

Chapter 2 Public Space, Public Art and Aboriginal Representation

Chapter Outline

This chapter introduces the major concepts with which this thesis is concerned. It discusses the historical absence of Aboriginal peoples from mainstream society and the public space, the more recent changes towards Aboriginal inclusion in Australian historiography and the call for Aboriginal representation in the public space. It introduces the concept of the public space and the artefacts within it and how these reflect the dominant social narrative of a place. It outlines the symbolic value of the public space and how the public space contributes to the identity discourse and the privileging or marginalising of particular groups, sub-groups or classes of citizens. It then discusses the role of civic and public art, distinguishing between the two, the role of artists in creating symbolic artefacts in the public space, and the challenge artists and others face in evolving new forms of expressions which are required for Aboriginal inclusion. It concludes with an overview which establishes the lack of writing on Aboriginal public space representation.

Social and Cultural Exclusion of Aboriginal Peoples

The continental land mass now known as Australia had been inhabited by Aboriginal people for at least 50,000 years prior to the British invasion and occupation (Australian Government, n.d.). The colonisation of Australia has not been one of humane consideration or adequate recognition of the Aboriginal peoples. It has been a process of dispossession, decimation, deceit and discrimination. As the noted anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner (1979:214) stated:

... the several hundred thousand Aborigines who lived and died between 1788 and 1938 were but negative facts of history and, having been negative, were in no way consequential for the modern period².

Until recently, this is an aspect of history that has not been widely narrated in the formal and informal enculturation process of Australians and the public space discourse. In outlining the concept of 'sharing histories' as part of the process of Reconciliation, Goodall (2002:8) noted that:

... the official and dominant histories of Australia from the 1880s to the 1960s had ignored or suppressed many stories and voices, privileging instead an account in which Anglo-Australians, with a few Irish and Scots offshoots, were the sole actors in the national saga.

As the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR, 1994:20) stated 'Indigenous Australians' history was seen as peripheral to the central task of the Australian historical enterprise'. Full and complete recognition and acceptance of an Aboriginal history, and that Aboriginal people and culture are of consequence, is another political and cultural step altogether but is I suggest underway. For Australians as a people to understand the true nature of the invasion and occupation of this land and

² 1788 is the year of British settlement in Sydney, New South Wales. European occupation of the whole continent developed from that date.

the impacts it has had on the Aboriginal peoples, multiple voices are necessary in the telling of histories. The Council (CAR, 1994:20) further stated that:

... the barriers that have for so long kept indigenous Australians' experiences out of our history books were not based on a lack of material, but rather on perception and choice. ... Deliberate avoidance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's history and a falsification of the historical record resulted in the legitimisation of colonisation, and deflected attention from the human rights violations inherent in the successive Australian government policies of segregation and protectionism, and assimilation.

Aboriginal history was not an integral part of the cultural history of place and, by extension, was not part of the public space narrative and public perception of self.

The colonising or 'received version of history' has been subject to more critical academic scrutiny and public debate over the last few decades, along with the inclusion of Aboriginal perspectives (see, for example, Mattingley and Hampton, 1988), to provide a broader understanding of settlement history, the various governments' policies towards Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal peoples' cultural heritage. There is still, however, an ongoing need to counter both overt and covert racist attitudes and perceptions within Australian society, in our received history and enculturation process and as represented in the public space. As the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation (1994:24) stated '[a] proper recognition of their [Aboriginal] role and a celebration of their lives should be a major aspect of the process of reconciliation'.

Cultural Artefacts and Meaning in the Public Space

The public space contains representations of a community's story about, and image of, itself. It is a contested space with various degrees of deliberate inclusion and exclusion in the exercise of power. It is governed and regulated by various levels of government and reflects the agendas of influential political, economic and cultural groups. As Hooper-Greenhill (2001:4) stated in the context of museums, also applicable to the public space, 'Questions need to be asked about access to culture and cultural production. Who has the power to create, to make visible and legitimate meanings and values? And what stories are being told?' As Francis (1998:475) has said, our stories or narratives '... produce the language that we use to describe ourselves as a community'. Further, as Hemming and Rigney (2003:1) have stated:

Cultural 'sites' often produce a range of competing meanings with the dominant ones reflecting existing relations. Identifying these complex relations of power should be crucial in planning the ongoing function and preservation of these significant 'sites' ... The absence of Indigenous symbols and presences is a powerful act of continuing dispossession and colonisation.

The public space also contributes to conversations about a community's identity and identity formation. As Osborne (2001:2) has pointed out, the geography of identity itself is constituted by '... the nurturing of collective memory and social cohesion through the representation of national narratives in symbolic places, monumental forms, and performance.' Martin (1997:89) confirmed this in stating:

[i]dentity is formed and continually reinforced via individual practice within culturally defined spaces ... Sense of place, as a component of identity and

psychic interiority, is a lived embodied felt quality of place that informs practice and is productive of particular expressions of place.

Osborne (2001:4) further outlined that:

Monuments, streets, neighbourhoods, buildings, churches, and parks are all material things, but they also evoke specific kinds of meanings and serve as spatial coordinates of identity (Lynch, 1972). They are associated with specific kinds of activities. They are also linked to society through repetitive prosaic practices, ritualized performance, and institutionalized commemoration. That is, there is an ongoing reciprocal relationship between people and the places they inhabit. People produce places, and yet they derive identities from them: "people are constituted through place" (McDowell, 1997).

The cultural artefacts in and the design of public spaces help make those spaces into places and help give those places symbolic meaning. It follows then that when Aboriginal people are not represented in the public space, or public culture, they become 'invisible'; not only are they invisible to the dominant culture, they do not see their own cultural heritage, their own people, as part of the cultural landscape in which they live. They are not part of the 'emotional and sentimental glue' (Holsti, 1996) that brings and binds people together as nations or as communities. This absence is also a deficit in the broader understanding of all Australians as a community and their acceptance of an Aboriginal inclusive public space narrative. As Francis (1998:475) has warned 'if we are not telling ourselves the right narratives, then we cannot imagine ourselves acting together to resolve our problems.'

In the 1990s when Aboriginal issues and reconciliation had become part of the national political agenda, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation recognised the power of public space commemorative practices, the monuments and memorials. It (1994:24) outlined that:

Memorials represent an important stage in the creation of national identity; they are a very concrete expression of public history, a way of making permanent in letters carved in stone a judgement about events, which may be local, national or international. Memorials reveal public perception, and may be seen as a measure of the popular influence of the views and writings of historians.

A monument or memorial 'tells a tale, not only of its subject but of the society that erects it' (Cameron, 1997: vii). Monuments and memorials tell us about aspects of our past and present and in some ways predicate our future; the direction we are moving in as a society. Collectively these symbolic forms speak of who a people are: their history, immutable in stone, bronze and mortar, represents the 'official' or dominant version of history and beliefs. Morris (2001:97) further pointed out that '...monuments predominantly function not only to remember deeds of the colonial figureheads they commemorate but to forget the more complex histories of the places they occupy'. Savage (1997:4) raised the point that:

Public monuments are the most conservative of commemorative forms precisely because they are meant to last, unchanged, forever. While other things come and go, are lost and forgotten, the monument is supposed to

remain a fixed point, stabilizing both the physical and cognitive landscape. Monuments attempt to mold a landscape of collective memory. To conserve what is worth remembering and discard the rest.

Monuments, whilst having a certain imprimatur are just one part of contemporary public space cultural expression. The civic or cultural landscape is constantly evolving, layered through the exercise of political, cultural and economic power, a reflection of the structures of governance, or even the vanity and ego of a prominent individual. As Bender (1993:3) outlined in the broader terms of landscape, of which the public space is part:

... landscape is never inert, people engage with it, re-work it, appropriate and contest it. It is part of the way in which identities are created and disputed, whether as individual, group, or nation-state.

More recently the choice of cultural artefacts to be placed in and the design of public spaces has included the balancing of social agendas and the inclusion of those once marginalised (Fazakerley, 2005, 2008, Sharp et al, 2005). For instance, women, minority groups and Aboriginals have emerged as subjects for representation in the public space, providing a reflection in the public space of other broader social trends and changes. A change in public representations then potentially helps reshape social understandings and cultural identities for all.

Public Space Representations of Aboriginal Peoples

Until recently the public representations of Aboriginal culture have been limited or, if present, have excluded the more unpleasant aspects of colonial history. The opportunities for Aboriginal peoples to see themselves reflected in the cultural landscape and for their stories to be part of the collective memory and narrative have been negligible. Aboriginal peoples have had little political and economic power to facilitate their participation in the articulation of the public space and narrative. Until the 1967 Commonwealth referendum Aboriginal people were not fully part of the nation-state: the Commonwealth government did not have powers to make laws for Aboriginal people, nor were they counted in the national census. Aboriginal people were clearly excluded from full participation in the nation-state; they were non-citizens and non-entities in their own country, lacking a place in the national identity and the national narrative. Their collective and personal identity was external to that of the nation-state.

In 1987 the Australian Bicentennial Authority facilitated a project *A National Register of Unusual Monuments* where 800 local Bicentennial Community Committees were approached to submit nominations. Two-thirds of the Committees responded, including in their submission, thirty-three monuments that referred to Aboriginals, which had been erected throughout white Australia's history³ (Bulbeck, 1990:169). Until 1970 the memorials:

... told a story of either nameless Aboriginal killers of whites or 'faithful' guides of white explorers or settlers, or recorded the death of the last 'chief' of

³Of these monuments 18 per cent were erected before 1900, 12 per cent between Federation and World War 11, 18 percent from the post War years until 1965, 27 per cent between 1965 and 1974, and 24 per cent between 1975 and 1988. Over half the monuments were erected in the later 25 year period (Bulbeck, 1990:168).

the local tribe. A handful of memorials record Aboriginal workers, artists, sportsmen. These memorials reproduce the story of assimilation.

This limited number of representations was largely the accidental by-product of the colonising culture's history, stereotypical and non-inclusive of a complete and complex Aboriginal narrative. The absence of Aboriginal representation in the public space can be considered as part of what Stanner (1979:216) called, in the 1968 Boyer Lectures, 'the great Australian silence'. Stanner (1979:214) suggested this silence was a deliberate 'structural matter' to exclude Aboriginal peoples' cultural histories from the 'received version of our history' and that it was part of 'a cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale'. As Taylor (2000:30) pointed out 'Acts of forgetting are easily sanctioned by selective historical narratives'. Aboriginal people were 'out of sight and out of mind'.

Senior Kurna custodian Lewis O'Brien (2006:26) put it this way:

History, language and education are the tools to carry culture on to the young. As I walk the city of Adelaide, in particular the North Terrace precinct, I ask myself: Kurna people lived here but where is the evidence of our histories? There are no memorials to the Kurna, our Kurna names for locations on the landscape are re-placed by English ones, so called European 'pioneers' and 'explorers' are elevated through monuments while the great deeds of our people the Kurna are silenced.

North Terrace is Adelaide's premier cultural boulevard; Parliament House, Government House, the Museum, Library, Art Gallery, University of Adelaide, University of South Australia and Botanic Gardens being located there. Hay, et al. (2004) also discussed the lack of representation of Aboriginal peoples along North Terrace, focussing on Prince Henry Gardens, a linear garden adjacent to Government House. Their paper (2004:201):

... illustrates the longstanding and ongoing exclusion of representations of Indigeneity in and around Prince Henry Gardens, part of one of the most significant cultural and memorial sites in South Australia. Prince Henry Gardens is home to a large number of monuments and memorials that commemorate almost solely non-Aboriginal people and events. This is a selective and deliberate landscape of the dominant culture.

This commemorative exclusion reflects the historical exclusion of Kurna and other Aboriginal people since colonisation. As Hemming and Harris (1998:14) stated of the Kurna:

From the early years of "settlement" they were constantly forced more and more to the margins of the Park Lands, away from the cultural precinct of North Terrace and the wealthier parts of the city.

This exclusion continued, as outlined by Lewis O'Brien (2006:26):

If reading the landscape and its memorials to history is the criteria [sic] by which to determine whose cultural space it is, then one could be forgiven for thinking that the city of Adelaide was and is void of any Aboriginal peoples, and that we as Kurna hold no rights to a shared space.

Many stories have not been told and many colonising myths have been perpetuated. To fully represent Aboriginal history would challenge the received versions of colonising history, the popular view having been that settlement was a relatively peaceful process and that the Indigenous were to assimilate or die out. To include Aboriginal history, especially the less pleasant aspects of colonisation, challenges historical myths. As Bulbeck (1990:170) outlined:

Most monuments avoid the sore spot of race relations, the moment of contact, by confining Aboriginal history to prehistory. It is therefore cordoned off from both the past atrocities of the early settlers and the present claims made by Aboriginal peoples for the return of their lands.

Counter-memorials to represent Aboriginal perspectives are evolving in Australia (Frances and Scates, 1989, Scates, 1989, Jenkins, 1998, Goodall, 2002, Schlunke, 2006, Batten & Batten, 2008, Strakosch, 2010, Public Art Around the World, n.d.) and although they may be relatively few, these counter-memorials provide an overdue challenge to the dominant narrative and provide stories not previously included. As Taylor (2000:31) has outlined:

... not only are places re-territorialised by the re-emergence of buried stories, but the strategic moves by which dominant narratives have managed to reproduce themselves on the surface of social memory are also laid bare and open to critical examination.

In her article 'Confronting amnesia: Aboriginality and public space', De Lorenzo (2005) outlined that:

For much of their history since 1788, non-Indigenous Australians have virtually erased from their public art practice any reference to a conflictual history of occupation. Yet since the bicentennial of settler occupation of Australia, artists, reconciliation groups and government authorities, amongst others, have sought to address intercultural issues in the public domain, by reference to historical contexts and contemporary aspirations.

De Lorenzo (2005) discussed three well known public works *Edge of the Trees* (1994) by Janet Lawrence and Fiona Foley located in the forecourt of the Museum of Sydney; the *Sea of Hands*, an ongoing temporary installation project undertaken by Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR); and *Reconciliation Place* (2002) a project by the federal governments' National Capital Authority within the precinct known as the Parliamentary Triangle at the very heart of the nation's capital, Canberra. Of these works she (2005:108) stated:

They employ diverse visual and political strategies to resist amnesia and express themes of commemoration and struggle. They perhaps mark a new maturity in Australia, and attempt to deal with a painful part of history. These dark and repressed subjects that gnaw at the national psyche are at last out in the open and this is itself is a sign of enormous hope.

Of *Reconciliation Place* in the Parliamentary Precinct in Canberra it has been said (Ellis et al, 2006:406):

For Indigenous people the healing comes, presumably, from them being able to see their stories being told and to have these stories heard. This is something that has been missing for many years on all levels, not least of which are institutional teaching and national memorialisation. For white people, the healing comes by them being confronted with Indigenous history that tells of Indigenous people's struggles and achievements.

In speaking of the *Aboriginal Memorial* (within the National Gallery of Australia) and Reconciliation Place, Jenkins (1998:26-29) said:

The success of the memorials in their various forms ... lies in our engagement with them in the context of Australia's history; more importantly, Aboriginal artists have attained a deservedly prominent place in the telling of their own history.

De Lorenzo (2005:117), however, commented on an alternative response to Reconciliation Place:

To add to its controversy, Reconciliation Place is seen by Aboriginals as a desecration of part of what was once a sacred site for Ngunnawal women. Consequently, most Aboriginal people want nothing to do with Reconciliation Place (Indigenous Solidarity Action Network 2001).

These statements reinforce not only the contested nature of the public space as to what is, or is not, included but also the merits and alternative perspectives on any particular revision. There has been little writing by Aboriginal people on public space commemorations to add to this discourse and to include their perspective in any evaluations of this new genre of public space representations (see O'Brien & Rigney, 2006, Williams, 2007a for Adelaide exemplars). Nor has there been any significant level of obtaining Aboriginal opinions in the fields of critical discourse and cultural geography. The writing to date is mainly by non-Aboriginal people providing their reflections on the genre. This thesis can perhaps be accused of avoiding or excluding an Aboriginal opinion. This is a considered, rather than avoided, outcome. This thesis aims to establish the context and extent of what exists. Detailed critique can follow.

As part of the research for this thesis the commissioning and design process and the cultural content of five public space projects was critiqued in detail. The complexity of a comprehensive critique culminated in lengthy writing which could not be accommodated in this thesis. Utilisation or publication of that writing awaits an opportune occasion.

In attempting to locate the commencement of Aboriginal public space representation De Lorenzo (2005:108) stated that *Edge of the Trees* (1994) in Sydney:

... marked the first commissioned public art piece to be made by an Indigenous (Foley) /non-Indigenous (Laurence) team, a fact that says much about the social and public art cultures in a city boasting multicultural tolerance.

De Lorenzo referred specifically to a cross-cultural collaborative public artwork rather than any public artwork. Whilst *Edge of the Trees* may be the first such work for Sydney, in Adelaide the first commissioned cross-cultural public artwork was

twelve years earlier in 1982: the mural *Aboriginals Discovered Cook* at the Adelaide Festival Centre, by Arrernte artist/musician Ronnie Ansell and non-Aboriginal artist, Carol Ruff. The mural is discussed in Chapter 6.

In summary, knowing and understanding intricate and intimate details of Aboriginal history and culture through public space representations assists cultural understanding and the defining of cultural identity for both Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals alike. A more comprehensive and detailed critical analysis of existing public space works from an Aboriginal perspective is yet to evolve.

Civic Art and Public Art

A distinction is appropriate between what can be understood as the tradition of civic art as compared to public art, a relatively new phenomenon which has broadened the style and content of art, and range of artists practising in the public space. Adelaide art critic Margot Osborne (2004) suggested that the term ‘civic art’ be used to distinguish a certain type of art in the public arena. Civic art commemorates the authority of the state, authenticates the state, represents the official narrative of the state, and is usually commissioned or endorsed by the state. Civic artworks reinforce rather than challenge the civil authority, and are usually of the commemorative and memorial type (war memorials, commemorations of royalty and so forth). The stories told by civic artworks in Adelaide are mainly of discovery, hardship, conquest, establishing a British or civilising order, and making an economic landscape. As a collection of cultural memories, they are a tale of civilising the wilderness; the heroic story is one of settlers, pioneers, and conquerors. By implication, civic art has also largely discredited the Aboriginal cultural landscape and mythologies by its absence but, as will be demonstrated in this thesis, this is changing. With civic art there is an established connection with the civic authority and the role of the artwork in embodying broad civic values.

Public art, as it is now understood in arts practice, is a term that has been used in Western arts practice since about the mid 1960s ‘to describe a certain art practice, the results of which are to be found in mainly external urban spaces used freely by the general public’ (Harding, 1997:9). Public art is the placement of artworks in public spaces to reflect a broader range of social intent; decorative, aesthetic, creating opportunities for artists, and bringing art into daily lives. Public artworks are often personal in nature and reflect the conceptual and aesthetic sensibilities of individual artists rather than the state or commissioning authority. Public art was born out of:

... attempts by artists to shift art out of the gallery and onto the streets in the 1960s [which] were not simply about changing the locations of where art could be viewed but were about changing art itself, broadening its influences ‘born of democratic urges’ and attesting, not that art was good for society, but that art was part of society and its systems (Harding, 1997:14).

In Australia, the broad concept of public art, as compared to civic art, has developed over the last forty years or so. The Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council established its Public Art Program in 1973 with the aim of giving ‘the public access to the very best in contemporary Australian art, and especially to provide works of art where none at present exist’ (Weston, 1983:9). Fazakerley (2005:2) summarised the aims of the Board in that:

... artworks would contribute to 'public enjoyment and education' developing not only the capacities of individual members of the public but the well being of society as a whole. The Public Art program also aimed to improve the conditions of Australian artists through the creation of spaces for art where none had existed before, providing the additional benefit of exposing the public to works of art and allowing for a wider assimilation of the values and concerns of artists.

This 'wider assimilation of the values and concerns of artists' has borne fruit in terms of Aboriginal public space inclusion in that artists, as will be demonstrated in this thesis, have often included an Aboriginal theme in their artworks at their own initiative, rather than it being an objective set out by the commissioning agent.

In South Australia, the Art for Public Places Committee was established in 1984 to oversee the development of an Art for Public Places Program, 'an important pioneering initiative. It was the first comprehensive public art program in Australia' (Arts SA: 2000). The reasons for its creation, as outlined by Arts SA were:

- . to provide work and income opportunities for artists – emerging and established; that is, to enable them to develop their artistic practice while earning income from their practice*
- . to enhance the environment by the provision of artworks which empathise with both the natural and built environments, in all regions of South Australia – in cities and the metropolitan area and in the regions*
- . to expose the community to contemporary Australian art in the daily environment*

A number of States have now developed public art programs and 'Since the inception of government public art programs, "public art" has been advocated on the grounds of integrating art and cultural activity into the public realm' (Fazakerley 2005:1). Whilst public art can simply contribute to the design, aesthetics and enjoyment of public places, other more profound social functions can be realised as outlined by Fazakerley (2005:3):

Public art has increasingly been advocated for on the grounds of its contribution to resolving visual and social conflict, and in collaboration with the work of other design professionals, as providing improved visual comprehension and literacy; opportunities for social cohesion, citizenship, and place identification;

The objectives of resolving social conflict, and providing opportunities for social cohesion, citizenship and place identification have been particularly important in terms of Aboriginal inclusion, the ongoing 're-identification of self' for Aboriginal people in the public space and as a contribution to the cross-cultural reconciliation process.

Carter (2001:36) also alluded to the differentiation between civic and public art and their social functions:

Governments and powerful patrons continue to sponsor works that show them in the best possible light, but there exists along side these expensively produced and anonymous ideological excursions a shadow breed of publicly funded

sculptures, portraits, installations and other environmental interventions, which enjoy an artistic prestige in inverse proportions to the budget expended on them. ... They may be expected to redeem a badly designed urban environment. ... They may be expected to communicate a redemptive message, one that asserts the importance of institutional practice, a place, a social heritage, or an historic event, which it is in the interests of the commissioning party to strengthen or commemorate.

Notwithstanding the social value of public art articulated above, opinions vary. Australian art critic Benjamin Genochio (2001) viewed public art another way:

Let's be honest for a minute and acknowledge that the encounter with a public sculpture in a park or a square is, for most people, a total non event. They breeze on by, on their way to somewhere else, unaware they are even in the presence of an artwork. This is partly because most of the population does not give a damn about art, unless of course it's the bronze statue of King Wally Lewis outside Lang Park Sports Stadium in Brisbane, but also because a great deal of public art in this country is, frankly, utterly inconsequential.

Genochio's comment does not fully engage the social aspects of public art making. It is not always the status of the work as an art object that is of import, but the social process and outcomes that support the work in terms of meeting particular social objectives. It is the social function or validity of the artefact that is of interest in this thesis, not necessarily the quality or grandeur of the artefact itself.

Public art is also critiqued by geographers and cultural critics as to its merits and functions, as outlined by Hubbard et al, (2003:150) '... many geographers have adopted a critical perspective, suggesting public art generates ideological effects insofar that it mobilises meaning in the built environment to sustain relations of domination.' Here I submit that the distinction between civic and public art is appropriate as Hubbard et al refer to civic art which can readily contribute to sustaining relations of domination. In contrast, Peter Sellars, Director, Adelaide Festival of Arts, 2002 stated that 'Public art is the street signage of democracy: how we enter cross-generational and multi-cultural intersections, how we merge, flow and yield, when we stop and reflect, and ultimately where we are going'. Carter, (2001:38) added that '... the terrain of the Australian public art is so often assumed to be ideologically neutral, offering a kind of museum without walls'. This may be so for the many artworks that are commissioned for their formalist or aesthetic values but many works can be overtly political and certainly adopting ideological positions. As will be outlined, public art and public space artists have contributed significantly to Aboriginal inclusion and expression, creating artworks that are both symbolic and stimulating.

De Lorenzo (2005:105) pointed out that ' a determined look around central public spaces in any Australian city or country town will show few public art works by settler Australians acknowledging Aboriginal pre-contact, much less post settler existence'. Whilst this may represent the historical geography of power, as I will demonstrate in Adelaide, this is being challenged. The 'central spaces' or cultural precincts of a city or town may also change slowly in terms of their civic and public art collection, the current collection has accumulated over many decades and will not change substantively 'overnight'. To fully comprehend what has occurred in terms of Aboriginal inclusion it is necessary to look beyond the central spaces, and that is the

approach of this thesis. She also stated (2005:10'5) 'Nor are there any documented accounts of 'unofficial' contemporary Indigenous visual art works that explicitly expose the gaps in mainstream public art'. Again this research looks beyond mainstream public art as to what 'unofficial' works may exist.

Genochio (2001) concluded his critique of public art by stating:

What I am arguing for is public art that really matters, artworks that do more than just embellish or enliven a shopping centre or car park - artworks, in short, that can enchant us, stimulate and even outrage. There will be duds along the way, sure, but if the essence of public art is about adding value to a city, which I think it is, then we must accept that the artists working in public have to be able to make an intrusion into the environment, to redefine a space through the creation of an object that is both symbolic and stimulating - not something that is so timid or banal as to be invisible.

In summary, public art, as distinct from civic art, has added another dimension to public space design, articulation, cultural expression and social inclusion. Initially public art was not so much to add to the commemorative landscape but more to add another layer of vibrance and meaning, to take art outside the confines of the gallery walls, to make it part of everyday lives, and to provide further opportunities for artists and artistic expression. In this process statuary evolved into public sculpture; public sculpture then morphed into a whole range of design forms and media including ephemeral installation art and murals, serving many different social and artistic agendas. But it has evolved to be more. There are new dimensions being added through technologies; projections, new media and social networking are all now used as part of public space practice and present new opportunities that may be used for Aboriginal inclusion.

As I will demonstrate in this thesis, public art has facilitated a greater Aboriginal representation in the urban environment. Public art can be and is a cultural glue that can cement reconciled relationships between the coloniser and the colonised whilst at the same time respecting diversity. Sharp et al (2005:1004) described it this way; 'Public art is not simply art placed outside. Public art is art which has as its goal a desire to engage with its audience and to create spaces ... within which people can identify themselves, perhaps by creating a renewed reflection on community, on the uses of public spaces or on behaviour within them'. In its essence and as part of the everyday (quotidian), it can equalise and help heal what has previously been an unequal and unhealthy public space relationship which was based on race and power. As Jacobs (1996:154) outlined, public art can contribute to the 're-Aboriginalisation of place' and 'although not land rights in itself, can be a meaningful re-territorialisation' and by not being subject to complex land rights and lineage associations 'offers a most democratic possibility for those groups wishing to remake their mark over land.'

The Role of Visual Arts Practice

In Australia, visual arts practice tends not to be a highly valued pursuit, economically or culturally. Here public fervour is directed towards sport and business as witnessed daily by the television news services. However, cultural artefacts can help shape a society and, over time, can become a significant part of the anthropological record by which a society is understood. The museums of the world represent and interpret cultures through their artefacts. A contemporary challenge in Australia is to evolve

artefacts that represent a contemporary Aboriginal Australia, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cross-cultural collaborations, cultural adaptation by both cultures and a cultural synthesis between the two cultures. Part of this is the development of three dimensional symbolic forms of expression for an urban Aboriginal culture, something which has not been part of their cultural tradition. This is a challenge and new phenomenon for a cultural tradition that stretches back at least 50,000 years. The evolving Aboriginal expression is often by way of cross-cultural collaboration and an emerging cultural synthesis. It requires new ways of thinking about public space arts practice, which in itself is very different from a studio-based practice, the process and audience being much different. In speaking of the artists who conceived *Edge of the Trees* (1994) De Lorenzo (2005:121) stated ‘... the artists catalysed fresh thinking about public art and contemporary Australian values’, a statement which reflects the activities of many contemporary artists in grappling with cross-cultural Aboriginal inclusion and forms of expression. She further (2005:108) outlined that ‘The few and largely unknown precedents of Aboriginal themes in public art meant that artists and commissioning agencies were free to invent new typologies’.

In the 1968 Boyer Lectures, Stanner described that what he called the ‘anthropological principle’ in engaging Aboriginal people, that is, ‘a steady awareness that there were no natural scales of better or worse on which we can range the varieties of men, culture and society’. He suggested it was permeating the 20th century in how Aboriginal people were being recognised but that other perspectives were also required. He added ‘at any moment the genius of a Sidney Nolan, or another artist or writer or poet of this order will disclose facets of Aboriginal integrity which our professional style can scarcely encompass’. And indeed, Nolan did contribute, providing one major artwork in the Adelaide Festival Centre in 1973 (Figure 5-13, part of the non-Aboriginal exploration of ways to positively represent the mysteries of Aboriginal culture.

Artists also work with communities and cross-culturally to develop the community’s creative abilities and to assist the expression of its sense of self. The cross-cultural collaborative expression of Aboriginal culture does require the non-Aboriginal artist to also be open to change and in some ways go through a personal process of reconciliation if the collaboration is to be successful and equitable. Through this process Aboriginal artists also evolve their expressive capabilities. Aboriginal artists often also have the added responsibility of representing their culture in a very public way or, more precisely, defining an aspect of contemporary Aboriginality. Aboriginal culture is traditionally a culture of concealment and earning the right to know rather than unfettered public expression. In addition for Aboriginal artists, who have not necessarily grown up with a strong Aboriginal enculturation, there is a need to be aware of and adhere to cultural protocols based in their cultural tradition when working within this public process. Non-Aboriginal artists also must learn a new set of cultural protocols.

There are parallels with the development of Aboriginal architecture as identified by Mallie & Ostwald, (2009:9). They discuss the ‘authorship of Aboriginality’, the architect’s complicity in creating cultural forms where, as in the design of visitor centres, architects are presented with the opportunity to participate in the construction of cultures. They cite Mike Austin’s (2007:149) argument that ‘[e]verywhere architecture is framing, defining, representing’ and consequently architects are repeatedly ‘portraying cultures other than their own, which raises the issue of who or what is being represented’ (Austin, 2007:154). Lisa Findley

(2005:194, cited in Mallie & Ostwald, 2009) maintained that for a designer creating a project for another culture:

... the complexity of this act of translation increases dramatically. This is due, in part, to the fact that architecture is primarily a European cultural practice. It has particular protocols, terminology, processes and sensibilities. It assumes specific dynamics between architect and client. And it is fairly particular about the purpose and values of buildings.

Anthropologist and architect Paul Memmott (2007:302) also made comment in discussing collaborative Aboriginal architecture which he defined as architecture in which an Aboriginal client retains stylistic and management control of the project but forms collaborative partnerships with other professional and skilled personnel to achieve the culturally appropriate outcome. He stated that in so far as the skills, materials and designs provided in the collaboration are of Western origin, such architecture can be termed 'bi-cultural architecture'. A similar challenge exists in public art practice.

Artists can seize the freedom and flexibility to express what it is to be human and make almost unfettered comment on all aspects of society. It is the work of artists, and other design professionals, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, to create the artefacts that are then absorbed into the cultural discourse and may or may not then become signifiers of national, personal and civic identity. Artefacts in themselves are the cultural story tellers and as Muecke (1997:220) has said:

If Australia is to be changed, for example by becoming a republic, then the kinds of stories we tell about Australia will have to change. Stories after all, are a mechanism for focussing our desires to belong to a community. In a curious way they lead us to say what we are or what we want to be, they intertwine personal and public identities, making Australians of us, for instance; Australian women, Australian men, Aboriginal Australians, and so on. So identity seems to be both internal and external, subjective and objective, in the domain of the cultural, where artists may have a responsibility to shape national destiny, where they create that strange unquantifiable thing, symbolic value.

Of the artist and public art, Siah Armajani (2001:104) has stated:

It is not about the myth of the artist but it is about its civicness. It is not to make people feel diminished and insignificant, but it is to glorify them. It is not about the gap between culture and public, but it is to make art public and artists citizens again.

Public art has social functions. It has moved from large scale, site specific art into work with social content. Its language is a hybrid of the social sciences, art, architecture and city planning.

The outcomes we see in the public space are influenced by many factors; the agenda of a commissioning body as outlined in a project brief, the location of the work, the abilities of artists and others to imaginatively respond to the brief and resolve the form of the artefact. This is a challenge. De Lorenzo, in speaking of what she considers the less successful aspects of *Reconciliation Place* in Canberra stated (2005:121) '... the overdesigned "slivers" desperately need the kind of imaginative

insight good artists can inject into the public domain'. This is one role of the artist, to bring 'imaginative insight' into a long standing problem.

Public Space Art Criticism: Lack of Critical Writing

Aboriginal public space representation is a relatively new phenomenon with most activity, as will be outlined in the thesis, occurring over the last fifteen years. The Aboriginal representation has not so much been through the formal commemorative processes, what I refer to as civic art, but through public art in its many forms. In 2000 De Lorenzo (2000) pointed out that it was 'alarming how few [Aboriginal] projects have been seriously written about'. Whilst there has been some writing on Aboriginal public artworks in a cultural geography or sociological context (for example Jacobs, 1996, Morris, 2001, Besley, 2005, De Lorenzo, 2000, 2005, Schlunke, 2006, Batten and Batten, 2008, Read, 2008) and a number of critiques or reviews by others in the context of art making, there is not yet a comprehensive body of literature on the genre. Kepert (2007:29) pointed out that there is relatively little literature to date discussing Aboriginal symbolic representations in urban environments.

The lack of writing sits within a broader context. As Fazakerley (2005:9) noted 'The production of knowledge about public art is dispersed across a wide range of sites which are rarely brought together in any one place'. Critical writing on public art has traditionally received less attention than gallery based artworks. Carter had earlier outlined (2001:47) that:

... [if] the discourse of the art magazines is tied to the interests of the art market, then the realm of the public work of art is understandably classified as a non-topos (non place) and non-topic. It serves no obvious interest, and little is to be gained by dwelling on it.

In speaking of the United Kingdom context Sharp et al (2005:1007) stated that:

Due to the lack of evaluations into the success, or otherwise, of public art projects, it is difficult to compose a representative selection of good or bad practice and whereas iconic or controversial projects may receive critical and media attention, those at a community level are often neglected in this respect.

The cultural discourse and writing on public art has evolved over the last decade in Australia, witness the Public Art Research Bulletin providing a forum for discussion and information dissemination (Fazakerly, 2012). Further afield in England IXIA, Public Art Think Tank, provides another forum (IXIA, 2012) and in the United States, PPS, Project for Public Spaces includes public art (Project for Public Spaces, 2012). Further evolution of a critique of Aboriginal public space representations, in particular that which includes an Aboriginal voice, is required.

Summary

Historically, Aboriginal peoples have been excluded from the mainstream of Australian society and this has been reflected in their lack of inclusion in public spaces and the civic art (cultural artefacts and commemorative markers) those spaces contain. Geographers have established the symbolic value of the public space, and the role of the cultural artefacts therein, and how that contributes to identity formation, public and personal, and the marginalisation of some people or groups of

people. Until recently Aboriginal people have been largely excluded from that space and the reflection of self, or a people, that it contains. Aboriginal people were not a visible or valued part of society. Over the last four decades or so the position of Aboriginal people in Australian society has been subject to an ongoing revision. Concurrently, the role of the previously predominant civic art has been expanded by the rise of public art, a new form of arts practice which has extended public participation in the public space. Understanding the distinction between civic and public art enables a better understanding of the intent of the commissioning of artworks (or other commemorations) and the intent of the cultural, social and aesthetic outcomes to be achieved by such commissions.

Through the genre of public space practice, non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal artists are playing a significant role in developing public space artefacts to represent Aboriginal culture, a considerable challenge. There still remains however only a small amount of writing on Aboriginal public space representations to document and critique the evolution of Aboriginal representation and to better understand what has occurred. A reason for that may be that little is known about what Aboriginal representation exists.

This thesis, in documenting the extent and manner of Aboriginal public space representations, aims to provide the base upon which a more comprehensive critique, active expansion and curation of Aboriginal public space representations can be built. The remainder of this thesis then, starting with the methodology used to locate Aboriginal Cultural Markers, documents in one place, those Aboriginal public space representations which have been located in Adelaide.