in Mornington Island and Lockhart River and as such must respect certain family obligations to help out (usually financially) when needed.

Ill health prevented my attendance at CIAF in 2011, however, I returned in 2012, by which time my research was largely concluded, and I wanted to observe what progress or change had occurred since my last visit. By this time, CIAF was promoted as a bigger spectacle and in a superior location to the one two years prior, because it offered more space, light and accessibility to community and gallery art stalls. The space outside the Cruise Liner Terminal allowed for dance and music performances, which was an improvement on the limited space at the Tanks, in 2010. With cultural activities immediately outside the gallery space, visitors could enjoy a more holistic experience of cultural engagement. There were also personnel changes. From the list of participants of 2010, Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale) had taken ill and was no longer producing art; Derek Rosendale (Hopevale) had decided to concentrate on his career as a singer/song-writer; Craig Koomeeta (Aurukun), Zane Saunders (Cairns-based artist) and Kassandra Savage (Wei'Num) were not represented at the Fair and Kassandra Savage had relocated to Mossman for work. Also, two arts

coordinators, Troy Dennis (Hopevale) and Guy Allain (Aurukun) had resigned and moved elsewhere. Samantha Creyton, curator of KickArts had relocated to Brisbane to join Arts Queensland and the arts hub of Wei'Num, Weipa had ceased to exist, and was now divided into centres in Mapoon and Naprunum, with Charles Street, as advisor on-call from Cairns. My informant at Arts Queensland, Peter Cleary along with other employees at the Cairns office were retrenched with the major share of the funding workload reallocated to the Brisbane office. The financial situation of the art centres was still vulnerable, and I received informal comments from the arts coordinators that the last twelve months had not generated as much income as the previous year. The exception was Mornington Island, which still enjoyed financial success due to the two elderly artists (in their late eighties), Sally Gabori and Paula Paul, but the other artists were struggling to reach those same heights.

My impression of CIAF, by then in its fourth year (2012), was that it did not have a committed commercial image as it disparately featured established artists, represented by galleries and emerging and new artists, represented by community art centres. When hung side-by-side, the art works presented a mixed image of art making in the region, conflating what Bourdieu described as high and low culture. This does not mean that there were not quality artworks for sale, but the combination of quality and lesser works conveyed an uneven presence. Compared to the Melbourne Art Fair (with exhibits of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous artworks), which in 2012 had eighty galleries displaying the best of their Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists from around Australia, and the Darwin Art Fair, which chose to represent Indigenous artists only and no

commercial galleries, CIAF seemed an art fair unsure of itself, and one that seemed more invested in regional interests than artistic ones.

Dovetailing with my observations was the announcement by the Queensland Arts Minister Ian Walker (as cited in Cormack, 2013) that there would be no art fair in 2013. Instead there was a concert and three forums, called 'CIAF Presents' in August 2013. IACA was the organising body for CIAF Presents, which comprised a curated exhibition called *Kinship*, held at the Tanks, Botanic Gardens, precinct and the Contemporary Art Space, Cairns. At the *Kinship* exhibition there were artworks displayed by the thirteen member art centres of IACA, which offered the public the opportunity to buy affordable artworks directly from the art centres located at Badu Island; Mua Island; Darnley Island; Mornington Island; Weipa; Aurukun; Pormpuraaw; Lockhart River; Hopevale; Wujul Wujul; Mossman; Yarrabah and lastly Cardwell. There was also a public symposium, which discussed current issues facing art centres. There was a notable absence of metropolitan-based artists in either the art spaces or the symposium. The strategy here appeared to be to support artists that reside and produce art in Far North Queensland.

The Queensland Government has put aside \$1.57 million to support CIAF Presents and the following two art fairs. According to Cormack (2013: 1) the next art fair will be at the Cairns Indigenous Arts Festival in 2014, which is projected to be a biennial event delivered by a different entity, after the report commissioned by Arts Queensland and Events Queensland recommended an independent company be formed to run the event. The new model with a strongly curated exhibition will be open to Indigenous artists from outside

Australia. The community art-centres and other Queensland exhibitors will be invited to sell their artworks in a separate pavilion nearby (Cormack, 2013: 1). According to Cormack the report suggests that changes have been brought about because of poor exhibition quality and less than brilliant sales over the period 2009 to 2012. Indigenous art centres struggled to cover the cost of attending the event and galleries found it difficult to justify the costs commercially (Cormack, 2013: 1). The report found there was 'growing disquiet' among exhibitors, curators and collectors about the variable quality of artworks at CIAF, which relied on a small group of artists to participate every year.

CIAF is now in transition to a biennial event, however the artists' goals persist. In the next chapter I will question the balance of culture and commerce against the fragile social issues that exist in communities and whether they influence the artists' optimism and willingness to pursue a career as an artist. In analysing my interviews with artists, I explore how they perceive their work and their relationships with arts coordinators and gallerists.

Chapter Five

Framing Artists: Habitus and Intercultural Exchange

Artists have been referred to numerous times so far in this dissertation: in the context of the foregoing history (Chapter Two), in particular in the contemporary art enterprise developments since the 1970s; in theorising habitus and friction (Chapter Three); and in the context of CIAF (Chapter Four), where artists perform and interact with a diverse group of people, making decisions and participating on centre stage as the stars of the show. In the present chapter, I analyse in more detail excerpts from my interviews with artists, recorded at CIAF in 2010, in order to form a closer perspective on their experience of the art network, and to gauge how friction might manifest in communities and in artists' relationships with arts coordinators and gallerists. Artists represent the primary and critical stage of production in the trajectory of art works along the commodity chain. Bourdieu (1992) argues that artists as creators are positioned as part of a strategic exercise in an historical field of already established determinations. Rather than liquidating artistic traditions, he suggests that the avant-garde, like previous artistic movements, 'makes history' by introducing a new position into the field, which displaces the whole series of previous artistic acts. With the advent of CIAF and more exhibitions than before, Bourdieu's concept of new positions equate to new ways of producing, distributing and consuming art. Artists arguably undergo the most significant transformation in adapting to the demands of the art network, even though they rarely travel away from their home communities and their artworks are made in the name of continuity with cultural knowledge. The artist's habitus is subject to many contemporary pressures and is therefore in constant re-

creation, fluid, changing, growing and thriving. Habitus enables a view of artists as subjects who generate and explore new ideas, try different ways to tackle a problem, find outcomes and solutions, ask questions of the arts coordinator, invent and follow ideas through and adapt to new circumstances, all methods of intercultural exchange.

The question of whether within the spaces of engagement in community art centres there is friction, resistance or social drama arises in the series of questions I put to the Indigenous artists at CIAF and in Cairns in 2010 concerning their relationships with arts coordinators and gallerists and how they perceive their place within the arts industry. From community art centres I interviewed three men, namely, Derek Rosendale, Harry Bowen (Hopevale); Craig Koomeeta (Aurukun); and four women, Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale), Kassandra Savage, Margaret Mara, Daphne De Jersey (Wei'num); and two male artists from Cairns, Arone Meeks and Zane Saunders. In 2011, I interviewed the artist Emily Ngarnal Evans (Mornington Island) at Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, making a total of five men and five women subjects, ranging in age from late thirties to late sixties (see Appendix 2 for details on artists). In talking with all of these artists, two equal and common aims emerged in their approach to making art, which was to make an income and to spread cultural awareness to a wider audience. The production of art appeals to Indigenous people because there is a sense of control over the artwork, and it is a straightforward transaction between the artist and the materials of art production, which does not require formal education, or a command of English. It is completely within the Indigenous world, and also has the appeal of money, and I observe this without

cynicism or implied criticism but to point out the primary source of friction that these intercultural desires might yield. I follow Carrie Miller (2011) in suggesting that the artists' comments and views are in keeping with an emerging pluralism in the art network. For some artists the purpose of art production is expression, documentation, and political statements while for others it is a crucial tool to re-present personal cultural identity and a sense of self. These views are disparately shared, however, between what emerges as three distinct groupings of Indigenous artists who jointly represent the art of Far North Queensland: community-based artists (who work mainly through art centres in remote communities), and urban artists comprising those based in regional urban centres like Cairns, and those in metropolitan centres, namely Brisbane.

The Friction of Identity: Urban and Community Artists

The art activism of Boomalli in Sydney and ProppaNOW in Brisbane (discussed in Chapter Two) has to some extent resulted in their dissociation from the practice of remote Indigenous artists, according to Jeremy Eccles (2012: 1). In my interviews, I also found that difference emerged in the views expressed by the artists from communities and those from urban centres. The proppaNOW artists are overtly activist in orientation, with their desire to provoke controversy and resistance by speaking on the commodification of indigeneity in the western art market. As discussed earlier (in Chapter Two) anecdotally, there is a perspective that these educated, professional and independent Brisbane-based artists are seen in the art network as less authentic Indigenous subjects than their counterparts who live and work in communities (Neale, 2010: 36). In addition, according to Eccles (2012) and Sarra (2011) some city-based

Indigenous artists have no immediate links to people in communities, speak English as a first language, and have lived for generations in urban areas. The ProppaNOW artists such as Richard Bell, Vernon Ah Kee and Judy Watson are established artists, outspoken and controversial. This brings publicity to them, which in turn may help to sell their art, and in the process they are seen to be activists for all Indigenous people (Neale, 2010: 36). Artists such as Vernon Ah Kee and Richard Bell (Bell's views were discussed in Chapter One) from proppaNOW target ideas of the noble savage and the exotic Other in their work, bringing attention instead to the modern contemporary lives of Aboriginal people. Both artists generate friction by questioning what is known about 'Aboriginal Art', thus bringing art and politics crashing together. Eccles (2012: 1), who interviewed both Ah Kee and Bell, observed of "Blak ¹² artists in White Australia, that their work in a variety of media is confrontational and full of biting humour". City-based Indigenous artists are part of mainstream art, and they have the power to send strong messages, frustrations and grievances about European colonisation in Australia through their politically motivated style of art.

In comparison to these vocal metropolitan activist artists, Cairns-based Indigenous artists seem to represent a second grouping that might be termed advocates (rather than activists). These Cairns-based artists culturally identify as Indigenous, and work in regional urban centres rather than communities. According to Neale (2010) they are perceived (in the art network) as less 'authentic' than their counterparts from communities as these Cairns-based

¹² This is the spelling used by Ah Kee and Bell when interviewed by Eccles (2012: 1)

artists may be second, third or fourth generation city dwellers seem more stereotypically in line with urban Australia. In the eyes of some community-based perspectives, this difference has become reified in institutional settings. For example, Derek Rosendale (2010) commented with regard to artist education that: “the TAFE (Cairns) course is far too rigid. It was set-up a long-time ago and is too structured. It caters for Indigenous students that have grown up in Cairns that are not aware of their cultural roots”. There is some stylistic comparison to be made between the work of the Cairns-based and Brisbane-based artists. “Arone Meeks produces paintings, sculptures and prints that express a passion for Country, spirituality and sexuality, in particular his most successful paintings are of ethereal beings from the Dreamtime” (Aboriginal Art Directory, 2012: 8) (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Arone Meeks,¹³ *Corridor*, 2008. Linocut print in black ink from one block, hand coloured.
<http://www.aboriginalartdirectory.com/artists/Arone+Meeks>. 15 August 2013.

¹³ Arone Meeks was born in Laura, Far North Queensland. This is his traditional country. He is a Kuku Midigi man, currently living in Cairns.



Zane Saunders produces paintings, sculptures, prints and installations, which reflect his spirituality, the people and the culture (see Figure 5). “Zane is interested in the process of creating new work by engaging in new mediums” (Milledge, 2006: 41).

Figure 5. Zane Saunders.¹⁴ *Call*, 2004. Acrylic on canvas
<http://www.realtimearts.net/article/71/8050>. Accessed 08 November 2013

¹⁴ Zane Saunders was born in Cairns and grew up in Kuranda, Far North Queensland. He identifies with the Butchulla (Bajala) people of Fraser Island.



The works of both Arone Meeks and Zane Saunders can be read with political overtones, but the messages are subtle compared to those of the Brisbane-based artists. I suggest that in general the Cairns-based artists are advocates for localised Indigenous issues who speak and act on behalf of other Indigenous people within the region. The Brisbane-based artists take on a more confrontational approach as activists who provoke intentional action through their art making and media interviews to bring about social and/or political change. “Bell’s works address – and protest – the commodification of indigeneity in the western art market. They draw attention to frustrations and grievances

brought about through the European colonisation of Australia” (Aboriginal Art Directory, 2009: 1). (see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Richard Bell.¹⁵ *Biblica*, 2002. Acrylic, gravel and binder on linen
<http://www.kooriweb/org/bell/>. Accessed 15 August 2013



Lastly, in this brief sample, Vernon Ah Kee’s work is motivated by his profound sense of exclusion and invisibility as an Aboriginal Australian (Leonard, 2008: 1). To date, he is largely known for two bodies of work, his text works and his portraits typically of subjects with a fixed gaze (see Figure 7). Ah Kee presents his text-based works on PVC, T-shirts and in billboard scale directly onto walls. Most of the text works are short and punchy, such as, *Not an animal or a plant*

¹⁵ Richard Bell was born in Charleville, Queensland and is a member of the Kamilaroi, Kooma, Jiman and Gurang Gurang peoples.

(2006), which reminds us that Aborigines were once categorised as subhuman, on a par with fauna and flora (Leonard, 2008: 35).

Figure 7. Vernon ah Kee.¹⁶ *Neither Pride nor Courage* (2008). Pastel, charcoal and synthetic polymer paint on canvas.
<http://gallery.aboriginalartdirectory.com/artists/vernon-ah-kee.php>. Accessed 15 August 2013



In my research I did not find evidence that the Cairns-based artists had voiced their anger with government, at symposiums or at art exhibitions. However, there is subtle friction being voiced because they want more Indigenous involvement at the distribution and reception end of the art network (see next section for examples), but to date have not lobbied for changes. Cairns-based

¹⁶ Vernon Ah Kee was born in Innisfail, North Queensland and is of the Kuku Yalandji, Waanji, Yidinji And Gugu Yimithirr peoples.

artists move in a more mainstream and diverse society than the community-based artists in the region operating no differently from any non-Indigenous artist. As Arone Meeks says: "I have to pay for my studio space, all materials and make my own arrangements with galleries" (Meeks, 2010). Zane Saunders observed: "It is important to make specific arrangements so that artists are fully aware of their rights and values" (Saunders, 2010). There were several other comments made by the Cairns-based artists about having to treat their art as income, and how this can have the effect of reducing their passion for the industry -- although not for the making of art -- and the chasing of monies, administration, taxation, materials and paying the bills. As sole traders in business they have to network with galleries, undertake the Business Analysis Support System (BASS), pay taxation, and find the costs of studio space, electricity, equipment and materials, which equates to maintaining a solid knowledge of financial matters. There are also opportunities in Cairns for employment if they desire or need it.

In comparison, community-based artists have developed their art making in cooperation with government agencies as the primary funding sources. They are supported by agencies such as Arts Queensland, IACA and UMI Arts, and by appointed arts coordinators in the community art centres who act as advisors, administrators and distributors of the art, and liaise with gallerists to sell the art. Arts coordinators 'take care' of the artists by networking with sales outlets (art fairs and commercial galleries) and maintaining the workspaces in the art centre as well as materials, equipment, and training and by handling all financial matters, effectively shielding artists from involvement in administration so they

can concentrate on producing art. The community artists have a responsibility to the art centre, which acts not only as a centre for making art, but also as a meeting place and mediating space for cultural events involving the community members. In a community art centre, the art is linked with goals of reclamation or reinforcement of identity, stories, language, place, symbolism, techniques and practices. Many of the issues that affect communities such as alcoholism, domestic violence and so on can be seen in the artists' works as political comment on their current situations, but in a modernist style that obscures the message. At no time did I find that the community-based artists wanted to be outspoken on Indigenous issues, instead the art is seen as a survival mechanism and a way forward. Cooperation and free and fully informed decision-making by the artists ensures that the success of art making has the ripple effect of cultural revitalisation and the spreading of cultural awareness to a wider audience. Community-based artists are empowered by the attention and financial gains (albeit modest) at CIAF or at commercial galleries because there are limited opportunities in communities to seek out other employment. Selling artworks builds community solidarity, independence from welfare aid and potential for future employment as artists. Community-based artists have stood for ownership of their art centre and the identity of communities in a continuing struggle to acquire the power to define and control their own life worlds. They are able to create a career that potentially can succeed because of its cultural distinctiveness, not despite it.

The art centre process requires community-based artists to straddle what Morphy (2008: 20) recognised as art making comprised of both Indigenous and

non-Indigenous worlds. Community-based artists mesh their cultural knowledge with western art skills, in a manner that requires they navigate two life-worlds, one Indigenous and the other non-Indigenous. On the one hand, there is the Indigenous world of family relationships, expectations, habits, traditions, ceremonies and respect for Elders, while on the other hand there is the western contemporary world of higher education, employment and the art network that is comprised largely of non-Indigenous people. To work under the western structure of an art centre, artists are required to dress with a certain standard of neatness, be punctual and be respectful towards the arts coordinator and other artists. Part of being an artist is therefore a process of becoming socialised accordingly, and friction must develop at times in this process. Friction is perhaps visible in the social drama that occurs in art centres as an effect of the two worlds, rather than between artists and the arts coordinators. The art network wants artists to conform by producing saleable art instead of being distracted by Indigenous community agendas that might take time away from art production and therefore artists have to learn to 'play the game', balancing two cultures if they want their art to sell. This does not mean that the art is inferior or less modern, even if for some of the community-based artists it is the value and meaning in their history and cultural knowledge that they want to preserve, restore and reconstruct in the art. For some community-based artists it is the current dynamics of everyday life that they want to capture in their artwork, which suggests that community culture is constantly changing.

The art centre is a space where social drama can play out and become manifest through any number of things such as a lack of punctuality, unkempt

appearance, a lack of truthfulness, temper tantrums and bad behaviour that show a defiance of the 'rules of the game' at the art centre. However, it is more likely that the problems do not start in the art centre and are expressions of far more serious conflicts that arise outside of the art centre, in the general community. There has to be an outlet for what ails many of the communities and the art centres can become an escape or refuge, while for others it may be where they struggle to define a sense of local community. My informal conversations with the artists of Hope Vale revealed that the younger people in the community are in the art centre because there is nothing else to do in the community, calling it a place for old peoples' business. My informants said that the youth are sometimes disruptive and do not see why the art is important. It is the artists that take them to task, rather than the arts coordinator, and this support by the artists assists the arts coordinator to maintain peace in the art centre. These social tensions can be seen as an expression of friction, different from the frictional dynamics that exist for urban artists in Cairns or in Brisbane.

Talking with Artists: Agency and Identity

In the art network, it appears that intercultural exchange does not always result in equitable arrangements, and this is at the heart of the debate (see Chapter One) concerning Richard Bell's view that Indigenous art is a non-Indigenous business. The commercial end of the art network is mainly non-Indigenous owned and operated. How community and urban artists see and experience this situation raises the question of power relationships in intercultural exchange. In the interviews with artists, I began by asking this very question, **'Is Indigenous Art a non-Indigenous business?'** It attracted varied

responses, which seemed to be influenced by artists' place in urban or community settings. In communities, overall, the responses suggested that the artists' view is one of a collaborative process, which is based on respect, and in which community considerations prevail.

Harry Bowen (Hopevale), said:

The commercial end of the business in the galleries is mostly non-Indigenous and they are respectful of artists. There are guidelines set out by the government departments to ensure that a Code of Conduct applies for everyone that works in art. It applies just as much to the artists as to others. If I want to be taken seriously I have to present myself properly. There are avenues that we can go to if we have a complaint about a situation or a person. That has not happened to me, I have been treated very well by gallery people. (Bowen, 2010)

Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale), said:

We need each other to make art, send it to galleries for people to sell it. It doesn't matter if the people managing the galleries are Indigenous or non-Indigenous they have to sell the art. It won't sell itself. I am more concerned with selling my artworks than who is selling them. (McGreen, 2010)

Craig Koomeeta (Aurukun), comments:

We don't get involved in marketing and don't want to as this would take away from the time left to produce art. Galleries and the arts coordinator are very respectful of the culture and of me as an artist. The people in the commercial end of the market need the artists, so it is a two-way business. (Koomeeta, 2010)

The comments by community-based artists suggest that these individuals were more concerned with producing art to sell than whom was selling it and they expressed no interest in getting involved in the commercial end of the art network. However, this does not tell the whole story; friction will always exist because not every discussion or negotiation will have positive outcomes.

Bourdieu says that resources (capital) and dispositions (habitus) can determine

the agent's position taking. This holds particular meaning for community-based artists as they are more likely to be disadvantaged due to a lack of resources, training and funding, while their dispositions may have narrower parameters due, in part, to the lack of opportunities, difficulty in telecommunications and geographic isolation. Two Wei'num artists, Margaret Mara and Daphne de Jersey, expressed their situation, with Margaret Mara (2010) saying: "We are not given any opportunities (training) to make art our business"; while Daphne De Jersey (2010) suggests: "There is a lack of training to venture into non-Indigenous roles". These comments suggest friction but were not aimed at any individual or organisation in particular. The two Wei'num artists live and work at art making in Mapoon, north of Weipa and the arts coordinator responsible for the Weipa region lives in Cairns. Therefore, the artists from Wei'num (approximately 10-15 artists spread across several communities) work in isolation without input from the arts coordinator except by Skype when needed. This lack of engagement with outsiders (outside of the community) on a regular basis does make it difficult to have a voice. To be heard there has to be a collective voice to maintain a struggle to produce art.

In principle, the two Wei'num artists and the Cairns-based artists seemed to agree on the question of whether more involvement by Indigenous people is necessary so that artists do not miss out on opportunities, but there was no mention by community artists as to how they would go about resolving this issue, nor did the artists mention wanting to be anything other than an artist. Zane Saunders, a Cairns-based artist, commented more directly:

Yes, but not wholly, Indigenous people are playing a bigger role in the distribution of art and want to have control of the work. It is

about empowerment for Indigenous people because getting that control back will be a way of making sure that they get a fair share of the profits. (Saunders, 2010)

Another Cairns-based artist, Arone Meeks also suggested the need for more active promotion of Indigenous interests in the industry: “Art workers should be able to learn more and go to the next step, but this will not happen anytime soon” (Meeks, 2010). With these comments, Meeks and Saunders are effectively acting as advocates for the community-based artists that want to see Indigenous people employed as arts coordinators. But Meeks and Saunders are not sources of controversial artworks or stinging media interviews, just a desire for Indigenous people to be more than artists. Saunders (2010) commented: “We want a bigger role in the distribution of art and want to have control of the work” while, Meeks (2010) said: “There are people that are trying to change this attitude, but it is a slow process”. This is a reference to the role of UMI Arts as the driver of this concept of Indigenous arts coordinators. Saunders mentions that if Indigenous people were ‘in control’ of the process it would be a fairer system. Meeks suggests that no time soon will this happen but stopped short of saying it will be a fairer system. In contrast to the comments of the Cairns-based artists, Robbi Neal (2010), arts coordinator, Lockhart River comments: “No one has asked the artists in communities what they want. Despite this push, artists do not want this because they are afraid of the impact of having people with family obligations managing the centre”. Neal is presumably alluding to ‘demand sharing’ (see also Chapter Six), and this is more an issue for community-based artists, who desire a buffer between them and their families, and between them and the world outside of the community. According to Neal

(2010): “Even when I offered to train-up one of the artists for the role of the arts coordinator the board and the artists pleaded for me to stay”.

Another way that training for other arts roles could be improved is by introducing a process whereby personnel from public art galleries and museums, Arts Queensland and other sponsors together with community art centres, work collaboratively to address the imbalance of opportunities. Such arrangements could ensure that artists or other interested parties are given training in other arts roles and in turn this will break down the disadvantages that community artists experience and potentially result in more Indigenous people becoming involved in the non-Indigenous arts sector. Arrangements such as secondments, sponsorships, traineeships, cadetships, scholarships and so on, could be supported in ways that are professionally effective and sustainable. Taylor (2003: 50) argues that, “[i]nitiatives need to be driven by an industry or a profession-wide recognition of, and formal commitment to, the premise that there is significant value in increasing the ranks of professional Indigenous arts personnel”. The more artists engage with a diverse pool of experts ready to support their activities the more professional and knowledgeable the artists will become. In this frame, artists could be seen as agents of change, not only by incorporating new art styles but through their ability to adapt to situations that take them away from their familiar surroundings and family in a community setting.

Dialogue and Desire: Two Questions about Relationships

The comments of the Cairns-based artists are more strongly suggestive of Tsing's notion of 'friction' than the comments of the community-based artists that appear to suggest they want to focus only on producing art. Even so, the views expressed by the Cairns-based artists indicate that there is tolerance towards the pace of change, and this should not detract from optimism that artists will push the boundaries of the present structures of art institutions in the future. Such change requires the empowerment of all participants through capacity building for intercultural exchange without the loss of personal or collective identity. The next two questions therefore sought to address the level of dialogue and confidence artists experience in their dealings with those who mediate and/or act as gatekeepers in the art network. The broadening of the artists' habitus is already underway for some, through perception, thought and action not only in matters of art production but also through knowledge gained at CIAF and gallery exhibitions about marketing, buyers, other artists' styles and artworks. To move further, there seems a need for relationship building between the parties, and this prompted my second question to artists, **'what dialogue takes place between the artist, the gallery staff and the arts coordinators?'**

The responses suggest that dialogue arises in the informal exchanges in the kitchen areas of art centres over coffee or lunch while the formal negotiations concerning upcoming exhibitions or cultural events take place in less busy areas of art centres, often in one-on-one situations. Community-based artists do not negotiate contracts or pricing with gallerists; instead this is left to the arts coordinator (see Chapter Six), leaving artists free to create artworks.

However, there are times that artists and gallerists meet, such as at CIAF, or at the opening of an exhibition at a gallery, or when a gallerist takes the time to visit a community art centre to discuss a forthcoming exhibition. Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale) commented:

Gallery people call me Auntie Evelyn, very much a term of endearment. I'm not interested in travelling to exhibitions, I like being in Hope Vale, but sometimes it is necessary because it helps to sell the art. (McGreen, 2010)

Harry Bowen (Hopevale) concurred:

People are very good to me, we need each other to make art sell. If you have a good sense of yourself, you can take on-board anything that life throws at you and it won't change who you are it just gives you more information. Information and knowledge can be used to harness change for your place in the world. I think I have done that with my art. (Bowen, 2010)

Although Evelyn McGreen and Harry Bowen, both from Hopevale, leave the organising and day-to-day running of the art centre to the arts coordinator they are in no way without agency in the financial transactions at galleries. Evelyn is aware that her presence at exhibitions has a powerful effect on the saleability of her art, while Harry recognises that gaining new information and knowledge helps guide change and his place in the world through his art. However, Craig Koomeeta (Aurukun) takes a more hands-on approach to the exhibiting of his art:

I have a very good relationship with the people in the art process. With gallery people we talk about prices, dates of the exhibition and the title. Gallery people also want to know about life in Aurukun and if everything is well with me. (Koomeeta, 2010)

Craig Koomeeta's experience in the art network as an artist of more than twenty-years standing, gives him the knowledge and the confidence to take a middle ground approach to dealing with gallerists. Koomeeta lives half time in Aurukun, where he produces art under the art centre banner, and half time in Cairns, where he acts as an independent artist like Zane Saunders and Arone Meeks, and therefore negotiates directly with gallerists. All of the community-based artists commented that the gallerists have demonstrated care for their welfare and that sharing information and knowledge helps cement their relationships. Evelyn McGreen says: "Gallerists call me Auntie Evelyn", while Craig Koomeeta says: "People want to know about life in Aurukun". Nevertheless, the main dialogue about artworks and sales for community artists appears to be held with the art coordinator, which suggests there is a relationship of collaboration between these players because both must agree on price, style, format and theme as part of the agreed plan or goal. Friction in the space of engagement could be a reality here because artists may disagree with the exhibition format or the prices suggested by the arts coordinator and the gallerist. For example, an emerging artist may desire a particular price, which, without a calibre reputation, cannot be achieved and the artist may either accept or decline the suggestions made. If the artist declines this may lead to resistance in completing the brief or even leaving the art centre for good. There is acknowledgement by the established artists that: "gallery people are knowledgeable and experienced at the commercial end of the art market" (Rosendale, 2010), which suggests there is respect and trust by the artists that gallerists will undertake their assigned roles with professionalism.

It needs to be recognised from the comments of the participants that they do not come to this intercultural space of engagement empty-handed either of traditional or of commercial knowledge and their insightful comments are evidence of this. The more challenging question is how balanced is the weighting of Indigenous cultural knowledge and experience in the exchange and whether it is respected and given the same currency as non-Indigenous knowledge. Traditional knowledge should be afforded a “parity of esteem” (Taylor, 2003: 50) with non-Indigenous western knowledge at all times and in some situations it should be given primacy. When artists talk about certain cultural aspects of their artworks, this should not take second place to the economic value, as both are equally important. When I interviewed Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale) I asked her about a small motif she had used as a part of her signature and what it meant. Her reply was that she did not know, except to say that it was traditional, but the meaning had been lost when she was a girl in the mission times, when use of cultural symbols and stories was not permitted. Artists today, in Far North Queensland are more likely to tell a story about current issues that evoke a complex variety of emotional and aesthetic judgements about life in communities.

My interviews revealed that community-based artists are deeply aware of their obligations to commercial galleries to produce art that is saleable (the rules of the game). In this context, I asked a further question, **‘do artists produce what they want?’** The responses reiterated artists’ priorities to maintain Indigenous expression and commercial imperatives. Daphne De Jersey commented: “I paint what I feel and however it goes on the canvas is how it is. I

don't want to live with the skeletons of the old people, I live for today and my art reflects that" (De Jersey, 2010). Harry Bowen commented that he wants to produce artworks with sales appeal: "I do whatever I want to, but I always think in terms of whether something will sell. After all this is not ceremonial art, this is artwork to sell commercially" (Bowen, 2010). Evelyn McGreen (2010) observed that "[t]he door is always open" to speak to the arts coordinator regarding the direction of the art for forthcoming exhibitions and that the quality of the artwork is at a level for gallery exhibitions. Evelyn also commented: "Yes, I'm now confident in what I do" (2010), indicating that she is aware that her artworks must be the best that she can produce. Craig Koomeeta echoed these sentiments and expressed an aim to develop a sustained interest or aesthetic in his paintings. He commented:

I have a good idea of what sells because I have been an artist for some time and have had success in galleries. I am able to tell the art centre coordinator what I want to make. We talk about solo exhibitions or group exhibitions before we start making artworks because we have to agree on continuity. This idea of continuity with a theme, colour or shape is something I have learned about marketing art. (Koomeeta, 2010)

Craig Koomeeta's comments suggest the importance of face-to-face discussions about aesthetic continuity with the arts coordinator or gallerist, in order for agreements to be made to enable the art to go forward to the next stage in the commodity chain. Some artists are only too willing to "incorporate new styles and concepts if it compliments my artwork and helps me tell my story" (Mara, 2010). Even so, there is always the chance that a gallery may reject an artwork for issues of quality, so particular attention is paid to details such as clean canvas, no spilling of paint, sharp lines, choice of colours, paints, linen,

background colour and priming as well as clean brushes or squeeze bottles and so on. From the various comments it seems that there is internalised friction within each artist because they have to balance their creative talents with the commercial demands of the art industry and its parameters (the rules of the game). Bourdieu (1990: 64) says that individual or social practices are governed by the relationship between an agent's habitus and a "[c]ertain state of the chances objectively offered to him [sic] by the social world". These can be seen in a practical sense in that the artists are free to make art with whatever materials or techniques they can imagine, creating new opportunities to express ideas and concepts, but none of this will be commercially appropriate unless the artworks are deemed saleable.

Artists can change their styles and genres several times during their careers but must remain conscious of what sells. The distinction between traditional and contemporary art is not intended to suggest that traditional art forms have disappeared. Rather, the present context is one in which traditional forms have been supplemented by new commercial interests (Layton, 1994: 138). The commercial considerations allow for a cash income and a degree of independence from state aid, in particular for artists from communities. If artists choose to include symbolism or a story in the artwork, it may be reframed by the gallery as part of the selling process, and symbolically reframed by the buyer once an artwork reaches its destination of display, in a home or office. Artworks with symbolism or a traditional story may have resonance with some buyers, particularly if they have lived in a community or ventured into Country for hunting, fishing or finding bush tucker, then animal tracks and mythical stories

may hold memories for them. However, this style of art has in a sense been superseded by the art world's need for innovation and modernism that reflects today's western tastes (see Chapter Seven). In response to my question, **'do artists produce what they want?'** Derek Rosendale (Hopevale) commented:

Indigenous art tells a story. My artwork is about traditional stories – they come from Dreamtime stories of how the world was formed and the spirit creatures that were involved in this process. I was one of the lucky ones that had stories handed down to me by an old aunt. (Rosendale, 2010)

Subsequently, at CIAF, 2010, I observed Derek Rosendale explaining the stories in his artworks to several potential buyers. But the artworks went unsold and the reasons given were because they were traditional in content and did not reflect the needs of today's art market.

Fine Art and Friction: Obstacles, Exploitation and Trust

The artists' comments so far overall suggest a view of a collaborative environment of exchange, notwithstanding as I suggest some variance in the outlooks of the Cairns-based and community-based artists. In seeking to identify particular problems experienced by artists I directly asked, **'what are the obstacles inhibiting artworks from reaching an art market?'** Again, a clear distinction emerged between the responses of community and Cairns-based artists. Harry Bowen (2010) readily named an obstacle as: "The geographic distance from anywhere. Getting artworks to a gallery can be difficult". Daphne De Jersey (2010) said: "Access to major cities and gallery contacts. It is difficult long distance to keep those contacts". The issues of distance, access to technology and the travel costs associated with sending people to exhibitions

and the freighting of artworks mean that the community-based artists are at a relative disadvantage to the Cairns-based artists. There are also unmade roads and complex weather patterns that maroon communities for months on end and are a reality of everyday life in the region.

A more subtle issue of trust emerges as a secondary obstacle between artists, gallerists and arts coordinators. In the words of Harry Bowen (Hopevale):

There has to be a great deal of trust that the canvases are being stretched properly. Sometimes I see the artwork at the same time as the public because travelling to the gallery in advance just means additional costs for the art centre. (Bowen, 2010)

Trust is a two-way process: community-based artists rely on the arts coordinator to see that all administration duties are in order for the smooth running of the art centre; and, at the same time, the arts coordinator must trust the artists to produce work of the highest quality (theme, size, colour) and in time to be ready for an exhibition deadline. At the commercial end, the gallerist must trust that the art is of the highest quality, is delivered on time, and in return must ensure that monies for sold items are remitted promptly. For the Cairns-based artists trust is also an issue in negotiations between themselves and gallerists. Any aspect of the relationships between artists, arts coordinators and gallerists requires understanding of the creative process; friction can manifest through tensions, stresses and differences that must be dealt with to enable positive outcomes, so trust is an element of relationships that can ballast friction.

Although the profit motive is an important driver for Indigenous artists it is also important to spread Indigenous culture to a wider audience by the art being

circulated and seen publicly as quickly as possible. In community art centres it is the role of the arts coordinator to harness friction when its effects surface through disagreements or “foot dragging” (a phrase used by Scott, 1985: 29) -- which could be seen as “a go slow” -- and turn differences into creative dynamics. Guy Allain (arts coordinator, Aurukun) comments on how friction has manifested into resistance in the Aurukun art centre:

Getting artists to work consistently is very, very difficult. It works like this: when artists paint or sculpt for an exhibition, for example, CIAF, 2010 and the artworks sell, it may be four months before they get paid. So because they don't get paid straight away, they stop working. When they get paid they work again. This not only limits the output of work it also limits their income. (Allain, 2010)

It is estimated that approximately ten artists from Far North Queensland make what is considered a living from their art, with several of them reported to be Cairns-based artists (Cleary, 2010). Most community-based artists earn approximately \$6,000 - \$7,000 a year from their art (Cleary, 2010), which makes payments of sold artworks crucial to their survival. It is not helped that “[t]he payment system to artists is very slow by some galleries and CIAF” (Derek Rosendale, 2010). The artists agree that it can take months before remuneration is a reality. Arone Meeks (2010) said: “Galleries can be bad at paying”. This is a major source of friction between artists, arts coordinators and gallerists.

Tied to this issue of income is another commercial consideration for community and urban artists: “Agreeing on a base price for an artwork can be difficult” and “underpayment is very common, whereby the gallery takes out more commission than it should” (Meeks, 2010). Bourdieu (1996) might say that this is a struggle over economic capital. However, the outcome for the Cairns-

based artists in such struggles over money can cause them to look for new outlets to sell their art, and possibly influence them to be overly cautious, or not trusting of others and/or respectful of the gallerists involved in negotiations. Either way, the artist will come to the space of engagement affected by the prior effects of the friction of commerce and this may have a detrimental effect on optimistic dialogue and negotiation.

This issue of obstacles can also be framed to include the potential for exploitation of artists, so I posed a further question, **‘have you been exploited by anyone in the art market?’** This question revealed another difference in the answers of the community-based artists and the Cairns-based artists. Derek Rosendale (2010) said, “Not yet, I know how the commercial world works. So people are careful with me. I was a policeman and in the military so people seem to think twice about trying to fool me”. Evelyn McGreen (2010) commented: “No one has done anything wrong by me. The gallery people have been very good to me, and interested in my welfare”. There was a common thread throughout the answers of the community-based artists that they had had no negative experiences with gallerists (although in Chapter Six I record comments by arts coordinators, which contest these views). On the other hand, the Cairns-based artists, Zane Saunders and Arone Meeks, commented that they experienced what they perceived to be exploitation, although they did not attribute the causes to cultural differences:

Yes, there are times when I have been approached by people wanting to employ your skills or services, and they’re not really up front with a lot of the information that will help make whatever you’re participating in run a whole lot better. (Saunders, 2010)

Yes, negotiations are very important and details can be omitted and therefore later costs are deducted that you never imagined. Galleries know what sells and so they will suggest certain shapes, sizes, colours, which at times is not what you had in mind, but these are the boundaries that you have to work in, if you want to sell your art. Most artists that have sold a certain style of artwork will go with 'if you are on to a good thing stick with it'. I don't think there is anything wrong with that. (Meeks, 2010)

Arone Meeks's experience of dealing with gallerists suggests that he has been exploited through cost deductions that he never thought to negotiate, such as advertising for an exhibition, printing and graphic designs for catalogues, invitations to the opening of an exhibition, travel costs and so on. Meeks told me that he had once been in the position of owing money to a gallery at the end of an exhibition. He said that he had learnt a lot about careful and considered negotiations and to only deal with reputable galleries that have a high standing in the art network, which again indicates the role of trust in such relationships. While these are issues that may potentially affect any artist dealing with galleries, in the context of this research the responses reinforce the sense of difference in the experiences of urban and community artists. Although the Cairns-based artists, such as Meeks and Saunders, were candid about their experiences of exploitation, the community-based artists were less so. Perhaps this reflects their lack of experience with outsiders (from outside of their communities) or the protection of the arts coordinator (further discussion in Chapter Six), but their silence on this question is telling. Unpacking the layers of exploitation suggests that intercultural exchange is fraught with a complex set of communications. Indigenous artists from communities may have a very different concept of finance and are willing (or, by virtue of family obligations or personal circumstance, are forced to be willing) participants in transactions that

are unfair and could potentially cost the artist in terms of his or her reputation by selling 'on-the-side'. Although community arts coordinators go to great lengths to explain to the artists the ramifications of 'selling-on-the-side' and the harm that the practice does to their reputations -- to sell items without provenance at cheaper prices -- there is the more pressing matter for artists to make financial ends meet and to have some income, no matter how small.

In the last few years the federal government has produced a legally binding document called the Indigenous Art Code of Conduct, which encourages increased professionalism in relationships between artists, art centres and the market (Indigenous Art Code, 2011: 1-2). The Code states: "It is a significant step towards securing ethical trade in the industry. It establishes a set of industry standards, provides a benchmark for ethical behaviour and gives consumers greater certainty that the artworks they buy came through ethical processes". However, the Code only applies to those who have signed up to it, such as galleries, art centres and individual dealers. It gives artists, arts coordinators and gallerists a channel to complain should any party not fulfil their obligations. The Code does not bring attention to regions or locations of artists. Although the Code of Conduct document is a step in the right direction for communicating rights and responsibilities for all the parties involved it raises a further issue as to how the artists and their artworks want to be represented. Until recently Aboriginal art has been categorised separately from other art. However, the art market is maturing and with it the belief that the art should be called contemporary Australian art, rather than Aboriginal art. If the art is categorised as contemporary Australian, it follows that the artists should be called

‘contemporary artists’ or just ‘artists’ without the specific definition of Indigenous, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. This prompted my final question to the participants, **‘do you identify as an Indigenous Artist or as an Artist?’**

This question of how the artists want to be identified brought a mixed response from the participants. From the total of ten artists, three said they wanted to be known as ‘artist’, one person said ‘Aboriginal artist’, four said ‘Indigenous artist’ and two said both. Harry Bowen (Hopevale) said: “Both, I want to tell outsiders a story about my culture but at the same time it is done in a modern style. So I think of myself as both”. The two Cairns-based artists chose to be in the category of ‘artist’. Zane Saunders said: “I identify myself as an artist. The more I move along in my practice I’m starting to see that I can comfortably describe myself as an artist of Aboriginal descent producing modern works”. Arone Meeks said: “As an artist”. The Cairns-based artists often share art spaces in commercial galleries with non-Indigenous mainstream artists, so it is not a surprise that they might want to be seen as artists who work on a level playing field with non-Indigenous artists. Only one community-based artist, Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale) chose to be identified as ‘artist’ (McGreen gave no further explanation or qualification for the decision to be known as ‘artist’).

In recent times, there has been some public questioning of the labelling of art as Aboriginal or Indigenous. This debate has centred around whether the practice of identifying art painted by Indigenous Australians as culturally distinctive is positive and a celebration of cultural history, or a negative way of ‘ghettoising’ artists because of their minority group status (Miller, 2011; 1). My

research suggests that there is no single view that can be attributed to artists, but there does seem to be a desire for some artists to seek to be characterised in terms beyond their ethnicity or cultural identity. There are earlier precedents; for example, in the early 1990s Tracey Moffat from Brisbane refused to be curated into exhibitions that were exclusively labelled Aboriginal or Indigenous (cited in Miller, 2011: 2). According to Carrie Miller (2011: 2): “Aboriginality is not an immutable, natural, historical category of ethnicity but rather a culturally and politically invested one”; instead, she argues, “[i]t is an idea that non-Indigenous Australia has projected onto the country’s original inhabitants for specific socio-political ends”. As a result, many Aboriginal activists have employed the term as a form of political identity, although not all artists see their identities as inherently political (2). The Brisbane-based artists from proppaNOW identify as politically motivated, but the Cairns-based and community-based artists appear to be more interested in surviving and making a living from their art, even as their work -- as discussed earlier -- can be read as politically informed. I could make an argument that Indigenous artists are automatically concerned with their own Aboriginality as a primary source of difference, but I am not convinced this is the case nor do my interviews suggest it. Indeed, Richard Bell whose controversial work and words have stimulated such debate about art and cultural identity has observed the redundancy of the distinction of ‘Indigenous artists’ in the following comment:

I don’t make art that looks like it comes from the desert and nor does it look like it comes from Arnhem Land. I don’t set out to make Aboriginal art. In my opinion, I make art in much the same manner and for much the same reasons as most contemporary artists from around the world. (Bell cited in Miller, 2011: 2)

Contemporary Indigenous art has become a powerful tool in the struggle for reconciliation, in particular in the work of the major city-based artists who use their art for activist reasons to raise awareness of a devastating history of two centuries of colonial contact and oppression. In contrast the community-based artists that I spoke with appear to be more concerned with selling their art as a means to participate in the economy, and to maintain culture rather than to achieve explicit political ends. But this agenda can be seen as political even if voiced and expressed in dissonance to the more activist artists. However, it is not just the Indigenous voices that influence the debate as, according to Miller (2011: 2), there are signs that the non-Indigenous community is developing an understanding of the inherent pluralism of Indigenous art practices. The pluralism that Miller describes can be regarded in terms of another form of intercultural exchange because the art network brings together people of different cultural domains as well as different arts practices, knowledge and funding that has melded into what we today know as contemporary Australian art. Comments made by Beverly Knight to reporter Ashleigh Wilson also drew attention to a correlative shift in perception among buyers. “The market is starting to mature, with collectors regarding the art as contemporary Australian first and Aboriginal second” (Knight quoted in Wilson, 2011: 28). Miller (2011: 1) suggests that defining artists in terms of their ethnicity is not necessarily the most progressive way of thinking about their art because “[e]ven if this labelling is not intended as explicitly racial, it may still effectively function to reinforce the way that Aboriginality is constructed as ‘Other’, as in perpetual dichotomy to the Western norm”. Categories like ‘Aboriginal’ or ‘Indigenous’, even if only used as

seemingly benign ethnographic classifications have real effects in the present, allowing past practices to persist through a lack of confrontation with them.

I have attempted in this chapter to profile the outlook of artists through their responses to a set of questions that aimed to elicit reflections on their roles, experiences and identities. These were obtained in interviews in the intercultural setting of CIAF. The more notable findings concerned the differences between the reflections of Cairns-based and community-based artists on their experiences. To sum up these differences, I found that the community-based artists appeared to have a non-careerist ¹⁷ attitude in that they did not aim to be anything other than an artist. This evidence was taken from artists ranging in age between late thirties to late sixties. If I had been able to interview artists in the age range of twenty to thirty, perhaps the attitude might have been different. However, it should be noted that at CIAF, 2010 there were no artists in this age range in attendance that I could have interviewed. Younger artists were represented, but did not attend. Artists from communities do not appear to want to self-promote or strive for a different path that would mean venturing into other sub-fields of the art network. However, the two artists who wanted more training (Margaret Mara and Daphne De Jersey both of Wei'Num) gave no indication that they wanted to be anything other than artists and did not make additional comments to indicate how they would go about changing the structuring mechanisms of the industry to allow for change. Opportunities for artists to venture into other arts roles, such as curator or arts coordinator will need to be instigated from within communities and with support from the

¹⁷ By non-careerist I mean that the community-based artists held no ambitions to pursue employment as curators or work in a gallery instead they wanted to be artists of the highest standing.

Cairns-based artists, and to date there has been no collective voice on the dual issues of funding and training to enable this change to become possibility into the future.

In contrast, the Cairns-based artists are independent and strive to be careerist, advocating self-promotion and self-management of their art. The two Cairns-based artists that I interviewed are tertiary educated and could, if they wanted to, apply for roles in the art network that are currently held by non-Indigenous people, but they have chosen to remain working artists. However, should their circumstances change there are more opportunities for them to follow other paths.¹⁸ It is worth noting here that there are artists that move between communities and urban areas because their art making success has brought them opportunities to share their new arts knowledge with others by facilitating arts workshops. For example, Arone Meeks facilitates art classes in various community art centres across Far North Queensland, spending time with artists and teaching them new techniques, and imparting his knowledge of the art network. Craig Koomeeta is another example as he lives partly in Cairns where he conducts his art business, and partly in Aurukun where he works under the banner of the art centre.

Overall, I found that the artists were positive about their futures and had few negative comments concerning gallerists and even fewer about arts coordinators, except to say that they would like to sell more art and be paid promptly for it. In communities, art plays a significant role in promoting social cohesion, employment, social policy goals and economic growth. If anything,

¹⁸ Arone Meeks is currently an arts facilitator at Yarrabah and Zane Saunders is a guest lecturer and mentor to students at TAFE Cairns.

Indigenous artists have experienced a revival of their sense of identity and in the process their art has the potential to become globally celebrated. For intercultural exchange to 'work' there has to be a willingness by all the parties to engage in meaningful dialogue, reciprocity and shared achievable outcomes. The reframing of self and culture has resonance for artists because they have chosen to explore the blurred edges of their Indigenous identity by bringing together culture and commerce through a process of intercultural exchange with arts coordinators, gallerists and buyers. Throughout this process artists have gained new insights, which can be explained as a transformation of habitus through acquisition of new arts knowledge, modern techniques, access to advice from arts coordinators and gallerists, and opportunities to exhibit artworks. These new experiences meld with their exiting habitus in the art making process. There will always be friction inside and outside of art centres that causes failures and delays in the trajectory of the art, which affect everyone in the various stages of the art network. Therefore there has to be a willingness by all the parties to engage in dialogue even when situations are difficult. I found this willingness in abundance, suggesting that the future prospects for artists in Far North Queensland are extremely positive provided that funding is maintained to art centres. The politics of sustainability of the centres is not as optimistic as came to light more in my conversations with arts coordinators.

In Chapter Six, I look at these issues from the angle of arts coordinators and in the context of their responsibilities to create pathways for community-based artists to overcome the geographic marginalisation and economic disadvantage. I consider arts coordinators to be intercultural mediators because

they must actively mediate between the artist and the art network. I found arts coordinators to be resourceful strategists, who engage with artists not just on a professional working basis but also in overcoming the challenges of living in isolated communities. Arts coordinators also seem more at the interface of the engagement with governments and commercial interests in the art network, and thus more perceptive of the risks in the industry. But like artists, the arts coordinators are willing participants in the intercultural process, sharing common goals, and experiences. In talking to arts coordinators, some silences emerged in the artists' views, and only in comparing their perspectives in a symbiotic encounter, can a sense of their mutual dependence in art production become clear, and a sense of the loss that would eventuate should the art centre enterprise decline or be de-funded.

Chapter Six

The Arts Coordinator as Intercultural Mediator

I take into this chapter the knowledge gleaned from my interviews with the community-based artists, reported in the previous chapter, and the various sources of friction identified, along with the emerging view of trust and respect as ballasting counter-forces in the dynamics of friction. Trust and respect are qualities that characterise and cement the relationships between arts coordinators and artists residing in remote communities, and the building of trust is a singularly important skill that forms the basis of any working relationship. Community-based artists repeatedly reported to me how they wanted to be left alone to produce art and for the day-to-day managing of the art

centre to be the responsibility of the arts coordinator. In other words, trust and mutual respect are qualities that enable roles to be defined as well as acknowledgement that artists and arts coordinators need each other to make art reach an art market. This view informs the analysis of the interviews at CIAF, 2010 where I spoke with two male and two female arts coordinators, Troy Dennis (Hopevale); Guy Allain (Aurukun); Valerie Keenan (Girringun) and Robbi Neal (Lockhart River) all in the age range of early forties to late fifties. In the following year, I also interviewed one male arts coordinator, Brett Evans (Mornington Island) (in the same age range) at Alcaston Gallery, in Melbourne, making a total of five arts coordinators whose responses are weighed in this chapter. I asked them the same questions as the artists because I wanted to compare their responses to the questions. In addition, I wanted to understand from their perspectives what and whether disagreements occur in their relationships with the artists, and what interpersonal strategies are employed to counter problems that may arise. This goes to how much control (or otherwise) art coordinators exert within the interactions with artists and how friction is handled. I found that talking about the roles of arts coordinators was inseparable from discussing the role of art centres in communities because the individuals and the centres are intertwined as places of cultural convergence and mediation, and the relationships therein blend professional and personal elements in the process of framing collaboration and interdependency. In the previous chapter, the outcomes of collaboration and interdependency can be seen to reflect the agency of the artists in using commercial opportunities and the expertise of arts coordinators to enhance their future prospects. As intercultural spaces, art centres form important sites, in and around which

Indigenous peoples' values and practices are brought to bear, and where these values and practices are also contested, adapted and transformed. Taken together, both the previous chapter and this one suggest the symbiotic pattern of practices and interests in which artists and arts coordinators are engaged in the art network. In summary, the responses of art coordinators to the questions posed revealed their complex, frontline mediating role between government and community, and in the intra-communal dynamics channeled through the activities of the art centres. On both axes of engagement, art coordinators require and exercise high-level intercultural competencies that are conducted through warm relationships with the artists whose interests they represent.

Talking with Arts Coordinators

The initial question posed was the one I first discussed in Chapter One, concerning the prevailing view of the issue provoked by Richard Bell, '**is Indigenous art a non-Indigenous business?**' Bell has defended his position since his first comments in 2003 and some see his political activism as helping in publicising his own art. While the likes of John Tracey (2006: 7) waded into the debate saying that "Queensland's Aboriginal performance and art industry is dominated by non-Aboriginal people and their agendas", the comments of the artists in the previous chapter suggest that the art would not sell itself and therefore it did not matter who sold it. The views that emerged in the responses of art coordinators were more expansive and concerned the conditions of art centres, with a consistent theme about the demands of government for centres to become self-funding, and the lack of account in this demand for the total role of art centres in communities. Initially, they commented on the intermediaries in

art sales. Valerie Keenan (2010), in responding to the question said: “Broadly speaking no, it doesn’t matter who sells the art”. Robbi Neal (2010) commented: “No. Every artist I have ever met, whether they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, including myself as an artist are hopeless at managing their own affairs and would like someone to manage them”. Brett Evans (2011) said, ‘yes’, explaining that the art industry is no different from “Aboriginal music, film, entertainment, they all exist in a non-Indigenous business”. It is the case that to date Indigenous involvement at the commercial end of the art network in Far North Queensland has been minimal, but the artists and the arts coordinators appear to want to get on with producing and selling art and not be part of the overt political activism that motivates metropolitan artists such as Richard Bell. Similarly, the arts coordinators appear to want to do their job of supporting artists to produce high quality art for sale.

According to Troy Dennis (2010): “The art centre provides studio space, materials and a range of arts and crafts workshops and employs professional artists/tutors to run workshops on specific art skills”. It is the role of the art coordinators to act as on-site mediators between artists and gallerists, and as advisors and distributors for artworks. The habitus of the art coordinator is therefore formed of western art knowledge and, through the socialisation of living and working in Indigenous communities, becomes supplemented with understanding of Indigenous law and the sense of belonging in a community. Arts coordinators bring with them particular skills such as expertise in marketing and an understanding of commerce and its relationship to the fine arts market. Their duties include:

Buying, selling, documenting, conserving, and transporting art; they accompany artists to exhibitions, host visitors, deal with intellectual property issues, administer grants, run projects, look after a small business, manage other staff, supply artists with materials and support the governing boards who employ them. (Altman, 2005: 6)

My research revealed that none of the five arts coordinators that I interviewed came to these positions with all of these skills. Robbi Neal and Guy Allain are artists themselves, Brett Evans has had experience in finance, Valerie Keenan has a PhD in creative arts, and Troy Dennis came to the role from a background in government arts policy and arts training. However, these qualifications and experience support the formal tasks but do not necessarily encompass the informal tasks that arise in the community art centre as a place for cultural events, the intergenerational passing down of cultural knowledge, or the daily social and community activities. How arts coordinators become integrated into the communities depends on communication as a key to breaking down the barriers between people from different cultures and worldviews.

As far back as 1997, Shareene Bell (1997: 34) reported on the social benefits for artists working in community art centres, which promote, she argued “[h]ealth, wellbeing, personal development, self-esteem, financial independence and empowerment within the communities”. More importantly Bell argues that:

[t]he other benefits include the sharing of cultural knowledge with the next generation and also with outsiders such as the art buying public. Within the communities the ability to produce and sell art allows the people to continue living on their lands and to engage in diverse customary activities and cultural practices. (Bell, 1997: 34)

Bell's comments suggest that community art centres must be approached as holistic entities that cater for their members in terms of customary activities, cultural practices and art production. An art centre is a place where people can congregate for meetings, or ceremonial art can be made, such as body painting and ritual objects, and it is a place for dancers to practice and for Elders to pass on stories to a younger generation. At other times it reverts to a space for art production. All of these social and economic demands fall on arts coordinators, accounting for approximately fifty percent of their time. The scheduling of times to allow the residents to use the art centre must be balanced with the demands of art making, so these arrangements have potential to be fraught with conflict, especially when a deadline for an exhibition or a dance performance is looming. It is largely through careful handling by the arts coordinator that conflicts are averted because the whole community owns the art centre not just the artists.

Felicity Wright and Frances Morphy (2000: 9) note that "[a]n artist is not serviced by an art centre solely in terms of their productivity, but as a whole person" because "[a]n artist also has health, education, nutrition and support needs, which they often bring to the art centre". The board members of art centres see them primarily as cultural institutions that generate income but less importance is attached to this because centres accrue benefits for entire communities. In this way, there is a strong argument that art centres are key contributors to the wellness of a community because the growth in art sales improves an artist's life through employment and status. But this view does not seem to be shared by government agencies. Robbi Neal of Lockhart River comments:

There is a lack of interest in how the art centres support peoples' lives. When funding acquittals are all about sales it continues the pressure to only invest in sure sellers. Funding acquittals need to also take into account the changes in peoples' mental well being, in capacity building, in connectedness etc., which all happen through the art centre but cannot be assessed in terms of monetary value (Neal, 2010).

Federal and state governments across Australia fund Indigenous art centres for the purpose of commercial enterprise. Colin Mercer (1997: 77) refers to art centres as "production houses" that distribute and collect art in the same way as wholesalers and retailers. Art centres have mixed objectives because according to Altman (2005: 1) they are: "critical mediating institutions, community-controlled art centres that are not white institutions, but are both intercultural and hybrid, that have been born of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal processes". In the last few years, Altman has taken this idea further theorizing a model of economic practice in Indigenous communities known as the hybrid economy. This model recognises the: "existence of and interdependencies between diverse and distinctive kinds of economic activity undertaken by Indigenous people in remote and regional Australia" (Russell, 2011: 1; Coleman, 2009: 18). Based on Altman's model of hybridity, Susie Russell (2011: 2) argues that community-controlled art centres are a mix of culture (customary), commerce (market), state (subsidies), Indigenous and non-Indigenous input, local and global components. Altman (2005) attributes much of the success of Indigenous art to art centres, which collect, document and market art. This model suggests that the development of art through Indigenous art centres, which are incorporated organisations with artists as members, is a positive departure from the mission-based and earlier Queensland government-based institutions that were overly

controlling. Indigenous art centres are a successful instance of the culturally appropriate use of particular Indigenous expertise for economic development. Since the *Backing Indigenous Art* programme was announced in 2007, support for art centres and artists has become more sophisticated because of institutional strengthening based on more stable core support (Altman, 2005: 9). With more stable resourcing and the physical infrastructure of art centres improved, many are also cultural centres where cultural activities take place. More opportunities arise in these art centres because of the stability to develop 'fine art' and the enabling of the agency of the artists. If anything, hybridity can be considered to be part of the repertoire of strategies for Indigenous cultural survival and revival (Altman, 2005; Morphy, 2008; Myers, 2007). According to Fran Edmonds (2007: 4): "This hybridity thinking provides a lens through which to view the progressions and adaptations that Indigenous people have made in their art practices and in the staging of art exhibitions, as they intersect with developing ideas about their own identity and their place in the world".

A major problem for art coordinators is that state government agencies appear to be preoccupied with arts centres becoming self-sufficient. Anecdotal evidence suggests that 2015 looms as a possible deadline for the withdrawal or decrease in funding because art centres are meant to be self-sustaining by that time. There is no greater political issue causing friction between the arts coordinators and the state government agencies today because the funding agencies have placed material development higher than cultural and artistic sustainability. A key issue is to understand what sustainability would mean or what a viable Indigenous art industry would look like. Sustainability does not

imply that an art centre could exist on commercial revenue sources alone, without government funding (Senate Standing Committee, 2006: 14). Cathy Hunt (2006: 15), in a report to the Queensland government argued precisely this case, saying that, “[a]ll aspects of the value production chain must be considered from cultural retention through to training, art production, marketing and distribution”, and that it is “crucial to understand the purpose behind the art centres and what they have been established to achieve including community, artist and stakeholder aspiration”. This is to say that, “production of a regular and high-quality supply of fine artwork for the market may be only one motivating factor behind the work of an art centre” (Hunt, 2006: 15). Robbi Neal (Lockhart River) says:

One of the biggest issues is the pressure from funding bodies for art centres to become self-sustaining. This means that art centres are placed in the position of not being able to take risks on new emerging talent. Sending work to galleries is expensive and if you are not sure how that work will be received it is a financial risk when funding is limited and you have pressure to become self-sustaining. This is difficult because it will mean that new artists will not get to sell their work because all our time will be spent on networking avenues to sell the well-known artists. And, there will be no time left over to encourage new talent. (Neal, 2010)

A high level of funding does not necessarily lead to better performance or more artists, production quality or sales. Nor are art centres automatically sustainable if the income depends on one or two artists. As Robbie Neal’s comments above indicate, art coordinators understand the importance of training emerging artists, although for galleries they represent a far higher financial risk. Guy Allain of Aurukun says:

It would be good if political will was a little more concerned with

building the ground where artworks are produced, encouraged, maintained and developed where it happens. There is a lot of attention put on the marketing, art events and public cultural institutions: the public side of the art business. This is good, but it would also be good to balance the support on the other side to ensure production capability. (Allain, 2010)

Arts coordinators want funding support from government agencies to continue for two reasons, firstly because art centres are community owned and benefit all the citizens; and, secondly, art centres are places to encourage emerging artists to gain skills. In sharp contrast to the arts coordinators' views, Ashleigh Wilson (2011: 28) suggests that there are too many artists working through community art centres and concentration on fewer artists would be more effective. Wilson's article contradicts the views of arts coordinators because nurturing new and emerging artists is important for the growth of the industry. Without them the industry will only support established artists and that pool will slowly become smaller, and artworks will become more expensive. In turn, potential new or inexperienced buyers are less likely to be exposed to the affordable end of the market. According to Barbara Glowczewski:

Community economics is not considered to be cost-effective. This is despite the fact that Aboriginal art (produced in the communities) has become a symbol of Australian identity and is exhibited overseas to foster tourism and other industries: some Aboriginal works of art have fetched astronomical prices on the contemporary international art market. (Glowczewski, 2011: 7)

Glowczewski's comments suggest the integral role of art centres in cultural export practices. The challenge for the Queensland government is to recognise that the ongoing viability of the art centres is not simply dependent on the primacy of commercial practices over cultural and community interests. Arts

coordinators understand that keeping the doors of the art centres open requires a variety of creative and strategic approaches to obtain sufficient funding from small grants and art competitions to supplement finances and raise the profile of artists, which in turn assists with sales. It is a constant battle for financial survival.

Art centres have no analogue in the mainstream arts industry; they have been structured in such a way as to meet the particular needs of Indigenous artists and their communities. In response to this artists have a “[d]eeply embedded sense of community ownership, pride and partnership at the core of the art centre” (Finnane, 2011: 70). The current boundaries of funding are limited and therefore Indigenous people in conjunction with the non-Indigenous arts sector must drive any changes. To close the art centres or to severely restrict the number of artists risks causing more people to seek welfare, and a return to past conditions. Yet the situation requires careful analysis as, for instance, Indigenous people may have a different understanding of what constitutes ‘economic development’, or whether it is even a desirable goal. Peter Sutton (2009), for instance, has pointed out that certain Indigenous values and practices may actually inhibit the kinds of social and economic changes, which are arguably required to address disadvantage.

Dialogue, Desire and Intercultural Competency: Relationship Building

The next two questions sought to address the kind of dialogue engaged in by arts coordinators to secure their roles in the communities, and in acting as mediators or gatekeepers between the artists and gallerists. In the responses,

themes emerged regarding the level and demand of commitment to the variety of tasks involved in the running of an art centre, and the importance of relationship building between the parties. The first question, **‘what dialogue takes place between the arts coordinator and the artist?’** elicited reflections upon both of these themes. It is clear that the goal for arts coordinators is to establish long-term partnerships with the artists that result in healthy, sustainable and caring professional and personal relationships that will ultimately enable the production of quality art. The relationships between arts coordinators and artists begin with the appointment by the Indigenous executive board of the art centre, which leads to taking on the formal role of an arts coordinator, and also taking on a whole new way of life. According to Troy Dennis (Hopevale):

It’s a very special thing to be selected by Indigenous Elders and Indigenous communities to work as a non-Indigenous person trusted to be in charge of their arts and cultural program. It is a responsibility that I don’t take lightly but it can put a lot of weight on your shoulders as I constantly have requests to support many different cultural issues or arts support. I also have a massive amount of reporting and funding obligations. (Dennis, 2010)

Intercultural exchange between the arts coordinators, the artists and the executive board has to be carefully nurtured through one-on-one individual exchanges that reflect motivation and personal commitment to the broader community. Arts coordinators act as arbitrators, advocates, friends, mentors and artistic advisors all rolled into one. They must accommodate the requests of the artists, the community members, cultural issues and the demands of the gallerists. Their work also involves capacity building in communities that are disadvantaged. It is not just about developing art skills, new buildings, new knowledge and western resources, it is also about using intercultural processes

to enable artists and the arts coordinators to work toward their own objectives, to manage their own initiatives, and to be effective advocates of social change and economic development. Below, I have collated several comments by the arts coordinators to explain how they see their roles on a daily basis.

Multiple roles – manager, instructor, critic, curator, advisor, stretcher-maker documentation, liaison with galleries, cook, cleaner, excursion leader, administrator, driver, confessor, receptionist, tourist guide, facilitator and so on. (Keenan, 2010)

I cook a hot lunch everyday in the art centre for the artists. We sit down together for lunch. We discuss, chat, joke and support and trust each other. I would describe the relationship as one of open communication. They know that I want to see them do well and they trust my advice and my commitment to them and their artwork. They are very supportive because of this. (Neal, 2010)

I'm everything. Taxi driver, banker, provider of art materials, organiser of exhibitions, motivator to take-up opportunities, take care of any money business for people at the art centre, social worker, mental health worker, fine art educator, grant seeker and applicant, even bureaucrat. (Dennis, 2010)

Basically I have always seen my role as providing the right environment for artists to produce their artwork. This includes things such as providing breakfast and lunch, pre-stretched and primed canvas or linen, picking-up artists each morning and dropping them home at the end of the day by bus, emphasizing that money is not the focus. (Evans, 2011)

All of these comments indicate that working in an art centre is not an average job. It involves long hours, a total lifestyle change, relatively poor pay and conditions and sometimes unrealistic expectations from the artists and their families, the art workers and the executive council/board of directors. In a nutshell, Robbi Neal comments:

Arts coordinators are underpaid when compared to other employees within the community, are undervalued and work extremely long hours without support structures. Base pay for a government employee in this

community is around \$80,000 plus a house and six weeks holiday. However, arts coordinators earn nothing like that. (Neal, 2010)

Arts coordinators have to be everything from taxi driver to art expert to cook; then there are the distinctive pressures and stresses associated with community living. The arts coordinator habitus is subject to ongoing change because of the new knowledge, life experiences and information for which they are responsible. As Bourdieu points out, a general habitus is a system of dispositions and ways of thinking about acting in the world that is constituted early in life, whereas a specific habitus is acquired later through education, training and discipline within particular organisations. With this in mind, I observed (in the previous chapter) that the artist habitus is formed by their Indigenous history and then by new knowledge learned through western social structures such as education, art skills, the art centre, gallery exhibitions, socialisation outside of the community and art market commercialism. The art coordinator habitus is formed from their western background that governs how they act, but the genesis of new Indigenous knowledge of living and working in a community reflects a new process of socialisation, which in turn produces their actions and habitus within the community, in the light of understanding of the cultural values placed on art, the art centre and community activities. To become socially and culturally embedded in the community requires good intercultural communication skills, in addition to the expertise to foster art production and endow artists with knowledge to pursue careers, knowledge of their rights and sense of artist identity, not to mention the financial consequences of their earnings, such as taxation, banking and budgeting. The artists take the advice of arts coordinators seriously and in turn the artists want to engage in dialogue and collaboration to

ensure artworks reach their target market. Achieving common goals, and agreement on price, style, format, theme and deadlines are part of an agreed plan. Conflict could easily occur because artists may disagree on any number of these points, so no matter how experienced the arts coordinator might be in the art network, without highly developed communication skills and intercultural competencies the arts coordinator may struggle to keep peace.

In theoretical terms intercultural competence should be linked with identity; the competent communicator is the person who can affirm others' avowed identities (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Other notions of intercultural competence focus on the communicator's goal to convey a sense of communication appropriateness and effectiveness in diverse cultural contexts (Bennett, 2003). Those arts coordinators that stay for some years in a community may obtain proficiency in the host language, which is invaluable for intercultural competence. But it is not enough to know the grammar and vocabulary of that language; the competent communicator will also understand language pragmatics such as how to use politeness strategies in making requests or how to avoid giving out too much information (Gass and Neu, 1996). Equally, competent communicators are sensitive to nonverbal communication patterns in other cultures (Gass and Neu, 1996). In addition to avoiding insults and gaffes by using gestures that may mean very different things in the adopted culture as opposed to one's home culture, competent communicators understand how to use (or avoid) touch, proximity in physical space, and paralinguistic sounds to convey their intended meaning (Gass and Neu, 1996). Traits that make for competent intercultural communicators include flexibility and the ability to

tolerate high levels of uncertainty, reflectiveness, open-mindedness, sensitivity, adaptability and the ability to engage in divergent and systems-level thinking (Ting-Toomey, 1999). The foundation of intercultural communication competence is the capacity to avoid ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is the inclination to view the values of one's own group as natural and correct, and all others as aberrant. In practical terms, arts coordinators learn to subordinate their ethnocentric reactions in order to better understand others on their own terms. Arts coordinators perhaps have the hardest job in the art network because they act as mediators between the key stakeholders, the artists and the gallerists and have to please everyone involved. According to Robbi Neal (Lockhart River):

It is an exhaustive job, with a high-burn out rate, no kudos or recognition – in fact the opposite. We spend more time defending our role to people who accuse us of only being here for the money. What money? (Neal, 2010)

Relationship building is a key strategy of the most committed kind, or as Guy Allain (2010) explains: "Relationships are not always easy, they need to be long-term with mutual understanding". Repeatedly art coordinators described themselves as friends and mentors first: "My relationship with the artists is to be a friend, always tell the truth and most of all listen" (Dennis, 2010); "My relationship with the artists is one of friend, facilitator, mentor and business manager" (Keenan, 2010). Brett Evans says:

The relationship with the artists is the most important thing, it needs to grow and build over time with trust and respect. The bottom line is that I'm their agent. So to me it's a sacred sort of relationship. I give them all I have. I work in their best interest and make all decisions to do the best for them. I love my artists and I

love our art centre and when I'm away from the community for the day, it's another world. (Evans, 2011)

The job itself appears to be a constant juggling act of fund seeking, community issues, art advice and networking with galleries. On the one hand, the arts coordinator must attain professional working relationships, while on the other hand, friendships form. On the professional side of the relationship the arts coordinator has to have artworks of the highest quality ready for exhibition in a timely manner, and be attuned to what the market wants. These goals are addressed through teamwork, as everyone that works in the centre is involved. The professional relationship between the artist and the arts coordinator is also prone to personal idiosyncrasies, personality traits and experiences that can be characterised as interpersonal as much as intercultural because these concern individuals that share the intimacy of neighbourhood as they live next-door or a few houses away and see each other during the art centre hours and also out of hours. According to Robbi Neal (2010), "We do a lot of things outside of the art centre. We go fishing, have meals together and watch movies. It can be difficult on my time because I am expected to be available 24/7". This is about living with people you work with, and overcoming tension and creating strong bonds of loyalty, respect and trust. The taut scope of these relationships is suggested by the comments of artist, Derek Rosendale (2010): "In the art centre, the arts coordinator advises us about how to make our art more accessible to the public because in the end it is about making a sale. When arts coordinators leave the community it is like losing a family member".

The role of arts coordinator could be one of power and privilege in the wrong hands. My discussions with Cleary (2010, 2011) revealed that there had been no reports of ill treatment or undue influence by arts coordinators towards artists in the region. It was suggested that the executive board of the community art centre would act swiftly to remove an arts coordinator from their position should any form of ill treatment be reported. Instead, I found that the coordinators I spoke with take on an advocacy and protector role towards the artists. Although the arts coordinators I interviewed were committed to working for the advancement of the art centre and the artists, anecdotal evidence suggests that their positions are precarious. They do not enjoy the normal job security available to public servants that work in the community since they were employed outside of the formal structures of government and the salary is lower. The hours are long and the commitment to 'being all things to all people' takes its toll. The word 'burn-out' was mentioned several times throughout the course of our formal and informal conversations.

Altman (2005) argued that the arts coordinator must remain neutral and unbiased in working with artists from kin-based societies, because there will be pressure to develop preferential relationships, most likely from Elders of the community or an Indigenous arts board member. For example, if an Elder insists that a particular artist be included in a forthcoming exhibition even though their artworks are not to the standard required, saying 'No' is difficult as a member of a community where collectivism is fundamental to the culture. Arts coordinators employ other strategies to overcome such scenarios. One such strategy is to

include other people such as arts workers and senior artists in the selection process of artworks for up-coming exhibitions, for example:

In this art centre, after a painting is complete, I and the artist and often the other artists will hang-up a finished work and we will all look at it for a long-time. Then as a learning tool, we discuss what is working really well in the painting, how the paint is applied and what that will mean to the depth, light darkness and composition. (Neal, 2010)

This strategy works by spreading the concern for artworks that are deemed 'not ready' for viewing by a public audience, so the arts coordinator cannot be blamed as the sole decision maker, and instead it is a collective decision. Sending away artworks that are not deemed 'ready' potentially will reflect negatively on the arts coordinator, the art centre and the artist. However, not all communities discuss the technical skills of the artists in the same way as the Lockhart River Art Centre (above) as most arts coordinators 'go it alone' to comment on whether an artwork is ready for an exhibition. Art coordinators are expected to make comment and give advice and this is why the community employs them. At no time (refer to Chapter Five) did any of the artists say that advice from the arts coordinator was not needed. "I always discuss what I want to produce with the arts coordinator because when an exhibition is coming up you need to have work 'fit' with others. If it is a solo exhibition then the artworks must 'fit' together" (Emily Ngarnal Evans, (2011)).

Another strategy is for arts coordinators to ensure that all decision-making is based on free and fully informed agreements and in this way the artists endorse the role of arts coordinators to 'look after' them. The arts coordinators spoke of the artists as people they work 'with', not people that

work 'for' them. They seemed very positive about their work and relationships with the artists and commented on how listening, confidence building, trust, supportive guidance, compliments, respect, sharing and hard work are mutual. Valerie Keenan (2010) says: "Artists do want to please me as the coordinator...it is about confidence building, asking artists to build artistic boundaries". Troy Dennis (2010) notes: "A great success is seeing artists take on some large works. It took some encouragement, however, some large works have attracted some high prices and that has encouraged more artists to produce more large works". Robbi Neal (2010) describes her relationship with the artists as one of: "Open communication. They know that I want to see them do well and they trust my advice and my commitment to them and their artworks. They are very supportive because of this".

Friction will surface in art centres sometimes in forms of social drama, most likely over small matters such as envy of someone's success or not having an artwork accepted for an upcoming exhibition and so on. Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale) told me that when she sold her 'dilly-bag' print series to a major curator some artists were jealous of her modest success and made some cruel remarks. As art centres are structured along western conventions that rely on adherence to the 'rules of the game', this means that when artists do not comply they might be warned and possibly disciplined. The artist will be taken aside by the arts coordinator and told that their attitude is not acceptable and if the behaviour continues the artist may be given a 'time-out' from the art centre. When artists are working they gossip, eat biscuits, drink tea and treat the art centre as a place to work but also as a social venue, so for an artist to be excluded

means missing these social aspects. After one or two days the arts coordinator may invite the artist to return. However, some senior artists commented that they take control of situations by asking 'unruly' people to leave the art centre and in this way they support the arts coordinators and share in the responsibility for discipline. No one person can then be blamed for the actions taken. But it is not enough to think in terms that the senior artists will support the arts coordinator; he or she must also have certain strategies and intercultural competencies to overcome problems that arise.

Part of the learning process (new habitus) for arts coordinators is to understand how poor living conditions, poor health, poor education, isolation, lack of meaningful work, loss of traditional roles, and the impact of western culture imposes limitation on the ability of residents to engage in art development activities. This is where arts coordinators become social workers of a kind and use the strategy of building trust through personal relationships and by being honest and keeping promises. I observed that artists wanted to please the arts coordinators and sought to create high quality artworks every time, which in reality is not possible. Artists are expected to produce art that is saleable (commercial), which means that they place much of the pressure on themselves to continually produce high quality art. This prompted a further question, **'do artists produce what they want?'** The coordinators responded to this question mainly in the positive, with some qualifications. Guy Allain (2010) said: "Yes, but within boundaries. Artworks have to conform to a market and the most desirable pieces are quite abstract and very modern. Artists know this and work accordingly". Allain commented further:

The artists who work here are instinctive about shape and colour – it is just a natural development of the culture. The artists are always trying new things. I leave the artists to do whatever they want. If something has sold well, the artists don't copy the artwork but create a style within the framework of what has sold. (Allain, 2010)

Brett Evans's opinion reflected a variation on Allain's view (above):

Yes, but they might not sell any paintings. If you let the artists produce what they want to, this can have a very bad effect on them when they don't sell anything. They will probably walk (away from producing art). Do you intervene and try and help them get their artwork to a point where they sell it? The art centre will go broke if all your artists don't sell so it's not a situation you can allow for too long. We work on a commission basis so if artwork sells you get paid if it doesn't sell the art centre loses money, the cost of materials etc. I'm lucky that I have a couple of very successful artists who can 'carry' the others but it's not a good situation so all artists need to improve and refine what they want to paint. (Evans, 2011)

Evans's phrasing, "If you let the artists..." may seem superior, but as Evans is not an artist himself, he is not the one that advises on what is 'ready'. Instead he employs an experienced art consultant that receives photographed artwork via email (she lives in Cairns) so she can make suggestions about content, colour and commercial viability. I suggest that it is easier for this art consultant as she is detached from the art centre and the artists and as a result can be more critical of the artworks. Mornington Island has used this consultant for five years and in that time the centre has grown to be among the most successful in the region, which suggests that this practice is effective and that artists respect and trust the advice given. Valerie Keenan's (2010) comments in response to the question, 'do artists produce what they want?' were in a similar vein but she spoke of being more directorial in her communication with artists. She said: "Within reason, if we have too many bowls to sell we tell them and they go on to

something else". Valerie is the person who tells artists to "stop" making a particular item and go to something else. This bespeaks the talent of artists that they can switch genres and media and the relationship with Valerie does not suffer, but strengthens their mutual respect. Robbi Neal's (2010) perspective on this question was less directorial as she fosters the view of art as a career path for the artists:

All artists are on a journey and their art develops and changes at an intuitive level. If artists understand about painting in a technical sense they will learn, develop and mature and their art will keep on evolving. Too often Indigenous artists have been taught tricks rather than to really understand paint as a medium and I think this has short-changed them leaving them vulnerable to the fickleness of the industry. Learning to understand paint or whatever medium is being used is essential for growth. I give a 'fresh eye' as to whether the artwork is working and give constructive feedback. The artists want this, I as an artist need feedback for my work as all artists do. You can't see the work when you are in the middle of it. (Neal, 2010)

It takes a long time for most artists to learn and develop their skills and the arts coordinators are in many ways responsible for the artists' success. When an artist such as Evelyn McGreen comments that she is now confident in what she does, it reflects on both the agency of the artist and the skill of the arts coordinator. Artists have to be passionate about their art making, but at the same time must be mindful of what will sell commercially and arts coordinators can do no more than advise. Trust and mutual respect are vital in this enterprise. Artists appreciate the coordinators' knowledge and expertise in commercial matters while the arts coordinators trust and respect the artists to maintain cultural knowledge and understand commercial imperatives. The artist, Harry Bowen's comments sum up this situation: "I do whatever I want to, I

always think in terms of whether something will sell. After all this is not ceremonial art, this is artwork to sell commercially” (2010).

Obstacles and Exploitation: A Different View

I asked both artists and arts coordinators the question, ‘**what are the obstacles inhibiting artworks from reaching an art market?**’ I found agreement on some of the issues that inhibit the creative side of art making as well as the obstacles to artworks reaching their destination. These obstacles are distance to galleries, the poor payment system by galleries and CIAF, a lack of telecommunications, poor weather conditions, the cost of freighting artworks to galleries in major cities, a lack of funds to send people on courses and to exhibitions. Robbi Neal (2010) said, “Galleries are notorious slow payers and really have very little understanding of the conditions the art centre and artists are working under”. This issue was reiterated by several of the artists (Arone Meeks, Zane Saunders, Daphne De Jersey) as reasons for being unhappy with galleries and CIAF that they do not pay in a timely manner. As the artists commented, they have to pay their bills just like everyone else. The slow payment system is responsible for more friction in art centres than perhaps anything else, and this has resulted in a perception by some artists that arts coordinators are keeping or stealing their money. Robbi Neal (Lockhart River) commented:

Once an artwork is sold, the artist expects the money immediately, which is not possible. The staff is under pressure by the artist or their relatives to pay the artist, even though the Centre has not received the money for a sale from the gallery. The staff is often accused of stealing the money by the artist and relatives of the artist

even though we have a close relationship with the artist. (Neal, 2010)

Aside from process issues of this kind, there are hazards such as arts coordinators becoming unwittingly involved in unforeseen situations such as negotiating in good faith with a gallery that either fails financially, or does not remit the monies owed on sold artworks or underpays the artists concerned. Circumstances such as these can damage the trust relationship between artists and coordinators, and it might fall to the coordinator to explain the loss of earnings to the artists and the executive board, and the arts coordinator may have to accept the blame.

Coordinators alluded to some other challenges specific to their role such as the ongoing heavy load of reporting and pursuit of funding from government institutions. They also expressed frustration with expectations of gallerists for artists to attend exhibition openings when it is not financially possible for the art centre; and there was mention of potential creative differences between arts coordinators and gallerists regarding exhibitions. Another obstacle about which arts coordinators spoke candidly while artists were silent concerned the issue of 'demand sharing'. I couched this question to artists in terms of: "so do you gift any of the money to your family when you make a sale?" This was not something that the artists I interviewed appeared comfortable discussing, and I moved on to the next question. Although this issue is seen as a problem from the western viewpoint I did find anecdotal evidence to suggest that some artists are not entirely happy with sharing their money. A former arts coordinator told me that

a famous artist from Far North Queensland had moved from her community to Cairns because of the constant requests for money from family and friends.

The phrase 'demand sharing' was coined by Nicolas Peterson (1993: 864) and elaborated by Gaynor MacDonald (2000: 89) to explain the expression as a "[p]articular characteristic of Aboriginal relations: it is very common for people to ask or demand that others 'share' with them" while Peterson and Taylor (2003: 105) explained this further with the term used as part of the 'moral economy'. All agree that giving is in response to direct verbal and/or nonverbal demands for goods, money, obligations and favours. MacDonald (2000: 87) says that, "the habitus of demand sharing is a deeply sedimented disposition". In Far North Queensland's Indigenous communities most people are related and have lived all their lives in the one location, suggesting that there is scarcely a person they do not know or have had at least some interaction and some kind of "social debt" (Peterson, 1993: 864). Peterson suggests that instead of keeping a 'mental ledger of social debts' it is far easier to respond to demands as they are made. Jeremy Beckett (1958: 187) says, it is "[d]ifficult to contract out of the system (of sharing)". With regard to 'sharing' in the Wiradjuri communities of central New South Wales, Gaynor MacDonald (2000: 88) observed that "[p]eople there have maintained a distinctive system of sharing despite not having lived independently by hunting and gathering for at least a century". Food is the major source of demand sharing (which cannot be refused), but as Indigenous people have moved into the cash economy, demands are more likely to be about money or goods. Demand sharing is intrinsic to social life in communities as a cultural and economic construct, in particular with the extended family, "[b]ut it

is also often cited as a liability when it comes to individuals and families seeking to improve their personal social and economic situation, since it makes the kind of accumulation that is fundamental to material well being in the contemporary Australian economy difficult” (MacDonald, 2000: 106). According to Peterson demand sharing has at least four advantages:

Difficult decisions are avoided, the onus is placed on others, discrepancies in the evaluation of relationships are not laid bare, and an excellent excuse is provided for not meeting some obligations with the context of behaving generously. Further, it fully recognises the inherent difficulty in delayed reciprocity; time alters the value of objects and the perception of relationships, compounding the difficulties of calculating the correct returns. (Petersen, 1993: 864)

Although the artists were reluctant to discuss this topic the arts coordinators, on the other hand, were willing to explain their perspective on demand sharing. The arts coordinators suggest that this ‘sharing’ characterises the old ways of being and is harmful because there is every chance that the artist’s funds will be completely eroded. But the sharing is not constrained to those only in communities. Beverly Knight (see Chapter Four) as a family member of both Mornington Island and Lockhart River communities is expected to comply with requests as a member of an extended family or potentially the fragile system could fail for Knight and the artists. It should be noted that the system is not a form of exchange or reciprocity and one does not necessarily give back equal value of what one has received, if at all. It is difficult for non-Indigenous people to understand this system because the western concept of individualism far outweighs any notion of collectivism that applies in Indigenous communities. When an artwork is sold, members of the artist’s family (possibly others as well)

will demand a share in the profit, which will be immediately given, making the accumulation of funds difficult for the artist. I understand that it is possible for artists to negotiate-down the demands by saying something like, “I have to pay my electricity bill”, which goes some way to keeping a little money. Robbi Neal (Lockhart River) summed up this situation:

The relatives of artists and the artists themselves often request that the art centre purchase them air tickets, accommodation, cars, whitegoods etc and also give them money from the art centre’s funding. It isn’t appropriate for the art centre which is an incorporated business and has to acquit its funding. As an outsider I can say no, whereas if a local person were in this position they would be obligated to give art centre resources to their family members if they are requested to do so. (Neal, 2010)

Related to this obstacle of demand sharing are the social problems that exist in communities and how these issues impact on artists. Noel Pearson (2007: 1) said that community members in Far North Queensland face social trauma on a daily basis such as substance abuse, domestic violence, poor health and vandalism, the dysfunctional nature of some local governing bodies (Community Councils), and the general lack of infrastructure for essential services, including banking facilities. None of these issues can be discounted or made light of because they all impact, if indirectly, on an artist’s performance or capacity to create art. Even if an artist is not involved in any of these social problems there is every chance that they are affected and may bring the issues into the art centre. Therefore, intercultural exchange does not only concern how relationships are formed in the art centre, it extends to the community members as well because the stress caused by such matters has ramifications for all. There are many things that can go wrong in a community and the responsibility

for any shortcoming in the art quality or getting the art to market falls ultimately on the arts coordinator.

Often obstacles discussed by arts coordinators included potential exploitation and how the arts coordinators as gatekeepers go to great lengths to shield the artists from outside influences. Exploitation represents a rupture between the social and economic systems because, according to Bourdieu (1992), those who place economic profit above cultural or symbolic status will find their cultural standing slip. Troy Dennis (2010) said, “I will make a big issue of any form of exploitation, as my network is very strong (particularly in government bodies) and this would be dealt with very quickly”. Valerie Keenan (2010) observed that, “[w]e go to great lengths to protect the artists from outside influences because if items are sold cheaply for quick money it will affect the market and their reputation”. Robbi Neal (2010) also spoke of ‘selling on the side’:

Unfortunately art is sold on the side to tourists when money is needed, and the worst buying offenders are government employees. These transactions can be with well-known artists. The artists often don’t understand the commercial value of their work and one well-known artist swaps his work for slabs of beer. This ends up permanently devaluing the work and means it can’t be sent to galleries. (Neal, 2010)

The artists I spoke with were largely silent on this issue, perhaps because it reflects badly on them, even though not all artists are involved in ‘selling on the side’ in communities. Artists that sell their art ‘on-the-side’ know this practice potentially harms their reputations but persist because the financial returns from their art through normal channels are relatively small. If artists are making

items at home and selling them to friends, tourist shops or visitors to the community, then this is difficult to control. The items will not have provenance (art centre documentation) and possibly no signature and will therefore be of little monetary value.

The Question of identity and Survival

I asked the arts coordinators, **‘should artists be identified as Indigenous artists or artists?’** The question received a mixed a response with three saying ‘artist’ (Robbi Neal, Lockhart River, Brett Evans, Mornington Island and Guy Allain, Aurukun); while Troy Dennis said ‘Indigenous artist’, and Valerie Keenan (Girringun) did not have an opinion on the matter. According to Brett Evans (Mornington Island): “I think you are either an artist or not an artist”. Guy Allain expanded:

They should be artists. We were part of a major contemporary fine art fair in Paris recently. This event (which has no connotation of the Indigenous aspect) reaffirms the excellence of the artists at an international level regardless of background. (Allain, 2010)

Troy Dennis, on the other hand observed:

Indigenous is good as I look at Australian Indigenous Art as our national treasure, it’s important for Indigenous people to be proud, tell their story and understand they have one of the greatest, complex cultures on earth. It is just taking non-Indigenous Australians much longer to recognise how important it is. (Dennis, 2010)

Robbi Neal (2010) said: “I tend to think art should be judged as to how it stands up as art regardless of the colour of the skin of the person that painted it”. In Chapter Five, the artists’ responses to this question comprised three who said

'artists' one said, 'Aboriginal artist'; four said 'Indigenous artists', and two who opted for 'both'. The diversity of these comments demonstrates that attitudes are changing. My view is that the artwork is 'contemporary' although not in the sense that art is positioned against or in relation to modernism, but in the temporal sense of 'current', as the art of today. This art is defined in relation to the past but has undergone rapid changes in terms of media and expression. None of these changes could have been possible without a long history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous relationships, and friendships with all manner of intermediaries operating in the art network, and there seems no reason to categorise artists as Indigenous or Aboriginal unless they wish to do so.

A crucial factor in the success of art centres has been the employment of arts coordinators from outside of the communities. Showing respect for local customs, behaviour patterns and not criticising or making light of Indigenous culture are evidence of basic competencies in an arts coordinator. Local knowledge and an ability to interact with community members about historical and contemporary subjects of local interest are important. Skills in nurturing positive feelings of wellbeing that can be associated with a positive self-concept in community members, and engaging in activities of importance to the community are all valuable intercultural competencies required by art coordinators. An ability to make local friends to support the new lifestyle is as much an asset to an art centre coordinator as to a newcomer in any community. Finally, learning the nonverbal communication system of the local culture and knowing how to use that system to show respect, acceptance and understanding are critical skills. In short, the skills of an art centre coordinator do not simply

run to administering an art practice during office hours but extend to complex social skills in taking care of people and showing empathy and concern for their wellbeing while trusting that their opinions on art matters are valued.

Art coordinators are intercultural mediators between the artists and the various interests in the art network. They come to these roles with varied expertise in marketing, commerce and the fine arts market. Most of all they nurture and encourage emerging artists, while also mentoring established artists whose prime interest and speciality is producing art. It is the responsibility of the arts coordinator to ask the artists to strive for aesthetic excellence as part of the commercial demand placed on them, while at the same time there must be a balance of cultural activities to enable the involvement of all community members in the art centre. Arts coordinators must have the ability to be accurate and honest in their dealings with artists, the Indigenous art centre board members and gallerists. A successful art centre with productive artists will only happen if there is a competent arts coordinator. Overall, the interviews with the arts coordinators revealed that they are people who communicate interculturally and cope with the unique pressures and stresses associated with remote community living. The future of art centres depends on future funding and the continued involvement of coordinators. If funding is cut in the future (perhaps 2015), only the self-sustaining centres will survive, while smaller community art centres that have not been deemed 'successful' economically may suffer. Emerging artists will have a much harder time, and the pool of established artists will gradually dwindle. CIAF will continue, albeit in a different name and format because of its compatibility with the region's tourism

profile that supplements and expands an economic boost to Cairns as a cultural hub.

In the next chapter I consider how the potential buying audience for Indigenous art plays a significant role in the process of intercultural exchange, even though there is every chance that artists and buyers never meet. If an artist and buyer meet at a gallery exhibition or at CIAF they will discuss art, but as my research so far has revealed buyers appear to be more concerned with aspects of the artist's welfare and life in their community. This may make the buyer far more sensitive to the agency of the individual artist, and how they relate to the culture and norms around them. Not only are the artists able to spread their culture further afield through exhibitions but they are also asking the audience to listen to a message expressed through the artwork that affirms Indigenous values, whether they identify specifically as 'Indigenous' artists or as 'artists'. Even if they never meet, the cultural object, the art will connect them. I will examine the themes that drive buyers to buy Indigenous art through Bourdieu's theory of taste, which will assist in unravelling some of the reasons for the popularity of the art.

Chapter Seven

Flipping the Frame: Buyers and Buying Indigenous Art

On the surface, Indigenous art is produced primarily for sale, and the model of the commodity chain concludes at the point of sale, and therefore provides no understanding as to why Indigenous art is purchased, or the character of the negotiations involved. It would seem that members of Indigenous cultures almost exclusively sell Indigenous art to members of non-Indigenous cultures, who putatively buy out of admiration for the art. However, not only does such a view evaluate the work in economic terms alone, my exposure to the art network suggests that the reasons for buying Indigenous art are not only because the buyers admire the works and wish to possess same. Although this is an important factor, there are others reasons for purchase. In this chapter, therefore, through data and discourse analysis, anecdote and some speculation, I consider buying practices as a further stage of intercultural exchange.

My research was conducted with twenty-six participants, including the ten artists, the five arts coordinators as well as six gallery staff members – all represented in some way in the previous chapters – and five actual buyers of Indigenous artworks. The methodology involved a modified version of discourse analysis (Gee, 2005). I transcribed conversations and texts from the interviews with the participants and then analysed the content thematically. The thematic analysis of these texts indicated a degree of consistency in the reasons put forward for interest in purchasing Indigenous art, and thus evidence of some prevailing values that are expressed in acts of purchasing. Tables that summarise the research data are in Appendix 1. This analysis therefore expands on the foregoing discussion in the previous chapters, in which artists, arts

coordinators and gallerists indicated that Indigenous artworks are not only valued aesthetically but also as expressions of cultural knowledge and identity as well as representing streams of income in locations where work is otherwise difficult to find. Morphy (2008) recognises that Indigenous art has the power to communicate interculturally with a cultural and creative message and as a result connects the artist and the buyer, even if they never meet. By reframing intercultural exchange in this chapter, the argument persists in the view of Indigenous art as a mediating force between Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures, and in overcoming the social distance between remote and urban societies in contemporary Australia.

The notion of friction also bears in this discussion as the relationships between buyers and artists can be seen as a further stage in the long and complex colonial history of Australia, which is layered with bureaucratic policies that have not resolved many of the problems that plague Indigenous communities today (see Chapter Two). The social policies aimed at Indigenous communities have had varying degrees of effect but art making seems to have been noticeable in the most recent era in generating a voice and a viewpoint for artists, which has helped mainstream society to take notice of Indigenous issues. The intercultural implications are suggested in that artists are finding pathways for personal growth and a degree of economic independence, and in the process non-Indigenous people are finding ways to support artists and their communities simply by buying or taking an interest in their art. The research (in this chapter) also suggests, that some actively seek to contribute to social justice through a form of redress for past wrongs, perhaps a way, to coin a term, to say

sorry. However, while the buyers I researched were Australian, not all Indigenous art is purchased by white Australians, as the trade has been internationalised for many years. Therefore, in approaching these questions in this chapter, I turn again to Bourdieu (1984) and his theory of ‘taste’, which was based on research conducted in French museums in the 1960s and offers a template for considering the buyers of Indigenous art and their reasons, in twenty-first century Australia.

Buyers and Habitus

Bourdieu’s (1984) lasting contribution to studies of consumption and culture is his contention that the cultural value in objects or practices is a function of social power, not of some value inherent to the object or practice itself. He argues that divisions between high and mass culture in the forms of authentic and commoditised art objects are established through the deployment of cultural capital, and that such divisions function more relationally than absolutely (Cameron, 2007: 552-553). His claims resulted from research undertaken in the 1960s, in which Bourdieu began to question the apparent social divisions in the audience engagement in the arts. Through his research in French museums Bourdieu’s (1984) findings revealed that the consumption of the arts was firmly rooted in people’s upbringing, education and social background and the part of society to which they seek to belong. This accounts for Bourdieu’s findings that intellectuals, academics and other cultural specialists “[t]end to prize affordable but arcane avant-garde and oppositional forms of art, while owners of capital may prefer costly but accessible canonical high-culture art” (DiMaggio, 1996: 162). The research also revealed that white-collar

workers accounted for a larger proportion of fine art consumers while blue-collar workers were drawn to mass culture.

The search for objective standards of taste in contemporary aesthetic theory is not so much to understand the universality of aesthetics, but rather to analyse how tastes are shaped by ever-changing social conditions. Bourdieu argues that tastes are socially conditioned (individual habitus) and that the objects of consumer choice reflect a symbolic hierarchy that is determined and maintained by the socially dominant groups (through education and family connections) in order to enforce their distance or distinction from other classes of society. Bourdieu breaks down art into a tiered system of high art (fine art), middlebrow and mass culture (I referred to this as low culture in Chapter Four on CIAF). Bourdieu suggests that those who possess large amounts of economic or cultural capital (or both) are dominant and will seek to impose a hierarchy of taste or preference on those with less capital. According to Michele Ollivier (2008: 120): "Taste is part of the process by which social actors construct meaning about their social world, classifying people, practices and things into categories of unequal value". Douglas and Isherwood (1979: 12) suggest: "Taste serves as an identity and status marker, being used simultaneously as fences or bridges in processes of exclusion and inclusion". In the Indigenous art world intermediaries such as gallery curators, art critics, art journalists, arts coordinators and auction house representatives influence and develop taste standards and aesthetic criteria for valuing and appraising artists' works. All artists are ultimately influenced by this long list of intermediaries.

Within the consumption field, social classes, or what Bourdieu calls 'classes on paper' are used to explain that they are not real groups because they lack a strong group identity and are not mobilised for action in the struggle over economic and cultural capital. Classes on paper are made up of individuals who happen to occupy similar positions, or in other words possess similar amounts and types of capital (Bourdieu, 1991: 231). Class is a theoretical construction that characterises people with similar social conditioning and similar material conditions of life. Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992: 133) use the words "social conditioning" to refer to habitus as an open set of dispositions of individual actors that are constantly modified or reinforced through experience. While the habitus is sufficiently 'open' to allow for human agency, it is nevertheless the product of social conditioning. The dispositions that constitute a class habitus for example: "are learned in the family, school, and neighbourhood and unavoidably reflect the material conditions and social conditionings that a person experiences as the result of his or her location in capital space" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 133). Individuals from working class backgrounds have every chance of experiencing similar life conditions and have the likelihood of generating similar perceptions, practices and attitudes and therefore one's class of origin is not a structural straight jacket that determines with certainty one's actions. But, on the other hand, there is a certain probability that people exposed to similar life experiences will display similar lifestyles and behaviours. The habitus, then, acts as a flexible explanatory tool that seeks to mediate between the determinism of structure and the openness of individual action.

While Bourdieu's theory of taste has had a major impact in the social sciences, it has also come under intense criticism. Bourdieu has been criticized for postulating the existence of a single, objective space of distinction, in which cultural capital operates as a universally recognised currency of exchange. Bourdieu's model is seen as giving analytical primacy to processes of distinction, which most closely reflect the experience and worldview of the French upper classes during the 1960s. Herbert Gans (1974) developed a rival concept of taste cultures, which are clusters of cultural forms, such as in art, entertainment, architecture, consumer goods, and so on, which embody similar values and aesthetic standards. Gans advocates that all cultures should be considered of equal value and placed on an equal footing, at least from the point of view of social analysis and public policy.

According to Ollivier (2008: 125) there have been disagreements between social scientists as to how in the last decades of the twentieth century there was an erosion of boundaries between taste cultures. The erosion of high, middle and low boundaries parallels a series of social transformations, which have increased the breadth and anonymity of social relations and therefore affect the processes of identity and status as more people come into frequent contact with others in a wide diversity of social situations. The reception of Indigenous art might be seen as a case in point as the production of art in communities leads to contact with visiting buyers to communities, or participation at gallery openings by artists, or in events such as CIAF, and these events also facilitate mobility for Indigenous artists (such as when they avail of medical treatment, or shopping or visiting relatives on trips to Cairns for CIAF).

Through the art network, Cairns-based artists also have a multiplicity of social groupings they can join.

Elites, a word used by Bourdieu to describe wealthy, socially connected French people,¹⁹ cannot so easily form into cohesive and tightly bounded status groups because there are now more diffuse networks of educated and geographically mobile professionals, company managers and people in high paying employment. Individuals from working-class families that are highly paid may choose to buy gallery-worthy artworks but their consumer taste is still produced through social interactions that are learned through education or encouragement from family, teachers or other sources. Peterson and Kern (1996) say that taste-based domination is constantly challenged, as no one group succeeds in imposing the unique legitimacy of its own standards of taste. This leads to the co-existence of multiple spaces of distinction anchored in constantly shifting identities and hierarchies. Without contesting the co-existence of multiple status markers in contemporary societies, it could be argued that the blurring of boundaries between taste cultures signals a transformation rather than the end of taste-based class domination (Peterson and Kern, 1996). The celebration of cultural diversity means that new rules of distinction are emerging. An example of this transformation can be seen in the research conducted by Carmelle Marcoux and Remi Marcoux in Montreal, Canada, in 2005, which sought to identify the factors that motivate people to consume fine art. Based on the findings, they argue that:

¹⁹ Pierre Bourdieu used the word 'upper class' to describe the group of people he considered were interested in visiting museums and art galleries.

Values transmitted by the family constitute the main factor influencing the development of a taste for art. When asked what has most influenced them, arts consumers typically say that their parents encouraged them or they had a positive attitude toward art. In cases where this factor is not present the values transmitted in school are often cited as an influence. For example, an art lover might identify a teacher's enthusiasm as the source of his or her own passion for art. Several studies also identify childhood attendance at performances or visits to museums as an important factor in fostering a taste for the arts. A person who had this type of opportunity as a child or teenager will tend to develop a greater interest in high art than a person who did not. Finally, there is a link between the pursuit of amateur art at school or as a leisure activity. (Marcoux and Marcoux, 2005: 2)

According to this research, family, education and attendance at performances or museums were responsible for the value attached to a taste for art. Marcoux and Marcoux stopped short of endorsing the references of Bourdieu's words such as 'wealthy and powerful' in characterizing people who would be interested in fine art. Instead they used words such as influence, enthusiasm, passion and opportunities. With these comments in mind, I wondered if this is true for the art-buying public of Australia today. Australian society has an increasing percentage of middle-class people due, some argue, to the mining boom (Hamilton et al, 2007: 9), and many of this middle-class are blue-collar workers, if the definition provided by the Australia Institute of the middle-class as those people with disposable incomes higher than the bottom thirty percent and lower than the richest twenty percent (Hamilton et al, 2007: 9), is accepted. Today, in Australia the middle-class is made up of both highly paid white-collar and blue-collar workers, large and small private and public business owners, who are not necessarily highly educated, or originate from families of influence. There is another anomaly with this model, in that individuals who may be great consumers of culture (such as specialized workers in the cultural fields -- arts

coordinators, art teachers, gallery staff) may have lower incomes, even though this group of people would be likely to attend gallery openings, art fairs, and museums. On the other hand, there are people with both very high salaries and very high educational levels who may not appreciate or be interested in art, while there is nothing stopping individuals from working class backgrounds visiting art galleries, museums, reading art magazines or attending art fairs. My point is to suggest that while Bourdieu's theory of consumer taste is useful he tends to overstate the importance of upper-class tastes for members of other taste communities. The Australian socio-demographics are very different from Bourdieu's research of forty years ago that suggested only highly educated and socially connected people were buyers and viewers of fine art. Who buys is difficult to say, but irrespective of the social capital, it requires economic capital to purchase artworks by established artists represented in major galleries. A further view is provided by Fine and Leopold (1993: 23) who argue that collecting institutions and government departments are not the drivers of the public consumption of art, which is, instead driven by art lovers and collectors.

With respect to Indigenous art, this consumption ethic is mediated by the range of spaces in which purchasing occurs. The advent of art fairs (as discussed in Chapter Four) draws not only established audiences but also new audiences and hence the potential for transacting art purchases in the spaces of a public event rather than private galleries. Given the range of exhibits, choosing art from an art fair gives the buyer the opportunity to recognise the difference between fine art and affordable art, which can be part of a learning process. Travelers that buy affordable art directly from community art centres may also

represent a new audience that might not in the past have ventured to galleries or museums. Inexpensive art may be bought on a whim but it would be a rare person that strolled into a major gallery for the first time and bought an expensive artwork. According to Coleman (2009: 4):

The formalist idea that we can go into a gallery and 'appreciate' the works of other cultures is less obvious than it seems. The judgment of taste, many people have argued, is culturally conditioned. Without information, we have only our initial resources, the resources of our personal taste and cultural background. (Coleman, 2009: 4)

There is every likelihood that buyers of fine art start small, for example, by purchasing a souvenir painting on a holiday, or when visiting a remote community for work. In addition, there is a further audience for online sales from art centre websites that attract buyers from across the globe.

In any of these contexts, the buying of fine art is a learned practice filtered through an individual's habitus that is inherited and developed with internalised dispositions to act, think, and feel in certain ways. Habitus for buyers, according to Bourdieu (1992) is acquired through acculturation into certain social groups, through the influence of social class, gender, family, peer group or nationality. Each individual's habitus is a complex mix of these variable aspects of identity. Encounters with artworks and art production like all human-made objects and practices objectify the relationship of an individual with the world. To perceive the concept of habitus in contemporary art is to first conceive of artworks as an extension of the artist, which echo and shadow the spaces of their lived experiences. When an artwork is sold, it is hoped that the buyer may intuitively hold a deep involvement with the content of the artwork and the lived spaces of the artist, while also engaging unconsciously with the complexity of his or her

own individual habitus. In this way, artworks operate as sites for reflection and renewal, reorientation and regeneration.

I asked Beverly Knight (2010) of Alcaston Gallery the question, ‘**who buys the art**’? She said that it was a constant surprise to her that people from all walks of life buy Indigenous art and that the motivation by most buyers is not investment; it is far more about aesthetics. I asked the same question to Neal (2010) and her answer was: “The galleries sell the established artists’ artworks at high prices, while the art centre stalls at CIAF sell the artworks of emerging artists to the mums and dads”²⁰. The buying of any artwork, whether Indigenous or non-Indigenous, is also a fickle business in the same way that music, film and fashion change and adapt in style and genre according to perceived customer interest. With Indigenous art, what will be in demand this year may not be so the next year. Contemporary Indigenous art has been promoted to buyers since 1971, originally to elite institutional buyers (as indicated in Chapter Two). While there is a growing address to more popular demand it cannot be assumed it will continue indefinitely.

Fine Art and Friction: Two Anecdotes of Exchange

The surface meanings of artworks have little bearing on people’s attachment to them; “[w]hat matters is the history of interaction, the associations that people have with the artworks, and the memories they evoke” (Norman, 2004: 46). At the point of sale an artwork is purchased in a financial

²⁰ This refers to couples (not necessarily with children) that may never have purchased fine art before and find themselves at CIAF where more affordable art is available.

transaction as a product, a commodity (see Chapter Three) but this may not reflect the true value of the art from the point of view of the purchaser, and this may not be fully realised until the artwork reaches its final destination of a home or an office. There it becomes an object with cultural meaning, stories, spiritual beliefs, values and ideas of the artist or a community, which are in turn transmitted by the new owner to the audiences in that space. People are attracted to artworks for reasons that might exceed the shared, public meanings of the work, and reflect personal experiences and individual taste that may affect the decision to purchase, even if the particulars are not registered at the point of sale. In some instances, exchange of personal reflections do occur, and in the context of this research, these reflections suggest as Andrew Sayers (2003: 341) argues that “[c]onsumption is not primarily a form of status seeking but a means to develop skills, achievements, commitments and relationships which have value regardless of whether they bring the buyers external rewards”.

Cook and Crang (1996: 149) argue that objects themselves contain a surfeit of possible meanings that should be read less in terms of authenticity or accuracy, but in terms of: “the spatial settings and social itineraries that are established through their usage”. This is illustrated in the following vignette of a conversation I observed at CIAF, 2010 between Harry Bowen (Hope Vale) and two buyers (whom I assumed to be a heterosexual couple aged in their early fifties). The ‘Buyer’ speaker is the female partner of the couple.

Buyer: I like the colours in your painting and want to hang it on the wall in my living room.

Harry: Where do you live?

Buyer: Melbourne, but the painting is going to our house in Port Douglas. What is your community like?

Harry: Hope Vale is a good place to grow-up. I lived elsewhere but decided to come back because all my family is there. You know it is one hour from Cooktown so you could come and see the art making for yourself, sometime.

Buyer: We would like that. Can I please take a photo of us [artist and buyers] in front of the painting?

Harry: I like that a piece of my culture is going home with you.

Earlier (in Chapter Five), I referred to Troy Dennis (Hope Vale), who mentioned that it took some encouragement for artists to undertake larger paintings, but those artists who did were gaining higher priced sales. The item for purchase in the vignette was one of those paintings, and the price tag read \$27, 000. It was an abstract painting with only three or four colours, and resembled a Jackson Pollack-style work as if produced from dribbled paint. The female speaker did ask of her co-buyer (presumably her husband) if he liked the painting and he appeared to be in total agreement. The sale was not concluded at the point relayed in the vignette, as the couple left the Hope Vale art stand with the speaker saying that they had to measure the wall where the painting would hang, to be sure that it fitted, and would call Troy Dennis to let him know. I checked with Dennis the next day and he reported that the painting had been sold to the couple, not at quite the price first advertised but still at a very good price.

In the exchange, the social gulf between the parties is explicit. The buyers here are an interstate couple with two homes, while the artist lives in a community in which employment outside of art (precarious at best) is a struggle. The painting – eventually, presumably – transited from one home (the artist's) to

the other (the buyers'). Harry Bowen makes clear that he regards the painting as an expression, even an artefact of his cultural identity. The implication of his invitation to the couple to visit Hope Vale -- that it is within reach of Port Douglas -- bespeaks the relative sense of distance in Far North Queensland, as Cooktown and Port Douglas are around 500 kilometres apart. But the buyer does not demur. Remembering that Harry Bowen would receive around one-third of the price negotiated, and assuming the price in this transaction was close to the original tag price, Harry Bowen would have to sell at least six large paintings a year to have a reasonable income, and this is most unlikely. While the aesthetic appeal of the painting is complimented in the conversation, it is the exchange of personal details -- the location of home and the cultural implications -- that seems to secure the transaction about the painting between artist and buyer. Indirectly, by purchasing, the buyers also join a conversation about community life and livelihood. While Harry Bowen is well established, this kind of interaction occurs with artists more generally at CIAF, and is evidence that, "[a]rt empowers a lot of artists. It enables artists to experience things they wouldn't otherwise" (Acker, 2008: 2). Nevertheless, the economic gains are limited. I observed at CIAF (2010) and Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne (2010, 2011) that artists asked as many questions as the buyers, suggesting that the intercultural exchange between the parties was of equal importance with the sale of art. At CIAF or at art galleries prices are discretely tagged, perhaps suggesting that commercial aspects of the art exhibited are downplayed, or in other words, the virtue of the product is highlighted, rather than the price.

A comparable example occurred at the opening night of Emily Ngarnal Evan's solo exhibition at Alcaston Gallery in June 2011, where Beverly Knight recounted an anecdote to the audience:

I was instructing the staff how I wanted Emily's paintings hung, when Emily walked in and questioned why all of her Stringray paintings were hung in portrait format and insisted they be hung in diamond shapes. I was quite dismayed by this; after all, I have been in this business a long-time and know what the clients want. After much discussion with Emily where the conversation went back and forth for a while, I decided to give it a try. To my surprise, they looked good because the Stingrays were better positioned in the artworks. (Knight, 2011)

The anecdote records an account of the dialogue between artist and gallerist that is presented as a mild difference based on Knight's perception of what buyers might prefer, and which at first appeared to lack resolution until it was resolved by Knight's decision to trust in the expertise of Emily Ngarnal Evans. The anecdote upholds a view that no one knows more about an artwork than the artist. There is no evidence to hand of the sales that resulted from the exhibition, or even the prices attached to the works. Instead, implied in the anecdote is the role of exchange, and the resultant shifting of the gallery's primary concern for the buyer's (assumed) perspective. In this instance, the artist's view that the work must be respected and not consumed as if it held no other purpose is permitted to prevail.

This exchange is not isolated and also represents change in the art network. In the past there was a reliance on the cultural traditions encoded in an artwork as 'the sell' component that gallerists proffered to their clients. "In

more recent times artists²¹ have challenged this ‘ethnographic’ or static concept by re-presenting their passions, their cultures, their people and most importantly themselves, as contemporary artists engaged in art practices that redefine notions of Aboriginality” (Watt, 2011: 35); and also redefine fine art. Today, Indigenous culture in Far North Queensland is still encoded in the artworks, and used by gallerists for marketing or a sales ‘pitch’. But in difference to the past, the sales pitch today is inclusive of the artistic and cultural expression of the artist and their capacity to highlight cultural distinctiveness and artistic identity rather than a notion of Indigenous culture as static or monolithic and unidentified with individual artists.

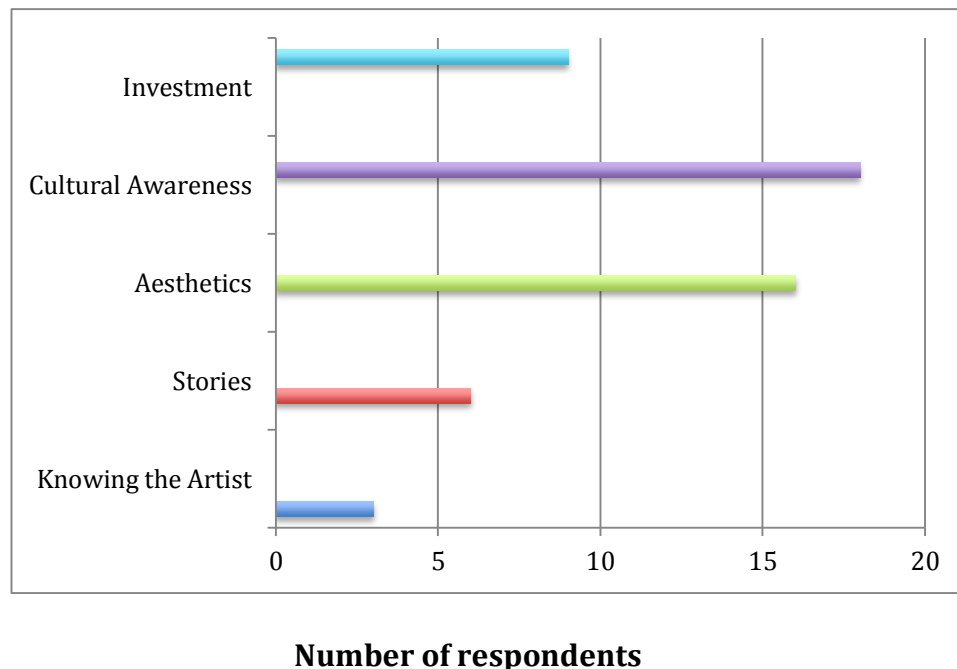
Dialogue and Desire: Talking with Buyers, Sellers and Others on why People buy Indigenous Art

As indicated earlier, in addition to artists, arts coordinators and gallerists, I interacted with a small group of buyers of Indigenous art to seek their perspectives on the practice of buying. To all 26 participants, I put the question, **‘why do people buy Indigenous art?’** I compiled and analysed the responses from the four groups, using a coding system to establish five consistent, main themes that emerged in the comments of all of the groups: investment (Theme A); cultural awareness and appreciation (Theme B); aesthetics (Theme C); the telling of stories (Theme D); and knowing the artist (Theme E) (see Appendix 1 for Tables of data). I compiled the responses and then identified the themes in

²¹ According to Ben Watt (2011: 36) It is artists such as Fiona Foley, Dianne Jones, Tony Albert, Vernon ah Kee, Christian Thompson, Brenda L. Croft, Gordon Hookey, Richard Bell, Jenny Fraser, Nici Cumpston and Bindi Cole that have been at the forefront of a three decade political, economic and cultural struggle for recognition as artists.

the comments.

Figure 8. Themes and Responses



In the coding of Theme A I included explicit statements about ‘investment’, which was mentioned by the participants nine times, as well as comments about money and finance. Theme B ‘cultural awareness’ included comments that contained explicit reference to Indigenous culture and/or reconciliation as well as personal experience or knowledge of Indigenous cultures, or even a sense of national pride, and such comments were mentioned eighteen times. References to the visual appeal of either the painting or the environment in which it would be displayed were interpreted as representing Theme C, ‘aesthetics’, which was mentioned sixteen times. ‘Stories’ or Theme D, was coded separately from cultural awareness, and derived from comments that reflected interest in both traditional (cultural) stories or stories of contemporary Indigenous life and were

mentioned six times. Finally, 'knowing the artist', or Theme E, was suggested three times by way of mention of intimate personal knowledge or brief contact with the artist. However, the coding was not straightforward as often the answers given combined several themes in one sentence, as if they were one reason. In the following section I relate a more qualitative account of the responses as related to the theoretical interests pursued in the thesis.

Theme A, Investment corresponds to economic capital. In summary, Theme A was signified on nine occasions, mostly by use of the words 'invest' or 'investment', which was mentioned by three out of the six gallery staff, and another gallerist mentioned 'money'; and three artists each explicitly said 'investment'. Indigenous art can be a sound investment if chosen wisely according to Greg Nazvanov (2010: 1-4) but it is the trading of risk for potential profit. Gallerists and art critics are responsible for creating higher economic value by suggesting it is a good investment and in this way the industry becomes self-generating (Nazvanov, 2010: 1-4). Nazvanov suggests investing in Indigenous art can be part of a broad investment strategy that may attract buyers to particular artists, regions or art forms, but that it is not enough to consider the art as an investment only as buyers must actually like the work and want it on their wall to make a purchase. "If people discount this fact it would be wrong because ultimately it is about purchasing art that you are proud to own"(2010: 2). Purchasing art should be a personally exhilarating and rewarding experience because, for the investment to pay off, it must be held for the long-term; possibly ten to twenty-years before selling on the secondary market, and even then there are no guarantees that artworks will increase in

value. However, none of the Buyers mentioned investment, and only two of the arts coordinators referred to it as “increase financially” (Robbie Neal, 2010) or “collectors” (Brett Evans, 2010).

Andrew Worthington and Helen Higgs (2008: 55) have pointed out that, “[i]nvesting in art operates differently from other more traditional investments such as the stock market, real estate and bonds”. Instead of earning a dividend from shares, artworks achieve a capital gain, so investing in art places the buyer’s money on the future value of something that cannot be logically valued or priced (in financial terms). There are also specific overhead costs associated with art, such as insurance, transportation, storage, expert valuations, cataloguing or exhibiting that are not associated with other types of investments (Worthington and Higgs, 2008: 55). Further, while there is status in owning a named artist’s artwork bought at the height of the artist’s fame the work is much more likely to be expensive than if purchased at the start of the artist’s career when their work costs relatively little.

Cultural Awareness and Appreciation, or Theme B corresponds to symbolic capital, and was mentioned eighteen times, mostly by artists and gallerists, and by three out of the five Buyers. The signifying words were “culture”, “Indigenous culture”, “respect for Indigenous culture” (Wright, 2010), “interested in Indigenous cultures” (Knight, 2010), “something intrinsically part of our country” (Taylor, 2010), “encourage the artist and I buy the art for its cultural value and social justice” (Craig, 2010). Certainly it is clear that interest in Indigenous knowledge and culture is stronger than ever before. The acquisition of this knowledge by mainstream society has brought about greater

understanding and appreciation of Indigenous traditions and ways of life, which has aided efforts towards reconciliation, Indigenous self-determination, and Indigenous land rights and Native Title. The reciprocal benefits are less clear; even though the increased western contact has resulted in more intercultural exchange, and partnerships have ultimately improved social outcomes for Indigenous people they are still well behind mainstream society.

Still the growing interest in Indigenous culture and society is witnessed not only through the growing market for fine art but also through the cultural tourism that operates in Far North Queensland, which includes the production of crafts and tourist souvenirs. Furthermore, initiatives such as the introduction of Indigenous studies in high schools, universities and TAFE curricula ensures that future generations are aware of the importance of Indigenous heritage, and also facilitates an appreciation of cultural diversity as part of the national identity. But equally, Theme B alludes to the frictional history of colonialism as much as the period of supposed reconciliation. The role of art centres and artists is critical in disentangling the complexities of the past through successful enterprises born of intercultural practices between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the art network. The collaborative relationships between the artists and the arts coordinators in art centres can be considered as what is often referred to as: "Reconciliation in action" (Sutton, 2009: 208), or as McLean (2010: 19-20) writes, "[t]here is a palpable sense of difference, in Aboriginal art, most evident in the political urgency that surrounds its reception. This burden of representation – be it the devotion to the Dreaming, the trauma of recent history,

or the symbolic weight of unfinished business and aspirations for reconciliation
– is unique to Aboriginal art”.

Aesthetics, or Theme C represents cultural capital, and was mentioned sixteen times. Aesthetics according to Morphy:

Is concerned with how something appeals to the senses, in the case of paintings with the visual effect they have on the person looking at them. Aesthetic response concerns sensations or feelings that evokes or causes the viewer to look at a painting with a positive emotional response, or that can be associated with feelings of pleasure, but which is not necessarily interpreted as pleasure. (Morphy, 2006: 306)

The research revealed that not only the signifying word ‘aesthetics’, but other words that described aesthetics were also mentioned, which included: “like the art to decorate a room” (Neal, 2010); “freedom, creativity and boldness” (Allain, 2010); “bought it for freshness and newness” (Knight, 2010); “it could be purely aesthetic reasons to complete the décor of a room” (Smith and McLeish, 2010); and “some people just want something bright in their lounge room that evokes conversation”(Barnard, 2011). Of all of the themed categories, this one is arguably the most contentious given that the very notion of aesthetic beauty is deeply sourced in western philosophy, and it is the most directly suggestive of the most conservative conventions of fine art. It begs the question of how aesthetic values are constituted, especially as the works often represent beliefs and values that are contrary or at least different to western tradition.

Globalisation (as suggested earlier) has contributed to the rise of Indigenous art particularly as a majority of Indigenous art buyers are based in the developed western world far removed from remote communities where much of the art is

created. I suggest that the aesthetic appeal for buyers starts with a representation of difference. According to Phillip Batty, curator at the Melbourne Museum:

There is a paradox (lots of paradoxes) one is Aboriginal art is marketed as a unique expression of Aboriginal culture as though it is has developed from a world disconnected from all other societies. And, of course this is the main selling point, buying a piece of the Dreaming and of a culture that is non-western. (Batty, 2010)

This difference, or distinctiveness is what the art embodies. Tim Acker (2008: 1) says: "People buy Aboriginal art for various reasons. For most there is a cultural interest, not just a beautiful object but a beautiful object with a strong cultural dimension". My research revealed that the style of art in demand by the public shows a strong preference for minimal imagery that approximates to abstraction, which works well when displayed in contemporary spaces. It is the use of vibrant colours, bold brushstrokes, paints applied with a palette knife and large canvases that appeal, and in particular such works photograph very well for art and décor magazines, which brings the art to a wider audience. The buyers I spoke with were not asked about the planned use of the works, or the kinds of spaces in which they would hang their purchases, nor were they or the other subjects asked to qualify what they meant by aesthetic appeal. But I note that the word 'aesthetic' was used multiple times in the responses, and four of the five buyers used the words 'aesthetic' or 'aesthetically'. Only two of them, however elaborated: one commented on "geometric designs and the right size" (Merrett, 2010); and another said "aesthetically attractive" (Wright, 2010).

Theme D, Stories was mentioned six times overall, and mostly by artists (four out of ten, all community-based), and not at all by gallerists. The signifying word 'stories' did not appear to be interchangeable with other words to describe a reason for buying Indigenous art. Stories are meant to be a connection to Indigenous culture by being embedded in the art and, yet 'stories' are not always part of the art from Far North Queensland. For example, Beverly Knight when interviewed by Kieren Finnane (2012) observed that the attraction of 'stories' is subject to popularity, or even fashion:

"Story and the artist's Aboriginality and cultural identity in the marketing of Aboriginal art is now outmoded. That is not what it is about at all for the contemporary consumer. Stories don't sell art; aesthetics sells art. Where story is important is in the motivation and inspiration for the artist. Artists may have deep cultural knowledge but their work is not selling. People who were collecting for that reason are no longer collecting, trust me, they're not. The contemporary collector is looking at the aesthetics. We exhibit in Korea for instance. Being Aboriginal means nothing over there. What they want to know is, is it fresh? This is what remote artists have over other people. They can actually come up with something totally different". (Knight, quoted in Finnane, 2012: 5)

Knight's comments are in contrast to those of the buyers and some artists that cited 'stories' as a reason for buying Indigenous art. Sally Gabori from Mornington Island, an artist who has prospered from Knight's support, paints large canvases with titles such as *Dibirdibi Country* (2011), with a three-word story, 'My Father's Country'. All of her landscapes (Country) are painted from an aerial perspective, or as if viewed from an aircraft and the artwork is non-representational in appearance. Stories are the language component of artworks and can resonate with discourses of human relationships. If the buyer asks for a story to accompany the artwork it will more likely concern the current problems

in the community not something mythical or ancient. It would seem, then, that not all artists choose to include a story with their artwork but if a story is required it can be added at the point of sale. This resonance with potential buyers can also result from meeting an artist at an art exhibition or CIAF or a television segment on a particular community that in some way piques the potential buyer's interest, childhood memories, knowledge of working in an Indigenous community or perhaps growing up somewhere quite remote and experiencing Country. Margaret Mara (Wei'num), for instance, relayed a conversation that she had with a buyer that seems apposite to the power of these works to provoke nostalgia and identification:

I was at an exhibition of my artworks in Weipa and a buyer asked me about the content of one of my paintings. I told her the painting was of my father and of me fishing, and then the buyer started to cry, I didn't know what to do, and then she said that is what she did on weekends with her father. Then she bought my painting. (Mara, 2010)

Her painting, *Fishing with My Father* (2009) did not have a written story attached to it, but the oral personal story of the artist was enough for the buyer to be arrested as it seemed to signify a particularly fond time and place in her own life.

'Knowing the Artist', Theme E was mentioned three times including once each by a buyer (Croke, 2010); gallerists (Smith and McLeish, 2010) and an arts coordinator (Dennis, 2010). In two instances, the relationship was one of friendship, and in the third, "the buyer has met the artist" (Dennis, 2010). It is not clear in the case of the friendships whether the motivation to buy arose from a sense of personal commitment or obligation to support the artist in question,

or whether the opportunity to buy was facilitated by the relationship, or whether the motivation was primarily due to the aesthetic or other appeal of the work purchased. In the case of the buyer who met the artist, one can only speculate on how the desire to buy may have been influenced by the phenomenon of personification or proximity to the artist in the transaction, or whether that buyer continued to follow the artist's career. However, Theme E prompts me to record my observations of gallery openings and CIAF when artists were in attendance and how audience gravitated to them, often asking personal questions, such as: 'do you get the money?' and 'what is your community like?'

The artist, Craig Koomeeta, commented in interview:

The stories, the songs and the dancing within the artworks are what are most important. One of my crocodiles was used in Aurukun as part of a ceremonial story. I don't think people buy this art because it is pretty and looks good on a feature wall. There is more depth to the reasons why this art is bought. I hope it is more of an appreciation of our culture. When I speak to a buyer, I am often asked if I get the money from the sale. At first this surprised me, but now I make sure that people know that artists do get their money. (Koomeeta, 2010)

It appears that empathy and concern for the artists' welfare is, if not a direct reason for buying Indigenous art, an aspect of the transaction, especially in instances where buyers and artists personally interact. Perhaps then Theme E should be filtered with Theme B – cultural awareness -- as my research suggested to me that among the mainstream art-buying public there is a view that Indigenous art-making is seen as part of a solution to Indigenous poverty and marginality, and that while it cannot solve everything, or completely drive the economic and wider equality of remote community lives, it can bring

attention to many of the issues, and thus contribute to individual and communal livelihoods.

In the 1960s Bourdieu's empirical research into audience attendance at French museums revealed that the consumption of fine art is embedded in social environments that are determined and maintained by the groups that are socially and economically dominant in order to enforce their distance or distinction from other classes of society (Allen and Anderson, 1994: 70-74). For Bourdieu, taste becomes a 'social weapon' that defines and marks off the high from the low, the sacred from the profane, and the legitimate from the illegitimate (Allen and Anderson, 1994: 70-74). In the outcomes of my limited survey about buying Indigenous art, this idea of taste as weapon is pertinent in, perhaps, a different sense to that implied by Bourdieu. If taste is seen to be constituted by the range of views (at least) represented in the interviews, then taste as a weapon might be used affirmatively as a means to assist in transforming the lot of the marginalised creators of the objects of taste. Some Indigenous artworks and artists have received canonical status (not Far North Queensland artists, yet) with high prices to match people's economic capital but not necessarily equivalent social capital (in Bourdieu's words, middle-class people). Ironically, the social capital of Indigenous artists is elevated by their relationship to fine art, even as the works encode the culture that was once unmercifully viewed as irremediably Other, and which their artistic efforts now seek to preserve. Artists are thus their own best selling agents at exhibitions and their presence in the exchange with buyers may well be an economic benefit in the sales transacted. The buying of an artwork equates to supporting Indigenous

people in their quest for social justice, an income stream and reconciliation. But it is more than this as it is about the frictional trade in cultures, and the intercultural exchange of learning about difference, an exchange which to be justly rewarding to all parties must be anchored in caring, trust and mutual respect.

Chapter Eight

Conclusion: Friction and Trust between Artists and the Art World

I started this project believing that I would uncover vast inequalities in the treatment of Indigenous artists in Far North Queensland, by government agencies and the non-Indigenous arts sector because non-Indigenous people, including arts coordinators that reside in communities, dominate the commercial

end of the art network. I drew an imaginary conclusion that Indigenous artists would not hold much sway in the industry. I also imagined that Far North Queensland would be at the mercy of exploiters and corruptors in the same way as other regions of Australia have suffered, in particular the Western Desert and Arnhem Land (Oster, 2012). However, compared to these areas the Indigenous art industry in Far North Queensland appears to be in better shape ethically, but not necessarily economically. There is certainly exploitation but at the time of writing this is mostly in the form of 'selling on the side' to visitors to communities when artists need cash (Oster, 2012). These transactions are conducted outside of the watchful eye of the arts coordinator and, although harmful for artist and art centre reputations, have been relatively modest, compared to other regions.

Far North Queensland Indigenous art is no longer viewed through the lens of ethnography instead it is celebrated as Indigenous creativity. Artists today work in introduced media, such as acrylic, sculpture, fabric, photography or printmaking with themes that reflect the range of artists' concerns and experiences; from relationships to landscapes to animals to political and social injustices. Most Indigenous artists express their heritage and experience in innovative ways, which reflects Indigenous and non-Indigenous influences. For some artists it is expression, for others it is documentation or radical thought, but most of all it is a crucial tool used to re-present personal cultural identity and a sense of self. I observed that artists have a great work ethic to develop their practice, communicate an Indigenous worldview and a postmodern position, engaging with non-Indigenous people, showing resilience when artworks go unsold or are not chosen for exhibitions, coping with the problems in the

communities and using resources with expertise to their advantage. Artists are prepared to collaborate in projects devised by arts coordinators and gallerists with the understanding that decision-making is open and transparent between all the parties involved in the art network.

Overall, the key finding of my research is that intercultural exchange pervades all stages of the process of bringing art to an art market – production, distribution, sale and purchase. In Chapter One, I outlined how my analysis concerns the dialogue, physical spaces and means by which the participants in the art practices interact, and whereby a cultural product – the Indigenous fine art of Far North Queensland – is produced and exchanged. I found that intercultural exchange is not just about an exchange between people but a complex set of interests. My ethnographic research involved interacting with and interviewing artists, arts coordinators, gallerists and buyers of Indigenous fine art from communities and urban centres in Queensland, and in a metropolitan gallery, Melbourne, Victoria. In approaching an account of the emergence of an art formation in FNQ, I suggested in Chapter Two that there has been a long history of relationships between some Indigenous artists and non-Indigenous people even during the mission era when Indigenous people were not allowed to follow their traditional cultures. In the past two decades the arts policy in Queensland could be described as one of the more successful policy frameworks in the relations between governments and Indigenous communities. If anything, art has revitalised and strengthened the social, political, and spiritual life of Indigenous artists as well as their personal prestige and influence. Thereafter, in Chapter Three, I developed a theoretical and practical framework to enable exploration of the concepts of culture and commerce and how they meld

together in the production practices of the Indigenous art industry. It is in these processes that intercultural exchange occurs at each stage in the trajectory of the art from its production to market. However, when people get together to discuss art and move it forward to the next stage in the commodity chain there will always be friction, but this does not necessarily mean that disagreements cannot be resolved. I argue that disagreements stimulate discussions to generate a need for change resulting in new collaborations and interdependencies. In examining these processes I adopt the notion of habitus to reflect on the interviews I conducted in field research with the artists and arts coordinators.

The Cairns Indigenous Art Fair discussed in Chapter Four was approached through a micro-ethnographic lens to study a concentrated intercultural activity where artworks are viewed, bought and sold for three days a year. CIAF is a spectacle, an event that highlights Indigenous culture as an adjunct to regional cultural tourism. This is an event where artists meet other artists, exchange ideas, learn and refine their own styles, and in this way CIAF fosters and supports a process of socialisation, which encourages new contacts, trust, interactions and reciprocity between individuals, groups, galleries and institutions. Intercultural exchange plays a pivotal role at CIAF because it is a time for artists to sell as much art as possible while also learning new ways of being an artist. In exploring CIAF and the community and commercial gallery stands nested within it, I found that any notion of friction is masked because the event exudes performances of harmony and even mateship and that in this regard, I found that my observations accorded with the publicity.

My specific encounters and interviews with artists in Chapter Five concerned the friction that exists between the three groups of Indigenous artists

in Queensland that is regional urban, community and metropolitan-based artists. Although the friction is relatively unspoken there are divisions between the Brisbane-based, Cairns-based and community-based artists. Both the Brisbane-based and Cairns-based artists that practice and live in these urban areas are ethnically and culturally Indigenous, but they engage in western-style livelihoods and the mainstream global art world through their independence as freelance artists. This leads to a sense of a dichotomy between community-based artists and urban artists primarily because of the desire of the art buying public (mainly non-Indigenous people) to hang onto romantic ideas about what constitutes authentic Aboriginal culture. For example, the proppaNOW artists are Brisbane-based and use Biennales, art fairs, galleries, and symposiums to have their voices overtly heard on political and social issues that concern Indigenous people. The Cairns-based artists may appear less outspoken in their political activism but they are equally determined to be independent artists exhibiting on the world stage and engaging in local arts-based issues. While the community-based artists are less vocal in the public arena, they are likely to depict in their art the social conditions that are prevalent in their communities that appear to permeate every corner of life for them. There is also subtle fiction between the groups due to the government funding of community art centres and the appointment of arts coordinators to support community-based artists while the urban artists do not receive the same level of assistance. These views were not explicitly stated in my interviews, but arise in some commentary. Such views overlook that urban artists do not experience the disadvantages that community-based artists face to get their artworks to art markets, which are often very far

away in major cities and with no prospects of supplementary employment in communities as in urban centres.

In focusing on community artists in Chapter Five, perhaps the most significant point that artists emphasised was that of interpersonal trust and mutual respect as valued qualities when dealing with arts coordinators or gallerists because artists recognise their work as only one part, albeit an important one, in the trajectory of the art. This view is captured in the words of the artists: "Gallerists and arts coordinators are very good to me, we need each other to make art sell" (Harry Bowen, 2010). The Cairns-based artists also aimed for mutual respect: "I have a professional working relationship with gallery people. They have always been professional, courteous, take due care of me and my artworks and let me know about spacing of artworks for display and the time of year best for an exhibition when traffic is at its highest" (Arone Meeks, 2010). It is worth noting that it is the community-based artists' artworks that are gaining the most attention in the national and international art market at the present time and have in a sense put Far North Queensland on the 'art-buying map'.

The interviews with the arts coordinators in Chapter Six revealed that they must have strong intercultural communication skills in order to tolerate high-levels of uncertainty and conflict because community problems can spill over into the art centre; then there are the expectations of the gallerists and the artists on the arts coordinator's time. By fostering intercultural exchange between the arts coordinators and the artists there is professional dialogue, which concerns art network issues but there is also personal dialogue that is

responsible for cementing friendships and in turn emplaces the arts coordinator in the wider community. All parties involved in such interactions must be mature enough to understand and appreciate that there will be differences, conflict or friction. It is up to the arts coordinator to smooth over problems as they occur by creating genuine dialogue as an open and respectful exchange of views that have a high-level of honesty, trust, respect, keeping promises and always telling the truth. If peace in the art centre cannot be achieved there is the likelihood that the artworks will not be completed and as a result the potential for financial gain from art sales will not be possible. Therefore, the importance of face-to-face interactions, training and expert advice cannot be underestimated to encourage the participation of all the parties to overcome problems and achieve workable goals for all the parties.

I moved from the established intercultural spaces of art centres to canvass the ideas and experiences of buyers of Indigenous art, their motivations and expectations in Chapter Seven. I found that in the sample interviews the buying of art was motivated mainly by investment, aesthetics, a sense of cultural awareness and appreciation gained by owning an artwork by an Indigenous artist, as well as an appreciation of stories implied in the artworks and in some cases the personal knowledge of the artist responsible. Buyers and viewers showed they cared, have empathy, cultural awareness and knowledge that Indigenous community life is fragile, which is difficult to reconcile because the power and vibrancy of the art is in stark contrast to the day-to-day harsh conditions of the artists' lives in communities.

The outcome of my field research can be summarised in four overarching conclusions. The first concerns the ways that intercultural exchange is framed in

the Indigenous fine art industry of Far North Queensland, which can be understood as: dialogue between people; the spaces of coexistence at commercial galleries and CIAF; and the process of cultural convergence in community art centres. Dialogue is acknowledged to take place in the “spaces of engagement” (Hinkson and Smith, 2005) between artists, arts coordinators and gallerists. Within these spaces or what Pratt (1992) calls “contact zones” people from different cultures meet, discuss art, have agreements and disagreements. There may be friction and even resistance, but more than anything the players want positive outcomes for themselves and their artworks. Each culture will evaluate things in accordance with their respective domain, but intercultural exchange allows for opinions, shared meanings, common goals to be enacted, realised, and contested and for most of the time with the aim to find a satisfactory way forward. Cultural coexistence extends to such places as art fairs and commercial galleries that mediate between the players in the art network and the buying public. It is in these physical spaces where the annual spectacle takes place that everyone involved at the commercial end of the art network must perform in front of a gathering crowd, with artists as stars of the show. Cultural convergence also takes place in the community art centres or the studio spaces of the Cairns-based artists where there is an intermixing of Indigenous knowledge and western art structures that characterise a hybrid art industry. It is in these mediating spaces where artworks are transformed into something of value, both commercially and culturally. Art centres offer spaces to create art, and are also spaces of socialisation for the people working in the art centres and the broader community. The art centre is a protective space away from much of the hardship of community life, giving people a sense of belonging. It is a space

where art experiences can be shared but it is also a democratic social space in which all community citizens can belong. This cannot be compared to Native Title claims, which are at the heart of Indigenous people and their sense of belonging to the land, but in some real sense art centres have carved out a territory within communities that forges and verifies the role of artists.

Secondly, in relaying my field research of habitus or people's social conditioning I found that Indigenous artists use their past-learned cultural knowledge and experience of western art skills to transcend their prior internalised principles from their upbringing to become contemporary artists exhibiting in commercial galleries. Artists have a great deal of cultural capital learned through Indigenous generational knowledge, but they must also learn new ways of being to be part of the western national and international art scene. I found that artists have agency because they are prepared to take risks when creating artworks by trying new styles and new mediums: "I have a good idea of what sells because I have been an artist for some time" (Koomeeta, 2010). Arts coordinators also experience transformation as they come to their roles with western art skills learned through higher education, but they need to acquire Indigenous cultural and community knowledge to be effective managers of art centres and to be emplaced into the communities. Gallerists also come from a western arts background and need to acquire certain Indigenous cultural knowledge as part of the selling process. Buyers may come to the purchasing of artworks with economic capital but not necessarily Indigenous cultural knowledge or the knowledge of fine art, which is learned in the process of purchase. It is in this exchange of artistic and cultural knowledge that gallerists must trust the provenance of artworks as a key point in the exchange between

the seller and buyer. Gallerists must also trust that the artist is the signatory on the artwork, and that payment to the artist is prompt.

Friction is elemental in all of these stages but is more likely to be visible in an art centre or the backroom of a commercial gallery away from the 'front stage' of art fairs and gallery exhibition spaces. Within the spaces of engagement between people the dialogue that takes place can have outcomes of agreement, conflict, misunderstandings or as Tsing (2005) says, 'friction'. Friction need not lead to incompatible agendas or missed opportunities because dialogue can change or be redirected and lead to new connections and outcomes for art making. People will always have strong opinions and use social drama for attention that amounts to attempts to stamp their individual identity on their artwork and their place in the art world. Community-based artists produce artworks as individuals but live collectively and therefore most conflicts are resolved in the name of the community, because when art production stops or is delayed artworks do not reach their destination on time, and all community members are affected ultimately. Friction is also an expression of the deeper and more complex issues aligned with living in remote communities and dealing with layers of bureaucratic political agendas. It is the arts coordinator that has the task of keeping the peace in the art centre, no matter what is happening in the broader community, but as discussed in Chapter Five senior community members assist where possible. If artists are selling their artworks consistently or even modestly and are being financially rewarded for their art in a timely manner there is a far less chance that friction, conflict or social drama will occur. Friction in art centres, galleries or at CIAF could potentially be the cause of the loss of trust, although I did not find evidence of this.

Trust was mentioned throughout the interview process as a key requirement between all the participants in the aim of handling friction and evaluating intercultural exchange. Indigenous Australians come from a history of mistrust due to their negative experience of colonialism, mission settlements and reserves, low or no wages across industries and the period of the stolen generation. Mistrust is the “[c]onfident expectation that another individual’s motives, intentions, and behaviours are sinister and harmful to one’s own interests” (Lewicki and Tomlinson, 2003: 1), which can damage interdependent relationships. Once in place, mistrust forms a powerful frame on subsequent events in the relationships. Friction between people allows for a space of engagement, a margin to compromise, but mistrust is quite final and requires a major shift in attitude by all the players in the art network to change to trust in relationships. I consider that partnerships of trust, collaboration and interdependency were cemented through the Backing Indigenous Arts Programme that began in 2008, and which has led to new confidence in the art network. In particular, the artists in communities have benefitted through the positivity of cultural revitalisation and the possibility of making art a career.

There are two types of trust operating in the art network, firstly, system trust (government agencies, art centres, corporate enterprises) and secondly interpersonal trust (between people). Niklas Luhmann (1979: 22) holds that the foundation of interpersonal trust differs from that of system trust. Personal trust is built upon an emotional bond between individuals. In contrast, system trust generally lacks the same emotional involvement and ultimately depends upon a more diffuse kind of trust, whereby people will continue to trust in the system or what Luhmann calls ‘trust in trust’ (66-70). For example, if Arts Queensland

continues the funding to art centres then the system trust (political, government institutions, employment of arts professionals) will continue. But, if the system trust fails in any sense then interpersonal trust (between people) becomes more risky causing a general level of system trust to be low. I argue that changes in interpersonal trust will result in a weakening of public confidence and trust in government institutions and arts professionals, that provide the framework within which interpersonal trust is initiated. There is interdependency between interpersonal trust and system trust but if one is eroded there will eventually be a threat to the other. I observed that trust between people leads to longer and more stable relationships and has the potential to reduce the incidence of friction and uncertainty. It is in the interest of all the parties involved in the trajectory of the art to 'smooth over' any friction between people and instead create relationships of trust to ensure artworks reach their target market. But, if system trust (government funding of arts support agencies) is challenged or fails there is every chance that some (possibly most) art centres in Far North Queensland will not survive and artists and other arts workers will mistrust again.

In the end, I did not uncover vast inequalities, unfair practices or animosity toward Indigenous artists in Far North Queensland. The artists are recognised for their cultural, social and economic contribution to the region. However, the considerable investment by the Queensland and Federal Governments (outlined particularly in Chapter Two) in art centres highlights the disparity between the government spending and the meagre individual incomes of the artists living in remote communities. For artists living in cities other paid

work in both arts and non-arts is available to make a living. Although I found artists to be optimistic about their futures, the reality is that there is a high level of uncertainty associated with the work of artists. Community-based artists are further disadvantaged due to poor telecommunications, seasonal weather patterns, poor roads and distance from galleries and most importantly government funding that is seen to be inadequate. Artists want to pay their bills like everyone else, but rarely do they become a professional artist for the money, instead they are driven by their passion and commitment to art. Even with such problems the artists' reputations for producing quality art is on the rise. Artists have a great deal of agency in communities because they own their own centres and can dictate the terms that they work under, but it appears that at this time they want non-Indigenous arts coordinators to manage the art centres because they are considered to carry with them expertise in the western art market. Government funding through Arts Queensland has been (just) adequate in keeping art centres open for artists to produce art, but there are no extra funds to entice artists to seek out other arts roles or certainty that funding will even continue into the future. It will be the role of IACA, located in Cairns to be the collective voice for its thirteen art centre members to lobby for changes and to guide arts policies into the future. CIAF will continue albeit in a different format in 2014 with input and direction from the IACA members. The urban artists from Cairns are independent and manage their art businesses in the same way as non-Indigenous mainstream artists. They do not receive regular government funding like the community-based artists, except for the occasional grant monies to cover the cost of freighting and travel for overseas exhibitions.

What I have learned through my research is that art can be a meeting point between people – creator and viewer – with a genuine interest in grasping each others' worlds. The major problem for community-based artists is that government agencies want art centres to be self-sustaining because they place economic outcomes above the cultural and social activities of an art centre and a community. Should funds decrease there will be fewer artists and this will create fewer prospects and possibly a return to the days of welfare dependency. If funding levels can be maintained or increased art making has the ability to bring purpose, cultural prestige, income and opportunities to Indigenous artists and the region of Far North Queensland, and in a small but important way, this assists the process of reconciliation. For artists it is letting their artworks speak for them, giving them identity, a voice and a place in the world through being admired and talked about in galleries, art fairs, homes and offices that will cement their relationships with the art world into the future.

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Appendices

Themes and Responses

Appendix 1

Table 1: Buyers

Buyers	A	B	C	D	E
	Investment	Cultural Awareness	Aesthetics	Stories	Knowing the Artist
Joanne Taylor		Something intrinsically part	I buy it mainly for aesthetic		

		of our country	reasons		
Cynthia Merrett			It appeals to me immediately, aesthetically. Geometric designs and the right size		
Karen Croke			I buy for aesthetic reasons		I knew the artist and we were friends
Felicity Wright		Encourage the artist and show respect for Indigenous culture	It is aesthetically attractive		
Valda Craig		I buy the art for its cultural value and social justice		I feel connected to Aboriginal stories	

The Buyers (Table 1) as will be noted from the names, were all women. Among the five Buyers, Theme A (Investment) was not mentioned as a reason for buying Indigenous art. Theme B (Cultural Awareness and Appreciation) was mentioned three times; Theme D (stories) and Theme E ('knowing the artist') occurred once each. Theme C (Aesthetics) was mentioned four out of five times and was therefore the most common theme that emerged among the comments of the Buyers.

Table 2: Arts Coordinators

Arts Coordinators	A	B	C	D	E
	Investment	Cultural Awareness	Aesthetics	Stories	Knowing the Artist
Robbi Neal	Increase financially		Like the art to decorate a room		
Brett Evans	Our artists are successful and it follows that		People buy at CIAF for their homes		

	there are collectors				
Guy Allain			Freedom, creativity and boldness		
Troy Dennis			Fits with the colour scheme of their home	Listened to a story	The buyer has met the artist
Valerie Keenan			They like it for their homes		

Five Arts Coordinators (Table 2) were interviewed, and again Theme C (aesthetics) was the most common response, mentioned five out five times. Also, Theme D (stories) and Theme E ('knowing the artist') were mentioned once each. On the other hand, Theme A (investment) was referred to twice; and Theme B (cultural awareness) gained no mention at all.

Table 3: Gallerists

Gallerists	A	B	C	D	E
	Investment	Cultural Awareness	Aesthetics	Stories	Knowing the Artist
Beverly Knight, Owner, Alcaston Gallery		Interested in Indigenous Cultures	Bought for its freshness and newness		
Grant Smith and Rod McLeish, Curators, Pizzi Gallery	Investment in a particular artist	Buyers may have worked in the community and feel connected to the people	It could be purely aesthetic reasons to complete the décor of a room		Previously met the artist
Samantha Creyton, Curator, KickArts	Make a financial investment and build a collection	Feel connected to Indigenous culture			

Trish Barnard, Curator, Townsville Cultural Centre	It is a commodity and some people invest	Contributing to the spirit of reconciliation	Some people just want something bright in their lounge room that evokes conversation		
Philip Batty, Curator, Indigenous Art, Museum Victoria		Reconnection with a pre- Industrial past. Distinctly Australian			
Lindy Allen, Curator Indigenous Art Museum Victoria	Collectors motivated by money, but rewards take a long time	It allows a greater awareness of Indigenous cultural issues	It is abstract, engaging, different not like anything else		

The six Gallerists (Table 3) were the largest group and represented a mix of private galleries (Pizzi and Alcaston) in Melbourne, public art galleries (Kick Arts) in Cairns, and state museums in Townsville (Townsville Cultural Centre) and Melbourne (Museum Victoria). This group emphasised the more - as it were - public-minded motivations as perhaps might be expected. Among this group, Theme B (Cultural awareness) was the most dominant, occurring six out of six times. Theme C (aesthetics) and Theme A (investment) each gained four mentions; while Theme D (stories) gained no mention by any gallerist, while Theme E (knowing the artist) was mentioned once.

Table 4: Artists

Artists	A	B	C	D	E
	Investment	Cultural Awareness	Aesthetics	Stories	Knowing the Artist

Evelyn McGreen		People are buying a part of our culture			
Emily Ngarnal Evans		People want to take home some of my culture			
Derek Rosendale		There is great depth to the art, it is not just pretty pictures		The art tells my story. Links the past with the present	
Harry Bowen				The story behind the art.	
Craig Koomeeta		There is an appreciation of our culture.		The stories within the artworks	
Daphne De Jersey		They appreciate Indigenous culture			
Zane Saunders	Investment	Appreciation and interest in Indigenous culture	Passion for art itself		
Arone Meeks	Investment	Indigenous experience of a culture			
Margaret Mara	Investment	Genuine interest in Indigenous culture	Aesthetic reasons		
Kassandra Savage		Connection to what the artist has depicted	Aesthetically pleasing	Traditional Family Stories	

The Artists (Table 4) numbered the largest group, ten in all, and like the gallerists they mentioned Theme B (cultural awareness) most often, in fact, nine out of ten times. A long way behind was the second most common response, Theme D (stories), mentioned four times. Theme A (investment) and Theme C (aesthetics) gained three mentions each; Theme E ('knowing the artist') was not mentioned at all.

Looking across the four groups there is disparity. The first division is in Theme A, investment, which was not mentioned at all by the five Buyers, but was consistently referred to by each of the other groups: arts coordinators (40%), gallerists (66%), artists (30%). Theme B (Cultural Awareness and Appreciation) gained no mention from arts coordinators, but was highly rated by the other three groups: gallerists (100%), artists (90%) and buyers (88%). Theme C (aesthetics) was the only theme mentioned by every group: Buyers (80%), arts coordinators (100%), Gallerists (66%), Artists (30%), it did not outstrip Theme B (Cultural awareness) in the overall percentage of 69%, or 18 of the 26 participants, while Theme C (aesthetics) was mentioned by 61%, or 16 participants overall. While Theme D (Stories) was important to the Artists with 40%, it was mentioned only once each by arts coordinators (20%) and buyers (20%), and was not mentioned by gallerists. Theme E (Knowing the Artist) was not mentioned by artists but was evenly referred to, once each by Gallerists, arts coordinators and Buyers.

Appendix 2

Profiles of Artists

The following profiles have been gleaned from websites and personal contact with the artists. Sourcing the latest exhibition details was challenging because of the constant distribution of artworks to exhibitions, and private sales in Australia and overseas. I concentrated on their back-stories as a way of getting to know my interviewees.

Harold (Harry) Bowen – Hopevale

“Harry is from the Guugu Yimithirr Language group, and a descendent of the Thuppi Warra Clan, one of the thirteen clans that make up the Guguu Yimithirr Nation, situated in the area surrounding Hope Vale, approximately one

hour drive from Cooktown, Far North Queensland” (Hope Vale Art and Cultural Centre, 2012). Harry told me that he started painting in 2009, stumbling on art by accident after he had returned to Hope Vale from learning music for two years in Adelaide. Harry is also a qualified electrician who spent some sixteen years working in various cities of Australia. From my interview in 2010 with Harry Bowen I found that some of his paintings are about personal stories, some are messages about such things as maintaining good health, and others are about the enjoyment of creating art.

“Harry is currently a commissioner with the Families Responsibility Commission; a member of IACA and a Director of the Hopevale Arts and Cultural Centre; Deputy Chair of the Thuppi Warra Land Trust, and Secretary for the Dharrpa Land Trust. The Arts has always been a great passion for Harry and he has decided that painting and music is what he wants to do, so now he is focusing on performance with his music and exhibitions with his art” (Harry Bowen, quoted in Hope Vale Art and Cultural Centre website, 2012).

Harry has represented Hope Vale at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair since its inception with his large colourful acrylic on canvas artworks.

Evelyn McGreen – Hopevale

“Evelyn was born in Woorabinda, Queensland in 1942, the daughter of Roy and May Dick, and in the early 1950s they moved to their original homeland of Hope Vale, Far North Queensland. Her father was a pioneer of the Hope Vale Community, and helped build the church there. Evelyn spent her school years in Hope Vale and married Benny McGreen in 1962. They had five children” (Hope Vale Arts and Cultural Centre, 2012). In 2010 at CIAF, I interviewed Evelyn McGreen who said that she started painting in about 2002 but it was a several years of struggle to learn her craft and even longer before she sold her first

painting. “I have experimented with different shapes and backgrounds for my paintings as well as weaving with Sisal Hemp, Pandanus, Beech Hibiscus and Bajin, [*lomandra longi folia*], and I also use bush dyes to colour the fibre” (McGreen, 2010).

Evelyn graduated from Tropical North Queensland TAFE Certificate IV Visual Arts in 2009. “In the same year Parliament House, Canberra purchased her Bajin Wawu folio for their permanent collection. This was a collection of ‘dilly bag’ prints that has become Evelyn’s trademark. She also painted a mural on the outside of the Hope Vale Community Well Being Centre” (Hopevale Art and Cultural Centre, 2012). Evelyn has represented Hope Vale at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair since its inception by producing a series of limited edition prints of dilly bags, which have sold out each year.

Derek Rosendale – Hopevale

Derek, on his mother’s side is from the Binthi clan of the Guugu Yimithirr people near the McIvor River area in Far North Queensland. On his father’s side he has family ties to the Western Guugu Yalanji people from the Quinkan Reserve, Maytown and Split Rock areas near Laura in Far North Queensland. He grew up in Hope Vale speaking the Guugu Yimithirr language of his mother’s people (Hopevale Art and Cultural Centre, 2012).

In 2010 I interviewed Derek Rosendale at CIAF where he told me about his artwork.

I am influenced by the spirituality of my people. I was never taught to paint in the traditional style but drew inspiration from the stories and depictions of the many spirit creatures and entities that inhabit the country of the Guugu Yimithirr and Guugu Yalanji peoples. I remember many happy days and evenings seated at the feet of my grandfathers as they told their stories of the spirit beings and their roles in creating, forming and shaping the world of his people (Rosendale, 2010).

Derek uses modern colours in his artworks that depict the hunting and gathering stories told by his grandfathers and grandmothers of long ago.

Craig Koomeeta – Aurukun

Born in 1977, in Cairns of the Wik-Alkan clan, speaking the Wik language, Craig's mother gave him his name 'Koomeeta', meaning 'Taipan' (snake). He lived the first ten years of his life at Kencherang Lagoon, an out station of Aurukun. He went to 'bush school' at the outstation, where a non-Indigenous teacher came from Koolkan Community School, Aurukun three times a week to conduct classes (Wik and Kugu Arts and Crafts Centre, 2012). After school in Aurukun Craig did a short stint at boarding school in Townsville, followed by a course for health workers at TAFE in Cairns. Sporadic work of many kinds and rugby league football filled his post-school life, until he turned to sculpture in his early twenties (Wik and Kugu Arts and Crafts Centre, 2012). Craig Koomeeta is listed in the top one hundred Indigenous artists in Australia with his sculptures, in particular his 'camp dogs' and acrylic on canvas painting:

"I started carving when I was fourteen years old. The first carving I sold was of a crocodile, which is a totem from my mother's country of Kencherang Lagoon. From my father's totems I carved the barramundi

and the dingo. All my sculptures are created for contemporary art spaces and 'outside' audiences. I now also paint and sculpt in metal. My sculptures have been bought by the Queensland Art Gallery, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and many private collectors in Australia and overseas". (Craig Koomeeta, quoted in Wik and Kugu Arts and Craft Centre, 2012).

Daphne De Jersey – Wei'Num, Weipa

"Born in 1969 of the Tjungundi Clan and living in Mapoon, Cape York. Daphne is a mother of six and is described as an artistic individual leaning more towards the tactile ceramics field as a student in secondary school and coming to find her painting ability in 2004. Partaking in an early Western Cape Artists programme in Mapoon, Daphne had instant success with her first painting selling to a wealthy business owner" (Wei'Num Aboriginal Arts Corporation, 2012). Daphne uses bold brushstrokes and vibrant colours in her artworks that depict her own life experiences and prominent events, coupled with her knowledge of bush food, which is a trademark of her artwork. Daphne's mother and sister are artists and they accompany Daphne on outings to paint and draw. "Her mother's own personal story of growing up in the mission also inspires Daphne's paintings, as well as her grandmother who was a child of the stolen generation" (Wei'Num Aboriginal Arts Corporation, 2012). Daphne has exhibited at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair since its inception and is a member of IACA.

Kassandra Savage, Wei'Num, Weipa

"Born in 1967 Kassandra has three children. She is a descendent of the Waanyi people. Her Great Grandmother was part of the stolen generation, taken

away from near Camooweal to Mapoon in 1901. Cassandra has had a successful teaching career spanning more than twenty years” (Wei’Num Aboriginal Arts Corporation, 2012). In 1994, Cassandra began painting using acrylics on flowerpots, lamps and canvas, and then she moved on to works on paper and ink depicting her love of nature. At the same time Cassandra made silver jewellery, which was sold at various exhibitions across Queensland. In 2010 at CIAF, Cassandra told me that her most successful artworks were her acrylic on canvas, using lines and dots to represent realistic images. Her latest artworks use acrylic on linen, ink on paper and etching prints on paper (Savage, 2010). Cassandra has moved to Mossman, Far North Queensland for work at the high school.

Margaret Mara, Wei’Num, Weipa

Born 1967 of the Tjungundi Clan and living in Mapoon, Cape York, Margaret is a mother of eight and grandmother to four. Margaret Mara (nee de Jersey) paints using acrylic on linen in the contemporary and abstract style. Drawing inspiration from the immediate events in her life, Margaret reflects on many other areas for inspiration; the environment, family stories, living in the Cape, emotions and anything else that has a direct effect on her as an individual. (Wei’Num Aboriginal Corporation, 2012)

Margaret Mara’s career has flourished, partly through the inspiration of her creative family, in particular the influence of her mother and sister as fellow artists. Margaret has received several feature articles in magazines, which has extended her reputation as a new ‘rising star’ artist. Margaret’s paintings are now in many private collections both nationally and internationally, and in the corporate collections of businesses such as Rio Tinto Ltd., and the Queensland Public Service Office in Brisbane. Margaret has exhibited at CIAF, since its inception.

Emily Ngarnal Evans - Mornington Island

“I’ve got four brothers and one sister and I’m the second eldest. We always went fishing and camping when I was growing up. Mum and Dad would take us out bush, out to our country. School was good when we were young, we learnt dancing in culture class that was fun. I grew up watching old Goobala, that’s short for Dick Roughsey. My brothers, sisters and I used to watch him paint a lot. My father used to paint and taught me a little bit. In 2003 he passed away, so that’s why I started in the art centre following on from my father and keeping my family’s stories going in my painting. I like painting it gives me peace. I’ve painted Balibal, the Spotted Stingray, Wurruku the Sharp Nose Brown Shark and Ngaalu the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo. I like to relax by painting and I enjoy the quiet time I get when I paint”. (Emily, Ngarnal Evans, quoted in Mornington Island Art Centre Website, April 2013).

Emily is a regular exhibitor with Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne and CIAF, since its inception.

Zane Saunders – Cairns (works at home and a studio in Cairns)

“Born in 1971 Zane grew up in Kuranda, but now lives in Cairns. He identifies with the Butchulla (Bajala) of Fraser Island, some 1500 kilometres to the south. Zane has a Guugu Yimithir language name, which was given to him by a Hope Vale Elder, meaning clever hands” (Saunders, 2012). In the 1980s, Zane attended Tropical North Queensland TAFE, Cairns for a visual arts qualification and in 2010 won a scholarship to New York. His paintings are in the permanent collections of the Australian National Gallery, Queensland Art Gallery, National Gallery of Victoria and private collections.

“In the past I painted and made prints but I am now exploring mediums such as installation, sculpture, media and contemporary performance. I have developed a very deep and unique approach to contemporary dance/performance drawing from my Indigenous

heritage and from my many experiences in contemporary society".
(Zane Saunders, quoted in Zane Saunders website, 2012)

Arone Meeks – Cairns (works at home and a studio in Cairns)

"Born in 1957 at Laura in Far North Queensland, Arone grew up near El Arish. Arone is of the Kuku Midigi clan and currently resides in Cairns. His traditional name 'Arone', meaning 'black crane' which was conferred on him by the renowned Cape York artist Thancoupie, with whom he established a great friendship" (Aboriginal art Directory, 2012). Årone has had a traditional and western arts education, having been taught art by his grandfather and other relatives before going to study at the City Art Institute in Sydney where he completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts in 1984. Arone was a founding member of Boomalli Artists Cooperative in Sydney. He later returned to Queensland to study with various tribal Elders including those of the Lardil people of Mornington Island. Arone won an Australia Council fellowship to study in Paris in 1989 and went on to exhibit throughout Europe and North and South America. Arone produces paintings, sculpture and prints that express a passion for Country, spirituality and sexuality. Arone is represented in CIAF and in many public collections in Australia including the National Gallery of Australia, the Queensland Art Gallery, and the National Gallery of Victoria, and in international collections such as the Institute of American Indian Art in Sante Fe, USA, and the Bibliotech National de Paris, France (Aboriginal Art Directory, 2012).

Appendix 3

Art Centres Referred to in the Thesis

Wik and Kugu Arts and Craft Centre

“The Wik and Kugu Arts and Craft Centre is located in Aurukun, a small remote Indigenous community situated on the north west tip of the Cape York Peninsula. Aurukun is home to Wik, Wik Waya and Kugu people” (Wik and Kugu Art and Craft Centre, 2012). The art centre has operated for more than fifty years and provides artistic and commercial support for local artists. Some of the artists are recognised for their distinctive wood sculptures, particularly of camp dogs and weaving skills using ghost nets. More recently new media styles, including paintings, prints, bronzes and aluminum castings have been included in their repertoire. (Wik and Kugu Arts and Craft Centre, 2012)

Hopevale Arts and Cultural Centre

Hope Vale is home to Guugu Yimithirr culture and encourages the use of the language. The art centre is also a place for learning cultural dancing, music and community meetings. The artists include in their repertoire, printmaking, etching, painting, photography, jewellery and weaving (Hope Vale Arts and Cultural Centre, 2012). “We are empowering our people to develop and share their culture, knowledge and skills and to keep and hold our culture sacred. Keeping our community strong in mind and spirit. We want to promote a flourishing and economical sustainable cultural centre” (Hopevale Arts and Cultural Centre, 2012).

Lockhart River Art Centre

The Lockhart River Art Centre was established in the mid-1990s.

The Lockhart River Art Centre has produced some of the most internationally acclaimed Indigenous painters in Australia. Local Indigenous artists such as Rosella Namok, Silas Hobson, Samantha Hobson and Fiona Omeenyo are celebrated artists. The success of Lockhart River Art Centre is attributed to the contemporary responses to the traditional culture and isolation of the community by expressing Indigenous life and values (Lockhart River Art Centre, 2012).

Wei'Num Aboriginal Corporation

“Founded in 2010, by five artists from Napranum, Weipa and Mapoon in partnership with funding from the Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation (DEEDI), Western Cape College and TNQ TAFE” (Wei'Num Aboriginal Arts Corporation, 2012). The artists work independently in their homes, only coming together for group exhibitions and recently a retail shop was opened in Weipa in order to have a permanent display of arts and crafts and to be more accessible to the public. Under the tutelage of Charles Street, who lives in Cairns, the artists Skype with Street to gain comment and advice.

Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre

“Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre at Cardwell represents artists from nine traditional owner groups: the Nywaigi, Gugu Badhum, Warrgamay,

Warungnu, Bandjin, Girramay, Gulnay, Jirrbal and Djiru people” (Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre, 2012). This art centre produced the Baju sculptures, which first appeared at CIAF 2009, and were considered to be a highlight of the event by Nicholas Rothwell (cited in Arts Queensland, 2009a). The artists are painters, weavers, potters, textile artists and makers of traditional objects (Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre, 2012).

Mornington Island Art Centre

In 2006, Sally Gabori, along with her two sisters and four nieces from Bentinck Island joined the Lardil artists of Mornington Island to paint their stories at the Mornington Island Art Centre (Memmott, 2008: 16). The artists have since earned international acclaim, creating paintings with a unique sense of colour and energy. Sally Gabori and Paula Paul are included in the list of the top one hundred Indigenous artists in Australia (Mornington Island Art Centre. Accessed 30 April 2012).

Appendix 4

Interviews: Questions and Answers

Question 1: Do you think that Indigenous art is essentially a non-Indigenous business?

Community-based artists

Derek Rosendale (Hopevale)

It does seem that way to me. A lot of the Indigenous art centres in FNQ have board members that do not know how much influence they have and could be better at determining the direction of their own Indigenous art. When I have spoken to artists from other art centres they tell me that the managers from their art centres set the direction of what is produced rather than let the artists do what they want. I always do what I want.

Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale)

We need each other to make art (Indigenous and non-Indigenous people), send it to the galleries for Indigenous or non-Indigenous people to sell it. It won't sell itself.

Harry Bowen (Hopevale)

The community owns the art that is produced in our community. The board in Hopevale is Aboriginal and so we work for the board. The commercial end of the business in the galleries is mostly non-Indigenous and they are respectful of artists. There are guidelines set out by the government departments to ensure that a Code of Conduct applies for everyone that works in art. It applies just as much to the artists as to others. There are avenues that we can go to if we have a complaint about a situation or a person. That has not happened to me. I have been treated well by gallery people.

Kassandra Savage (Wei'num)

There are a lot of non-Aboriginal businesses selling indigenous art (in Cairns).

Margaret Mara (Wei'num)

Yes, all those 'in charge' making decisions regarding Indigenous art are non-Indigenous people.

Daphne De Jersey (Wei'num)

We aren't given the opportunity (training) to make it our business.

Craig Koomeeta (Aurukun)

The stories, the songs and the dancing within the artwork are what are most important. One of my crocodiles was used in Aurukun as part of a ceremonial story. I don't think people buy this art because it is pretty and looks good on a feature wall there is more depth to the reasons why this art is bought. I hope it is more of an appreciation of our culture. When I speak to a buyer, I am often asked if I get the money from the sale, at first this surprised me, but now I make sure that people know that artists do get their money.

Emily Ngarnal Evans (Mornington Island)

Probably all the buyers are non-Indigenous. And, the gallery people too.

Cairns-based Artists

Arone Meeks

There are people that are trying to change this attitude, but it is a slow process. Art workers should be able to learn more and go to the next step, but this will not happen anytime soon. Funds for art centres are very restricted and the courses are usually very far away. I go to art centres in communities (Yarrabah, Girringun, Lockhart River, Pormpuraaw) as an experienced artist to show new ideas, new concepts and new materials and to explore the boundaries of art through workshops. But, there is no equivalent for artists to learn to be an arts coordinator.

Zane Saunders

Yes, but not wholly. Indigenous people are playing a bigger role in the distribution of art and want to have control of the work. It is about empowerment for Indigenous people because getting that control back, will be a way of making sure that they get a fair share of the profits.

Arts Coordinators

Troy Dennis (Hopevale)

Hope Vale Art Centre has an all-Indigenous board of directors and all Indigenous staff aside from me. I can only speak for Hope Vale but I think the past has been dominated by non-Indigenous throughout Australian. The issues with this has created great focus from government investment into arts centres, the Code of Conduct, the creating of the Queensland Cultural Sector Plan 2010-2013, Arts Queensland and the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair. It is about Indigenous people

taking more active roles in the art network. It is at the commercial end that less Indigenous people engage in art, however this is gradually changing with public galleries in particular employing trained Indigenous art curators.

Robbi Neal (Lockhart River)

No. Every artist I have ever met, whether they are Indigenous or non-Indigenous, including myself as an artist are hopeless at managing their own affairs. Every artist would like someone to manage them because as an independent artist you want to concentrate on the production of your work and not on networking with galleries, buyers, publishers etc. Artists are often not skilled at promoting and marketing themselves. So in many ways artists from remote communities are fortunate because the art centre through its staff does all of these things, leaving the artist free to produce great work. This is not a black-white issue but an artist issue. I think it is naïve and too convenient to attach a race card to what is really an issue for all artists.

Brett Evans (Mornington Island)

I try not to buy into this argument. Is anything in Australia Aboriginal? What about Aboriginal music, film, entertainment, they all exist in a non-Indigenous business so why should the art world be any different: I think the art world cops an unfair go. I think the emergence of the Code of Conduct, which we are signatories to is a good start. I don't buy into the Richard Bell, proppaNOW rhetoric re same topic. This is the same rhetoric on the topic of white art centre managers. I think people who run this argument have little or no knowledge of what communities are like and some isolated communities are where most art centres are located. The people who make the comments wouldn't couldn't live/survive in the community yet they criticise white art centre managers who sacrifice much of their lives in highly stressful situations. Why? Because of their commitment to the artist and the community they serve.

Guy Allain (Aurukun)

No, not at all, it should not be put in a category of its own it should be all just art. It should not be treated differently. An artist is an artist! But the reality of the life of Indigenous people in Australia, particularly in remote communities is often extremely challenging, disadvantaged, and needs to be supported. In this sense Aboriginal art is quite different. How to reconcile the dichotomy of the power and vibrancy of their arts with the day-to-day harsh conditions of their lives is difficult to assess.

Valerie Keenan (Girringun)

Broadly speaking, no but the commercial end of the process is still essentially non-Indigenous. The board of directors of Girringun are all Indigenous people and the board employs me. There has been a move towards getting Indigenous arts workers more involved but at this time to my knowledge there are no Indigenous arts coordinators in FNQ. There are now Indigenous curators at public galleries, such as Brisbane and Canberra. At the National Gallery (Canberra) curators are setting-up professional development touring exhibitions

with workshops to tour art centres in communities and other venues where Indigenous artists can learn more.

Curators

Philip Batty (Curator, Central and Western Indigenous art, Museum Victoria)

My answer is somewhere in between. Yes, I believe art is a cross-cultural product. It is a product of a European buying audience and market and Aboriginal producers and suppliers. I spent three years at Papunya and have regularly visited for the last 30 years. What I have found fascinating in all my time is that I have never seen an Aboriginal person decorate their house with Aboriginal art. In contrast, my non-Aboriginal friends have many pieces of Aboriginal art in their homes. There is a paradox (lots of paradoxes). One is Aboriginal art is marketed as a unique expression of Aboriginal culture as though it has developed from a world disconnected from all other societies. And, of course this is the main selling point; buying a piece of the Dreaming and of a culture that is non-Western. But, I argue it is the West that thinks of itself as disconnected from an imagined pre-industrial past. And, the desire by non-Aboriginal people to get in contact with that imagined past is one of the elements that drives the development of Aboriginal art in Australia. Aboriginal artists are engaged in art production to make money.

Grant Smith and Rod McLeish (Curators, Pizzi Gallery, Melbourne)

No, not at all, we need each other for this exchange or interface to take place. The artists are the creators and without them there would be no gallery. We never tell them what they should paint or sculpt, that is not for us to say. We are the commercial end of the process. The art centre coordinators tell us that artists are very pleased with us selling their art, but the true motivation is the spreading of cultural knowledge to outsiders. We have recently seen a shift in the interface in regard to secret/sacred knowledge. In the past there was an unwillingness to share this knowledge but now more stories and objects once thought of as secret/sacred are being given to us to sell. The artists' comments through the arts coordinator tell us that it is their chance to educate the public about Aboriginal culture. With urban artists it is easier to develop relationships because they have far more knowledge of the social order of cities.

Trish Barnard (Curator, Cultural Centre, Townsville)

Predominantly.

Lindy Allen (Curator of Northern Australia Arts, Crafts and Artefacts, Museum Victoria)

No, because artists are doing it for economic reasons and also because the art is sold to non-Indigenous people. The Museum is not a gallery so we don't sell things. Instead, we promote justice from the indigenous perspective particularly of historical accounts and maintenance of cultural diversity. We work closely with artists and communities and what it means to be an Indigenous person. Art is an important key to understanding difference. We build on issues of past, present and future.

Beverly Knight (Owner, Curator, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne)

Indigenous artists are finding ways to be included in the business. There are now pathways to be involved. The Wesfarmers and the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra now have 16 scholarships for Indigenous people to become involved in the public and private sectors of the art world.

Samantha Creyton (Curator of KickArts, Cairns)

In terms of business, yes, it can be, especially with regards to the management of sales. White management, collectors, critics and curators largely drive activity in the 'industry'; it would be easy to believe, as Richard Bell states, Aboriginal art is a white thing.

Question 2: Explain to me your relationship with artists, gallery curators, arts coordinators – what dialogue takes place?

Community-based artists

Derek Rosendale (Hope Vale)

The people working in galleries are knowledgeable and experienced at the commercial end of the art market. I have found the people to be very positive and very respectful of my culture and of myself. In the art centre, the arts coordinator advises us about how to make our art more accessible to the public because in the end it is about making a sale. When arts coordinators leave the community it is like losing a family member.

Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale)

They call me Auntie Evelyn, very much a term of endearment. I'm not interested in travelling to exhibitions. I like being in Hopevale, but sometimes it is necessary because it helps to sell the art. I would not be an artist without the advice of the arts coordinator.

Harry Bowen (Hopevale)

Gallerists and the arts coordinator are very good to me, we need each other to make art sell.

Kassandra Savage (Wei'num)

I don't have a relationship with any gallerists: I leave this up to the arts coordinator. This is a person I trust and respect in all arts matters.

Margaret Mara (Wei'num)

I have a very good relationship with the arts coordinator (Charles Street) who has been looking after the artists in our area for the last few years.

Daphne De Jersey (Wei'num)

I only deal with the arts coordinator, mainly because gallerists are in major cities far away. The arts coordinator has been very good to me.

Craig Koomeeta (Aurukun)

I have a very good relationship with the people in the art process. With gallery people we talk about prices, dates of exhibitions and titles. They also want to know about life in Aurukun and if everything is well with me.

Emily Ngarnal Evans (Mornington Island)

The arts coordinator takes care of the artists by protecting them from outside people. That way we can get on with producing art.

Cairns-based artists

Arone Meeks

I have a professional working relationship with gallery people. They have always been professional, courteous, take due care of me and my artworks and let me know about spacing of artworks for display and the time of year best for an exhibition when traffic is at its highest. Because I deal directly with galleries we talk about the price range – which pieces can be sold cheaper, as in 'bread and butter' art that you know will sell? Mostly, this is artwork up to \$2,000, which then allows you to display some more expensive artworks. They may or may not sell, but by having an exhibition that covers a range of prices, you and the gallery stand a chance of making a profit. Galleries and artists need each other so each party involved takes care to make it work.

Zane Saunders

So information is one large area, then payment, unless you're familiar with the arts and how it works, how much is a standard rate per hour or day or contract. Well there will be times when you are frustrated when dealing with people their needs to be a trust platform. Plus contractual work, signing an agreed contract of work being produced using your designs etc. I have had experience that left me quite sceptical and paranoid when dealing with people who want you to sign an agreement. There needs to be specific arrangements that the artist is fully aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Arts Coordinators

Troy Dennis (Hopevale)

UMI Arts is the peak body for Indigenous Arts in FNQ, they run a program called 'Exhibition Ready' that prepares artists with all they need to know to hold an exhibition including artists profiles, labelling and stories, pricing, launching the exhibition, speeches. They also have a program one of my staff is doing called Arts Administration and Market Ready.

Robbi Neal (Lockhart River)

I cook a hot lunch every day in the art centre for the artists. We sit down together for lunch. We discuss, chat, joke and support and trust each other. I would describe the relationships as one of open communication. They know that I want to see them do well and they trust my advice and my commitment to them and their artwork. They are very supportive because of this. We do a lot of things outside of the art centre such as fishing, having meals together and watching movies. It can be difficult on my time because I am expected to be available 24/7. I am generally asked by 10 people in a day to take care of different matters with Centrelink, the bank etc., that they don't have the resources to deal with themselves so it is very rare for me to actually have a day off or to finish work by 5pm. I think this is why coordinators in remote communities don't last as it is an exhaustive job with a high burn out rate, no kudos or recognition in fact the opposite. We spend more time defending our role to people who accuse us of only being here for the money – what a joke – what money? My role extends far beyond the job description and is very hard to draw boundaries around.

Brett Evans (Mornington Island)

The bottom line is I'm their agent so to me it's a sacred sort of relationship. I give them all I have. I work in their best interests and make all decisions to do the best for them. I love my artists and I love our art centre and I love walking into the studio because it's warm and friendly and you almost escape from the community for the day. It's another world.

Guy Allain (Aurukun)

I live in the middle of the community, so I see everyone everyday. I have a comfortable and friendly relationship with the artists. But, this has been sometimes very frightening. It is a community with many acute socio-cultural-economic problems.

Valerie Keenan (Girringun)

My relationship with the artists is one of friend, facilitator, mentor and business manager.

Curators

Philip Batty (Curator, Museum Victoria)

I would describe our intercultural relationship as one of business. For example, we have a coordinated effort with the National Gallery of Victoria and the Papunya Tula artists that will be shown in Paris. We often have to negotiate with artists or their families to use art that was painted in the 1970s. Absolutely no money changes hands. People are genuinely happy for their art to be displayed in a cared for environment. It highlights how artistic the concerned communities were and in this way their reputations live on. We had to seek permission from the families of the deceased artists for a legally binding agreement to display the works. This involved some 300 people. We held community meetings with the relevant people of the various central Australian communities to get the agreements in order to exhibit the artworks.

Grant Smith and Rod McLeish (Curators, Pizzi Gallery, Melbourne)

Our relationship is with the arts coordinator from the communities because they have the power to decide on price and which artworks go forward for exhibition. They understand the market because they have experience in the industry.

Trish Barnard (Curator, Cultural Centre, Townsville)

As an Indigenous person I am ever conscious of the appropriate protocols to protect the designs on material culture from being appropriated by both non-Indigenous artists and other Indigenous artists who do not identify with the group that the material was collected from. I deal mostly with elders and custodians and often with art centres.

Lindy Allen (Curator, Museum Victoria)

Absolutely, there are relationships with artists, art centre staff and elders of communities. We need their help to piece together history, and they need our help to promote their culture. Many museums don't have that approach. We work with living Indigenous artists and the families of deceased artists in order to give meaning to objects. We refer to this as 'descent communities'.

Beverly Knight (Owner, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne)

Yes, the coordinators, but also with the artists I get to know. The sharing of knowledge about exhibitions is important. Politics is important, there must be open and transparent decisions. We know the prices through the gallery and discuss this with the art centre coordinator. We make decisions based on discussions between the parties involved.

Samantha Creyton (Curator, KickArts, Cairns)

It is a combination. We work with both artists and art centre coordinators. We deal with art centre coordinators and visit art centres to meet artists to ensure a more personal working relationship with artists.

Question 3: What are the obstacles in the art network?

Community-based Artists

Derek Rosendale (Hopevale)

The TAFE (Cairns) course is far too rigid. It was set-up a long time ago and is too structured. It caters for Indigenous students that have grown up in Cairns that are not aware of their cultural roots.

Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale)

At first when I did my prints I had a lot of negative comments, which upset me. The dilly bag is just a dilly bag, it doesn't belong to anyone and yet people said they owned it as a totem. I think they were just jealous of my modest success at that time. It did upset me.

Harry Bowen (Hopevale)

I can't say I have had any problems with pricing, selling and marketing, however finding art workers for the art centre that want to stay is difficult. The pay is low and the hours are long, so people leave. The other problem is the geographic distance from anywhere. Getting artworks to a gallery can be difficult. There has to be a great deal of trust that the canvases are being stretched properly. Sometimes, I see the artwork at the same time as the public. For example, if a show is in Cairns, I will probably drive there just in time for the opening. If I stay longer in Cairns it means that I need accommodation and that is an additional cost for the art centre.

Kassandra Savage (Wei'num)

No obstacles.

Margaret Mara (Wei'num)

Not many people actually listen to what the artist wants or thinks...there are too many 'experts' who supposedly know what we want and think.

Daphne De Jersey (Wei'num)

Access to major cities and gallery contacts; it is difficult long distance to keep those contacts.

Craig Koomeeta (Aurukun)

No, my experience has been very positive. People in galleries are very respectful and seem to want the very best for me. I would like to work with other artists from other communities so that new ideas can be explored.

Emily Ngarnal Evans (Mornington Island)

No obstacles.

Cairns-based Artists

Arone Meeks

Urban artists have challenges because they work independently unlike artists from communities that have the safety net of the art centre and the arts coordinator. It is hard to survive as an independent artist, because you not only have to produce art, but also look after the financial side of the business. I have to take care of finding galleries, transportation of artworks, stretching the canvases, undertaking my paperwork of BASS and GST and then chasing monies owed by the galleries. Then start all over again by following up opportunities of group exhibitions, commissions and competitions.

Galleries can be bad at paying. I never have contracts with galleries, because they can tie you up in red tape and you are not free to produce art for others. At the same time this can open you up to corrupt practices on behalf of the gallery. Underpayment is very common, whereby the gallery takes out more commission than it should. I have been caught before owing money to a gallery. There are good galleries, where owners/curators act honestly and ethically, but there are not enough of them.

Zane Saunders

Can be personal. Education helps to overcome problems. Also, knowledge of the art system helps. How you act as a person and how you are treated matters. People have tried to exploit me – they want me to give more while they give less.

Arts Coordinators

Troy Dennis (Hopevale)

FNQ remote communities are often rained in and isolated during the wet season, as the roads in and out become 4 x 4 only. The main obstacle is language and literacy; Hope Vale speaks traditional Guugu Yimithirr Language, and all funding grants and reporting are in English. Many people judge intelligence by your literacy skills but some of the smartest and wisest people I've met can't read or write so they miss out on great opportunities.

Robbi Neal (Lockhart River)

One of the biggest issues is the pressure from funding bodies for art centres to become self-sustaining. This means that art centres are placed in the position of not being able to take risks on new emerging talent. Sending work to galleries is expensive and if you are not sure how that work will be received it is a financial risk when funding is limited and you have pressure to become self-sustaining. I think this is really sad. Australia is already a small art market and very hard to break into. Government funding bodies should be supporting new emerging talent but instead they often put their dollars behind the already established big names.

Also, there is a lack of interest in how the art centres support people's lives. When funding acquittals are all about sales it continues the pressure to only invest in sure sellers. Funding acquittals need to also take into account the changes in peoples mental well being, in capacity building, in connectedness and this all happens through the art centre, but cannot be assessed in terms of monetary value.

Brett Evans (Mornington Island)

I suppose the biggest obstacle is getting noticed making the break into the market. I suppose isolation can be a big obstacle. For us Dick Roughsey and our dancers were world famous over 30 years ago so we were known for story/pictorial artwork on bark in storybooks, small board paintings. Dick Roughsey and Percy Trezise produced storybook style art but this was not sought after or even acknowledged by the mainstream fine art market, so you can be pigeon-holed that can be extremely hard to break out of.

For us it happened relatively quickly after we made the decision to change but that decision can take some time. You need artists with courage and vision and luckily I had 5 or 7 old men who took up the challenge. Another obstacle concerns unethical dealers. A lack of understanding and experience of the market by arts coordinators can lead to poor decisions, which costs the artists their livelihood.

I know when I started I tended to look for young galleries with refreshing approaches, but after a few years and great success I started looking for the top

galleries, because they can continue placing your artists higher in the market. After six years we now have Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, Raft Art Space, Alice Springs, KickArts, Cairns and a couple of galleries overseas.

Guy Allain (Aurukun)

The art centre has to rely on local government (council) for its funding and much of its administration. Our relationship can be difficult because we as an art centre are attached to the council and its many layers of bureaucracy, which inhibits our progress. The major hurdle is that the government model and regulation is not a fit with an artistic model, which needs flexibility. No art organisation should be attached directly to a government body because they are about accounting and not creativity, there must be an 'arm length' distance, that leaves flexibility and room for the constant flow of emerging opportunities.

Valerie Keenan (Girringun)

Distance to galleries, time constraints, staffing levels and inadequate funding are the main issues. Many of the artists from Girringun work on art one or two days a week because they are pensioners. When they sell an artwork their pensions are cut accordingly. To go from earning a little extra money to making a living is a big step and may take many years, if at all.

Question 4: Do you ever feel exploited by anyone in the art network?

Community-based Artists

Derek Rosendale (Hopevale)

Not yet. I know how the commercial world works, so people are careful with me. I was a policeman and in the military so people seem to think twice about trying to fool me.

Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale)

No one has done anything wrong by me. The gallery people have been very good to me, and interested in my welfare.

Harry Bowen (Hopevale)

Not yet.

Kassandra Savage (Wei'num)

No.

Margaret Mara (Wei'num)

Not yet.

Daphne De Jersey (Wei'num)

No, because I have not allowed myself to be exploited.

Craig Koomeeta (Aurukun)

No. Smooth sailing so far.

Emily Ngarnal Evans (Mornington Island)

The arts coordinator has been at the art centre a long-time, so he knows all the tricks and has worked out who is ethical in this business. I don't have to think about these things, just produce art.

Cairns-based Artists

Arone Meeks

Yes, negotiations are very important and details can be omitted and therefore later costs are deducted that you never imagined. Galleries know what sells and so they will suggest certain shapes, sizes, colours, which at times are not what you had in mind, but these are the boundaries that you have to work in if you want to sell your art. Most artists that have sold a certain style of artwork will go with "if you are on a good thing stick with it". I don't think there is anything wrong with that.

Zane Saunders

Yes, there are times when people want to employ my skills or services and approach me, but they're not really upfront with a lot of the information that will help make whatever you're participating in run a whole lot better.

Arts Coordinators

Troy Dennis (Hopevale)

No, because I will make a big issue of any form of exploitation, my network is very strong (particularly in government bodies) and this would be dealt with very quickly.

Robbi Neal (Lockhart River)

Using reputable galleries that have experience of remote community art centres is key to not being exploited. Galleries are notoriously slow payers and really have very little understanding of the conditions of the art centre and artists are working under. Once an artwork is sold, the artist expects the money immediately, which is not possible. Staff have often had undue pressure on them to pay the artist, even though the Centre has not received the money for a sale from the gallery. Staff are often accused of stealing the money by the artist and their relatives with whom the staff have a close relationship.

Unfortunately art is sold 'on the side' to tourists when money is needed and the worst buying offenders are government employees. These transactions can be with well-known artists. The artists often don't understand the value of their work and one well-known artist swaps his work for slabs of beers. This ends up permanently devaluing the work and means it can't be sent to galleries.

Arts coordinators are underpaid when compared to other employees in the community (in particular government employees), are undervalued and work extremely long hours without support structures. Base pay for a government employee in this community is around \$80,000 plus a house and six weeks holiday however, arts coordinators earn nothing like that. The first step is to get the right people for the job as Artistic Director/arts coordinator and the second step is to keep the right people by treating them well.

Brett Evans (Mornington Island)

No, not now, I suppose exploited might be a bit strong, but certainly there is a lot of pressure whether by funding bodies or galleries that represent you or galleries that want to. Fortunately, I'm now in a position to choose.

Guy Allain (Aurukun)

No, but relationships are not always easy. They need to be long-term with mutual understanding. And the passion of the dealers and gallery people is a must. It would be good also if political will was a little more concerned with building the ground where artworks are produced, encourage the maintenance, development and proliferation of culture on the ground where it happens. There is a lot of attention put on the marketing, art events, public cultural institutions; the public side of the art business. This is good, and it would also be good to balance the support on the other side to ensure production capability.

Valerie Keenan (Girringun)

Girringun has only been operating for two years, so I'm not qualified to answer this. We do go to great lengths to protect the artists from outside influences because if items are sold cheaply for quick money it will affect the market and

their reputation. All artwork that leaves this art centre includes documentation of authenticity.

Question 5: Do You Produce What You Want?

Community-based Artists

Derek Rosendale (Hopevale)

Yes.

Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale)

Yes and now I'm confident in what I do.

Harry Bowen (Hopevale)

Yes.

Kassandra Savage (Wei'num)

Yes.

Margaret Mara (Wei'num)

Yes.

Daphne De Jersey (Wei'num)

Yes.

Craig Koomeeta (Aurukun)

I have a good idea of what sells because I have been an artist for some time and have had success in galleries. I am able to tell the art centre coordinator what I want to make. We talk about solo exhibitions or group exhibitions before we start making artworks because we have to agree on continuity. This idea of continuity with a theme, colour or shape is something I have learned about marketing art. For example, at CIAF, 2010, the way the 'camp dogs' were displayed, how the colours went together, dogs of different shapes and with the one theme – dogs. This is probably why they sold straight away.

Emily Ngarnal Evans (Mornington Island)

I always discuss what I want to produce with the arts coordinator because when an exhibition is coming up you need to have work 'fit' with others. If it is a solo exhibition then the artworks must 'fit' together.

Cairns-based Artists

Arone Meeks

Yes, but always being mindful of what sells.

Zane Saunders

Yes.

Arts Coordinators

Troy Dennis (Hopevale)

Yes, I go with any idea and try to provide whatever is required to achieve the outcome.

Robbi Neal (Lockhart River)

Yes. They do. In this art centre, after a painting is completed, I and the artist and often the other artists will hang up a finished work and we will all look at it for a long time. Then as a learning tool, we discuss what is working really well in the painting, how the paint is applied and what that will mean to the depth, light, darkness and composition. All artists are on a journey and their art develops and changes at an intuitive level. If artists understand about painting in a technical sense then they will learn, develop and mature and their art will keep-on evolving. Too often Indigenous artists have been taught tricks rather than to really understand paint as a medium and I think this has short changed them leaving them vulnerable to the fickleness of the industry. Learning to understand paint or whatever medium is being used is essential for growth.

Brett Evans (Mornington Island)

Not an easy straightforward answer to this. Yes, but they might not sell any paintings. What do you do if they don't? Do you let an artist produce what they want and have no sales? What effect do you think that this has on an artist – they will probably walk? Do you intervene and try and help them get their artwork to a point where they sell it?

The art centre will go broke if all your artists don't sell, so it's not a situation you can allow for too long. We work on a commission basis and therefore when an artwork sells you get paid; if it doesn't sell the art centre loses money.

I'm lucky in that I have a couple of very successful artists who can 'carry' others but its not a good situation so all artists need to improve and refine what they want to paint. I use an art consultant who has been with us for five years. During that time we have continued to improve and the success both financial and reputation have also grown. The relationships with the artists are the important thing, which needs to grow and build over time with trust and respect.

Guy Allian (Aurukun)

Yes, but within boundaries. Artworks have to conform to their protocols. They can only represent what is relevant to their own particular family relationships and clan. They cannot represent someone else. They would have to ask permission from the 'owners' of the image or story, which they do at times. There is in this sense a strict protocol that they all follow. Some artists refuse to carve some images when I had asked them out of my ignorance.

Otherwise I encouraged them to carve firstly what they want, what is relevant to them personally, from their own life perspectives, while also pointing out that some image would sell more easily than others, such as currently the Camp Dogs are in demand so someone would ask for a specific image or commission.

I also on completion of the works mention to them that their work could do with a little more attention. This is a difficult issue, but there is also the sense that we have to aim for excellence in the field. And, that is often open to a wide range of perspectives. In that sense I do have some influence, but every manager will have its own, and this will change with new input. As we have a strong program of artists in residence workshops, this influence becomes broader and multiple.

Valerie Keenan (Girringun)

Within reason, if we have too many bowls to sell we tell the artists to go do something else. We started making pottery this year. We have a teacher coming in once a week to teach pottery and this has been very popular. It is about variety by offering artists choices. Artists do want to please me as the coordinator and if I'm happy with the output then the items will go forward for an exhibition. It is a bit of a balancing act for me because it is about confidence building, asking artists to push artistic boundaries while sometimes having to say stop, no more of that item.

Question 6: Do You Identify Yourself as 'Indigenous Artist' or 'Artist'?

Community-based Artists

Derek Rosendale (Hopevale)

I am very much an Indigenous artist, tied to my spirituality. However, on reflection I can be both, I want to tell outsiders a story about my culture but at the same time it is done in a modern style. So, I think of myself as both.

Evelyn McGreen (Hopevale)

I'm an artist.

Harry Bowen (Hopevale)

I think of myself as both.

Kassandra Savage (Wei'num)

As an Indigenous artist and in particular an Aboriginal artist

Margaret Mara (Wei'num)

I identify myself as an Indigenous artist.

Daphne De Jersey (Wei'num)

Indigenous artist.

Craig Koomeeta (Aurukun)

I think of myself as an Indigenous artist.

Emily Ngarnal Evans (Mornington Island)

I want to be known as an Aboriginal artist.

Cairns-based Artists

Arone Meeks

As an artist.

Zane Saunders

I identify myself as an artist, but most of the time people do the identifying that determines what category you sit in. Depending on how proactive you are as an individual can determine the outcome of where your work sits, and how people view the work, because it's in the work that identifies you the artist, your ethnicity too as people see you. But this is not always the case, I think. And, also where and how you see your social standing within your community. But mostly my work and how I describe to someone about whom I am and the type of work I produce is Contemporary Aboriginal Art. As I move along in my practice I can comfortably describe myself as an artist, of Aboriginal descent, producing contemporary and modern works.

Arts Coordinators

Troy Dennis (Hopevale)

Indigenous is good as I look at Australian Indigenous Art as our national treasure, it's important for Indigenous people to be proud, tell their story and understand they have one of the greatest, complex cultures on earth. It is taking non-Indigenous Australia much longer to recognise how important it is.

Robbi Neal (Lockhart River)

Not sure on that one, I tend to think art should be judged how it stands up as art regardless of the skin colour of the person who painted it.

Brett Evans (Mornington Island)

I think you are either an artist or not an artist.

Guy Allain (Aurukun)

They should be artists. We were part of a major Contemporary Fine Art Fair in Paris recently. This event (which has no connotation of the Indigenous aspect) reaffirms the excellence of the artists at an international level, regardless of background.

Valerie Keenan (Girringun)

I don't have an opinion on that question at this time.

Gallerists

Philip Batty (Curator, Melbourne Museum)

They are artists because they have earned their place in the Australian art scene.

Grant Smith and Rod McLeish (Curators, Pizzi Gallery, Melbourne)

We consider all artists that are in the fine art category to be artists. What sets the artists from remote communities apart from urban Indigenous artists could be language problems and anomie can be overwhelming for the artists. We can easily develop relationships with the urban artists because they speak English and have far more knowledge of the social order of cities.

Trish Barnard (Curator, Cultural Centre, Townsville)

As an Aboriginal person I am ever conscious of how Aboriginal people want to be identified. The branding 'Aboriginal' or 'Indigenous' helps sell the art, but it is up to the individual to decide.

Lindy Allen (Curator, Melbourne Museum)

I like to think that Indigenous artists are recognised as artists, but it is not up to me to decide for each artist. My role is to curate and acquire objects for the museum.

Beverly Knight (Owner, Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne)

They are artists. When I am overseas at exhibitions potential buyers and viewers want to know if the artist is Australian. For example, in South Korea (Seoul) I found that few people asked whether an Indigenous artist painted an artwork.

Samantha Creyton (Curator, KickArts, Cairns)

Indigenous art is part of the broader category of Australian art. In the end there is only one category, therefore everyone Indigenous or non-Indigenous are artists.
