“A PIECE OF OUR SOUL”

How producers, intermediaries and consumers understand the authenticity of Aboriginal art at Woolaning and Darwin (Northern Territory, Australia).

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Research objective and question

Nowadays a great variety of material products of Aboriginal culture are available to the outside world. Think for example of the world-famous didgeridoos, dot paintings, bark paintings or boomerangs. These products can be bought at commercial art galleries, Aboriginal art centres and cooperations, department stores, tourist shops, on the internet or directly from the artists. This immense collection of art and artefacts is ranging in price from a few to ten thousands of dollars. Some are bought without questioning where they come from or what their meaning is. Others can be bought with extensive information about the artist and if available the hidden contents or the 'story' of the work.

My thesis is about this Aboriginal art that is for sale. The research objective is about the consequences of commercialisation, and more specifically tourism, for this art; its production and its authenticity. Is Aboriginal art produced for commercial reasons still to be considered authentic? Who decides what the criteria for authenticity are? And thus what is authenticity in different contexts?

It is important to look at the different contexts in which Aboriginal art circulates nowadays. With Aboriginal artworks being produced for the market and circulating on a global level, they can be seen as intercultural objects. To get an insight into the consequences of commercialisation, not only the artists but also other actors on this market should be considered. I have chosen to look at the following actors along the art's trajectory: artists as producers, owners/representatives of art galleries as intermediaries and tourists as consumers. In order to conduct a three-month research project I went to the Northern Territory of Australia at the end of January 2006. The first month I spent in an Aboriginal community named Woolaning, situated in Litchfield National Park (about a 120 kilometres south-west of Darwin, the Northern Territories' capital). From my first visit to the Litchfield National Park area four years ago, I knew indigenous people there were active in art production and sales. So my first month of being with the artists, I looked at the starting point of the art's trajectory, namely its production. This was important to gain an insight into the context in which the art is literally made and from the artists' points of view. I was especially interested in the authenticity debate that surrounds Aboriginal art in

the western art world. Authenticity and art are often debated from the outside. I wanted to get an insight into the ideas of the people who actually produce and 'own' this art. What is their understanding of the commercialisation and authenticity of their art?

Because Aboriginal art is also part of the intercultural framework, a focus just on the Aboriginal frame or domain would give me a too narrow view. Aboriginal art as intercultural objects are produced for the market and thus should this intercultural context be considered as well. Although the fieldwork in the community and therefore the artists' point(s) of view remained an important and substantial part of my research, I moved to Darwin for the remaining two months.

A lot of the Aboriginal works of art are not directly sold from producer to consumer, but an intermediary is involved. I therefore include commercial Aboriginal art galleries and galleries that represent Aboriginal art centres in my research. Because the art centres themselves are often situated in remote areas, I added their point of view by looking at their representatives in Darwin. By looking at these art galleries, the middle part of the art's trajectory, where the contexts of producers and consumers come together, was covered.

To finish the art's trajectory I also added the views of possible Aboriginal art consumers, which in Darwin happen to be mainly tourists. Consequently, my research would cover the art's trajectory from producer to intermediary to consumer. In that way it would become clear that with contexts changing, the meanings of art are changing as well. My main research question is:

"*Does commodification affect the authenticity of Aboriginal art?*
And if it does so, for whom and to what extent?"

One of the issues most prevalent in the commodification of Aboriginal art is whether Aboriginal art that is made for the market can still be called authentic. I was very much interested in the debate about authenticity that surrounds Aboriginal art, which we mainly see in the western art world. In western art tradition, indigenous art, as part of an ancient culture, is often looked at as something fixed and unchanging. The idea that Aboriginal art is produced with non-traditional materials and for non-traditional purposes does not fit this

image. However, Aboriginal artists I spoke to emphasised that their art is authentic because it is not so much about how it is painted, but about who painted it. They, as true Aborigines, produce true, authentic Aboriginal art. The fact that it can be different from their 'traditional' art didn't change this fact. Also the fact that most of their paintings still say something about their Dreaming, (even though new media and materials might be used to express this) assured its authenticity. Most art-gallery owners and managers agreed in some way on this flexible view of culture. Most of the possible consumers I spoke to didn't think 'true Aboriginal art and culture' and commerce could go together. Most of them stuck to the limited, static notions of Aboriginal art and culture, not seeing its dynamism. However, I think that Aboriginal art, being part of an intercultural framework, can challenge these static ideas. In this thesis I will present an understanding of authenticity from these different viewpoints. Contrary to Bowden (2001) and Coleman (2001, 2005), I found that the different actors in this study *do* emphasise that it is important for Aboriginal art to be produced by an Aboriginal person in order to be authentic.

By looking at commercialisation and authenticity of Aboriginal art from different perspectives, my theoretical approach is motivated by Myers and his ideas in *Painting Culture* (2002). There he points out that there are a number of discursive levels in the social creation of Aboriginal art (2002: 23). It is not just the artists anymore who have ideas about the meaning of the art. Aboriginal art are not just local products anymore, they are intercultural objects nowadays. This means that numerous other actors, as for example art dealers, consumers and art critics, are involved as well. Images and identities of Aboriginal people and their culture are produced, transformed and circulated in these intercultural discourses of art. This implies that meanings are being negotiated. Therefore it is impossible to apply only one meaning to the art. Neither is it possible to look at these meanings as fixed. There is a continuous dialogue between these different actors about the meaning of this art. This approach can be looked at as 'culture making'. Culture can then be understood not as a set entity, but as something that is constantly negotiated and changing.

Related to this is the categorisation of art. In this thesis I use concepts as art and commodification at the same time. As Philips and Steiner (1999: 3-19) show, objects are often categorised as either art, artefact or commodity. An object categorised as a

commodity in the west is in this way often seen as less authentic in comparison to an object categorised as art, among others because a commodity is produced for an external market (Ibid: 9-10). The point is though that in today's interconnected world, with art circulating in different contexts, it is hard to define an object as either art, artefact or commodity. Because of its movement through different contexts (and also through time), the object can acquire different meanings. Depending on the context, the same object can shift from one category to another and thus be categorised as art as well as artefact or commodity. Because of these blurred boundaries between categories, Philips and Steiner argue not to try to define art, but to look at why people construct these various categories of art. In this thesis I will therefore be not be concerned with the discussion if Aboriginal art that is for sale is still art or if it should be considered as a commodity (and if there are differences), but I will shed a light on how people in different contexts look at this commercial art and its authenticity. I will use both concepts of 'art' and 'commodification' in this thesis without rating the one above the other.

By studying these issues of commodification and authenticity on a local level, it can shed a light on a global issue. It is not just Aboriginal art in Australia that has to deal with these issues. Everywhere around the world the incorporation of non-western art, think for example of African or American-Indian art, into the western art market is attended by a certain stratification and tension. As Welsch, Venbrux and Sheffield Rosi (2006: 21) explain: "(…) the contemporary visual arts of non-Western peoples are increasingly part of a capitalistic global art world with diverse gatekeepers, tastes, venues, individuation of artists, and hybrid sources of inspiration." Therefore ideas and opinions about non-western art are not limited anymore to the context it originates from. To get a better insight into this global phenomenon, it is necessary to look at it on a local level.

Ethnographic approach

With this thesis focused on the expression of authenticity and on the ideas about consequences of commodification in *different art contexts*, my ethnographic approach resembles Geertz's (1973) 'thick description'. In anthropology, especially interpretative anthropology, thick description asserts the essentially semiotic nature of culture. It has to do with the fact that without a context, cultural practices and discourses are hard to

understand. When the context changes, these practices and discourses will change. This means that culture is not a 'thing' and that practices and discourses are not the causes of action, but its medium. It is the anthropologists' job to explain these contexts in such a way that they become meaningful to an 'outsider'. In everyday contexts it is possible to gain an insight into the actors involved in 'culture making' and in their motives.

The social reality an anthropologist is studying is never static, but always changing and indefinite. Therefore what I have been studying and observing at a certain point in time, might not be valid for the future. This can be linked to the idea of 'culture making' (Myers, 2005). Actors in the Aboriginal and intercultural context are constantly involved in a dialogue about the meaning of Aboriginal art. This means that there are no set standards; culture is made in social action.

Outline of the thesis

Above I presented the outline of the research topic and the ethnographic approach, which are central to this thesis. Now I will discuss the outline of the following chapters. In chapter two I will present the research settings and methods. The theoretical framework will be discussed in chapter three. Here relevant theories and concepts will be elaborated. In chapter four, five and six the findings of my study will be presented. Starting with the art producers or artists in chapter four. Followed by the art intermediaries or art galleries in chapter five. In chapter six I concern myself with the survey findings concerning the consumers, in this case tourists. Finally, in chapter seven I will get back to my research questions and draw the conclusions of this study.

2. RESEARCH SETTINGS AND METHODS

Research settings

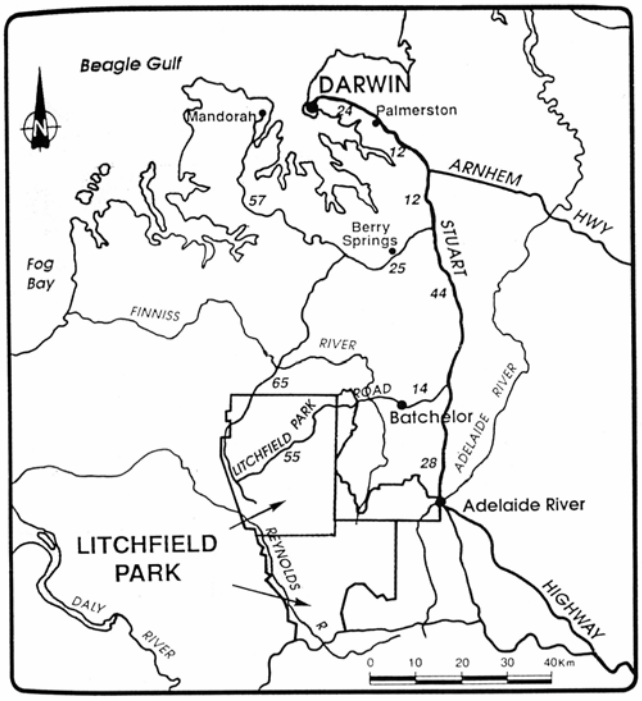

Figure 1: Australia's Top End (Gunn, 1991: 3)

The fieldwork I have done can be looked at as multi-sited fieldwork (see Marcus, 1995). By doing multi-sited fieldwork among different actors along the Aboriginal art's trajectory, I have been able to place Aboriginal art in a wider context.

The first month I have spent at Woolaning community. When I arrived, I was struck by the lush green nature. It was the middle of the wet season. Last time I was there I remember the nature being dried up and gasping for the 'big rain' to come. Now it was the time of the 'big rain'. This first month I lived with my main informant. Because I actually lived with the people at Woolaning community *and* to get a better understanding of the situation today, some background information is necessary.

Woolaning community is situated in Litchfield National Park, about a 120 kilometres southwest of Darwin. Litchfield National Park, with over 330,000 visitors in

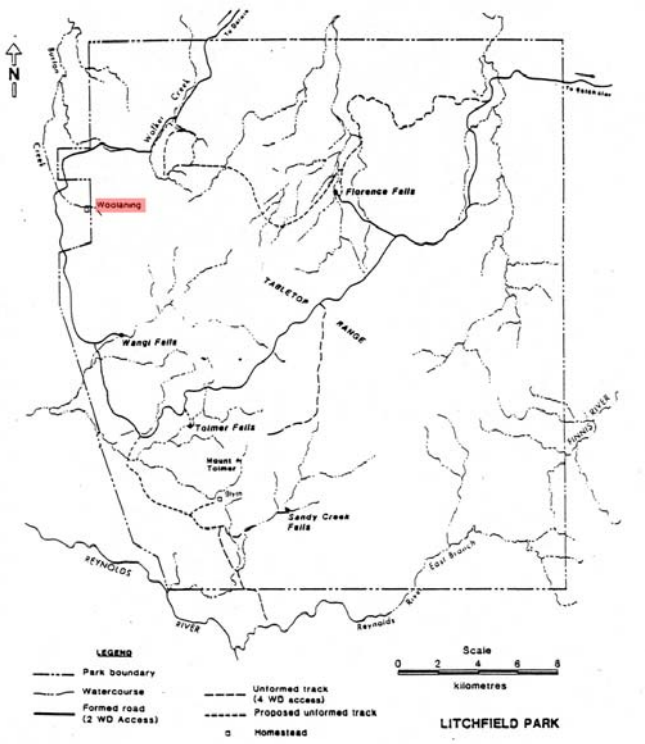

Figure 2: Litchfield National Park (Parks & Wildlife, n.d.[a])

2005, compared to 130,000 in 1990 [1], is one of the fastest growing tourist attractions in the Northern Territory (Bain, 2002). It covers an approximate 1,500 km2 and encompasses the Tabletop, the Tabletop Ranges and parts of the Reynolds River and the Adelaide River drainage basins. Throughout the range, numerous springs, waterfalls and enormous termite mounds, can be found (Parks & Wildlife, 1997: 1-3).

The first European exploration in the area was in 1864 by Frederick Litchfield from the Finniss Expedition (Parks & Wildlife, 1997: 3-4). The first European settlement was not until 10 years later. Since this European settlement, cattle have been the main land use in the area. The first pastoral leases were established around 1900. It was not until World War II, in which the area was important as a base for Defence Force troops and used for the storage of ammunition (because of its remote location), that the area was more actively used for mining. Deposits of gold, tin, copper and uranium were being exploited. Most of these mining operations were relatively small. Nowadays there are still some mining activities in the area (Ibid: 4). When parts of the pastoral leases were surrendered in 1985, the National Park could be established and became a fact in 1986.

Although there are internal disputes about traditional Aboriginal ownership of the area, four groups have been recorded as having an interest in it: Kungarrakun, Marranungu, Werat and Waray (Parks & Wildlife, n.d.[b]). About 21 different clans can be found in the area, which are all interrelated and involved in land claims (T. Petherick, personal

[1] See Appendix I

communication, February 2, 2006). [2] Because the Northern Land Council is still resolving these disputes, none of these groups have yet officially been recognised as traditional owners of the Litchfield National Park area. Similar to a lot of other places, European settlement has brought disruption to traditional life and even dislocation from traditional lands to the local indigenous people. They became an important labour source for the pastoral and mining activities in the area (Parks & Wildlife, 1997: 5).

Woolaning community is situated at the site of the old sawmill at McCullum Creek, established in 1951 by Ray Petherick. At that time Ray Petherick was a crocodile shooter in the area. He married Rosie, a traditional owner of the Finniss River area (south-east of Litchfield). In the 1970s one of their sons, Tom, started a family on the Finniss River with Daisy Marjar, now one of the senior Werat members and my main informant in this research. This was at a time when most Aboriginal people from the area had moved to Darwin. Daisy and Tom lived in the area shooting and catching buffalo, bulls and scrub cattle (Guse & Marjar, 2000: 11). With the land rights legislation in the 1970s their hopes, Tom as a member of the Werak/Goanna clan and Daisy as a member of the Freshwater Crocodile clan, were high on greater control over their traditional lands. However, as mentioned before, land claims still continue today. In the 1980s Tom and Daisy were forced off the Wagait Aboriginal Land Trust because of changed boundaries, but they continued living at Woolaning.[3] At that time Daisy was not yet recognised as a Werat traditional owner. It has only been since the 1990s that her rights as a traditional owner have been restored and she, her children and grandchildren, living at Woolaning, are recognised as Werat people (Ibid).

Nowadays, members of the community are running the 'Marinja Aboriginal Corporation'[4], which main activity is producing and selling art. They are also working on an Aboriginal cultural tour, focusing on rock art and bush tucker. They sell their art at their

[2] See Appendix II

[3] "The Aboriginal Lands Trust was established by the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972. It is a significant landholder with responsibility for approximately 27 million hectares or 12% of the State's land. This is made up of reserves (most being reserved for "the use and benefit of Aboriginal inhabitants"), freehold properties, pastoral leases, special purpose leases, one annual renewable lease and one reserve leased from the Water Corporation." (Department of Indigenous Affairs, n.d.). The Wagait Aboriginal land trust is an area near Litchfield National Park, consisting out of the southern portion of the Finniss River coastal plain (Guse & Marjar, 2000: 11).

[4] In their mythology Marinja is the place where people go to when they die.

own shop at Wangi Falls, the main tourist attraction in the park. So the economic production in the community has changed from the pastoral industry in which mainly men were active, to an arts and crafts industry in which both men and women are active (Guse & Marjar, 2000: 13).

Even though cultural realities have changed drastically since European settlement in the area, the level of 'traditional' cultural maintenance is high for the people at Woolaning (Guse & Marjar, 2000: 13). The language that is spoken might be a pidgin of English and local languages and dialects and the children might receive western education, still traditional life and knowledge is an important factor in their lives. They know the mythology of the region and occasionally ceremonies are held. About a 135 rock art sites can be found in the area, their lives are still mainly based on kinship ties and networks and elders are to be respected and listened to.

For the reasons mentioned before, I moved from Woolaning to Darwin, my second fieldwork location, after a month. Moving from the lush green and tranquil bush in Litchfield National Park to the hustle and bustle of Darwin-city was quite a change. The reason to proceed my research in Darwin was that Darwin, together with Alice Springs (further south), is the main Aboriginal art and tourist centre of the Northern Territory. In 2003, 29% of the Northern Territories' population were Aborigines (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2003). This is the highest proportion of Aborigines in any state or territory of Australia. This, together with the fact that the Northern Territory was the last area of Australia for the Europeans to colonise, results in a strong continuation of traditional Aboriginal culture and practices. Together with a number of national parks in the area, this attracts a lot of tourists to Darwin.

Besides their traditional subsistence economy, Aborigines are also involved in the mainstream economy nowadays.[5] The involvement in this mainstream economy is in many communities mainly based on the production and sale of arts and crafts (Altman, 1988: 63,145). With most of the tourists in the Top End[6] being in Darwin, most of the art is also being sold in Darwin. So this city is *the* place to find art galleries and tourists in the Top

[5] Altman (2005) describes this as a hybrid economy model. This means that besides being involved in subsistence economy, indigenous people are also involved in a state economy (certain benefits) and a mainstream economy, mainly by the sales of art.
[6] The northern part of the Northern Territory is referred to as the Top End.

End. Furthermore, Darwin is quite close to Woolaning and sometimes the people from Woolaning sell their art in Darwin. Being able to do fieldwork in both Woolaning and Darwin gave me the opportunity to get into contact with three different kinds of actors in the art's trajectory: producers (the artists from Woolaning), intermediaries (art galleries in Darwin), and consumers (tourists in Darwin).

Research methods

The first part of my research at Woolaning community was based on the method of participant observation. I tried to participate as much as possible in the activities of the people I lived with. The aim is "to understand another way of life from the native point of view" (Spradley, 1980: 3). I tried to get close to people and make them feel comfortable with my presence so I could observe and record information on their lives. I did this by living with my main informant (a small disadvantage of this was that it was hard to withdraw to work on my fieldnotes). This meant that 'the field was around me 24 hours a day'. A lot of days were spent painting, selling art or just sitting around with relatives. I watched the painting and selling of art, mingled in with the 'sitting around' and whenever possible asked questions. Furthermore I tried to help out by preparing canvas and acrylic paint and by helping out with day-to-day tasks and at the local primary school. I also joined my informants whenever they were selling their art (mostly at Wangi Falls, the main tourist attraction in the park, but also at some tourist restaurants and a service station along the road to Darwin) and I was going wherever they were going. I think that in this way I also got accepted sooner. Because I already knew a few people in the community it was not hard communicating with people and thus I was soon participating in the community life. After a month it was time to change my research setting. Also having to cover the contexts of the art galleries and tourists, I needed to proceed with my research in Darwin.

As I mentioned before, moving to Darwin was a big change. Changing my research setting from Woolaning to Darwin also meant changing my research methods. Not being surrounded with informants anymore meant that the setting got a lot more formal. The following two months of my research I spent doing a variety of things. First I tried to get into contact with the gallery owners or managers of the Aboriginal art galleries in town. Most of them I approached by just walking in, talking about my research and asking them

if an interview would be possible. I managed to get appointments at all (about 9), but two (one because I simply didn't have enough time and the other didn't want to cooperate), of the galleries. When interviewing the gallery owners/managers I used an interviewguide[7]. In most cases I was allowed to record the conversations on tape, which helped me a lot with working out the information.

Besides talking to all these gallery owners and managers I had some conversations with other relevant people and organisations in the Aboriginal arts' industry like for example ANKAAA, the Association of the Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists. Furthermore, I have spent a lot of my time doing literature research, predominantly in the Northern Territory State Library in Darwin. The library has got a broad range of material on Aboriginal art and culture, though a lot of it is outdated. I also carried out literature research at the Charles Darwin University and AAPA, the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

The last method I used was doing questionnaires with tourists. I decided not just to ask 'yes' or 'no' questions, but also 'why' questions. I wanted to get an insight into *their opinions*. First I tried to let people fill out the questions themselves. It turned out though that in that way they sometimes did not answer the more difficult questions. Therefore I decided to ask the questions myself, 'forcing' them to think about it and answer. In the end I had done 51 questionnaires.

Limitations of the fieldwork

As the perfect fieldwork research does not exist, there have also been some limitations to mine. First, I arrived at Woolaning having prepared an interviewguide. My idea was to sit down with people and talk about this list of topics and questions and if possible tape these conversations. I soon realised that that would not be the right way to do it, the setting would be too formal and it would create a distance that I wanted to avoid. My study of this first month is therefore mainly based on informal conversations. Sometimes it was possible to take notes during these conversations, but often it was not. This meant quickly working out the information after the conversation. I think that in this way useful information unfortunately gets lost sometimes. Because I have spend so much time with my key

[7] A list of questions and/or topics that need to be covered (Bernard, 2002: 205)

informant Daisy, doing an interview also wasn't necessary. I got a clear view of her ideas just by being with and talking to her. With the two other informants, Wendy and Tom (I spend less time talking to them about the subject) I did a short, quite informal, interview at the end to get a clearer idea on their views.

The switch from the bush to the city was also quite hard sometimes. The situation changed from being in the bush, were I was surrounded by the research all the time, to being in a city were, to be involved, I really had to 'search' for the research.

A limitation to some of the interviews with the gallery owners or managers was that I could not record them on tape. In that way a lot of valuable information gets lost because working out the interviews depends just on your notes and memories. I had also hoped that through the galleries I could get into contact with other artists. Unfortunately there was just not enough time for this. On the one hand I think this is a pity, other artists' opinions would have been interesting. On the other hand though, it gave me more time to include perspectives from different contexts on the topic.

Furthermore, I would have liked to include opinions of older tourists in my thesis, but this was difficult. The initial plan for doing the questionnaires was to situate myself at the Northern Territory Tourist Information Centre, a neutral place in the city centre where I could meet a variety of tourists. Unfortunately I could not get permission to ask people for their cooperation. Therefore I decided to walk through the city asking people if they were tourists and if they were interested in answering some questions. This way it was hard finding older people, I found that it were mainly younger tourists walking around. The result of this is that younger people mainly filled out my questionnaires.

What I think was of quite great influence on my study is the season. The wet season being on its peak meant that for the artists at Woolaning there was quite little activity concerning art production and especially tourism and thus sales. The heat and humidity and the fact that there were not a lot of tourists, kept motivation low, also to talk to me sometimes. For people at Woolaning this is also the time to be busy with a lot of other things for which they do not have time during the busy, dry season. This made it often quite hard to change the topic of conversations to art. In Darwin it was also low season for tourism. For most of the galleries it was the lowest of the low season, just being able to cope. The advantage of this for me was that people had the time to talk to me. Usually I

interviewed the gallery owners or managers in the gallery (a location that helped to evoke answers to my questions). This meant having to stop the interview whenever customers entered. During the dry season it would have been impossible doing an interview this way, now it was not a problem at all.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As Morphy (1998) shows in his book *'Aboriginal Art'*, Aborigines already have a long history of art production. Traditionally they painted on bark, rock, and human bodies or in the sand and used natural ochres for it. These paintings were then often used in ceremonies. From the 1980s onwards interest in Aboriginal art has started to grow (Morphy, 1995: 219). Aboriginal art was more and more seen as art in a western sense, so 'art for art's sake', art being praised for its aesthetic appeal. Soon the popularity of Aboriginal culture and art increased immensely, both in the tourist and fine art sectors[8] (Kranenbarg, 2004: 67). Aborigines noticing this started to produce more art for the market, which has become a significant element in the Aboriginal economy nowadays (Altman & Smith, 1992: 24). The growth in interest is partly caused by an increasing promotion of Aboriginal culture, including art, as a tourist attraction, especially from the 1990s onwards (Huyton & Ryan, 2002: 632). Of greater impact however, has been the establishment of Aboriginal art centres and cooperations. The Aboriginal members are involved in the decision-making process. The art centres not only help to organize the production but are also responsible for the distribution of the art. According to Altman, Hunter, Ward and Wright (2002: 3-8), the sales of indigenous art is estimated at somewhere between $100 million and $300 million a year. Over 70 indigenous art centres in central, South and Western Australia and in the Northern Territory represent some 5,000 to 6,000 artists, with $10 to $10.5 million-worth of sales. Besides these indigenous art centres, a wide variety of commercial art galleries and shops have been established, which

[8]Altman, Hunter, Ward and Wright (2002: 8) show that a general but imprecise distinction is being made between fine and tourist art. Examples of tourist art are mainly boomerangs, didgeridoos, small to medium sized paintings, souvenirs and clothing. Fine art than, would be art with a certain higher status. Mostly paintings collected by museums and galleries. In reality the distinction between these categories are not that clear. Altman et al. (ibid) give an example of a large and expensive painting that is still considered tourist art, according to the artists, because of the technique that has been used.

are especially popular with tourists and also art collectors. So while traditionally art was used in ceremonies (see for example Errington, 1998: 82), artists have definitely responded to new opportunities offered by the production of art for sale. Nowadays Aborigines and intermediaries have created a market for Aboriginal art. This commercialisation of art is exactly what raises a conflict.

Nowadays, instead of traditional materials as for example rock, bark and ochres, introduced materials, such as canvas and acrylic paint, are often used for paintings. Next, most of these paintings are sold in art galleries or tourist shops (Weichart: 2000: 153-154). According to western art tradition though, indigenous art that is produced using non-traditional materials and for the market, so produced not in traditional ways and not for traditional purposes, is seen as less authentic or even as 'inauthentic'. However, for the artists themselves the art is seen as authentic because often it is still a representation of their Dreaming[9] or land (as it previously was). What we see is that because the art moves through different contexts, different conceptualisations of 'authentic Aboriginal art' are in conflict. The Western idea of inauthenticity has got to do with the fact that authenticity is seen as connected with tradition. Tradition in its turn is seen as connected to the idea of an unchanging, static society, "uncontaminated" by external influences. The idea that Aboriginal culture is an ancient, continuing and thus static culture also explains why for example urban Aboriginal art is less popular (Weichart, 2000: 141, 157). Instead, Aborigines from the centre and the North come closest to this romanticised image of a culture unspoiled by the West. They are mostly seen as an authentic people in an authentic country (ibid: 143-144). The fact then that they use introduced materials and produce for a market, make people question this authenticity. So even though it is a modern, western,

[9] Although the views on religion are diverse throughout Aboriginal Australia, for many Aborigines, Dreaming ideas form a religious basis. Dreaming is about the past, the present and a determinant to the future. It explains how a once formless earth was given form by Ancestral beings who emerged from beneath the earth. These Ancestral beings, as human, animals, plants, objects, substances or forces, travelled the earth and gave shape to it. They created places, plants and animals, introduced the law, rules by which to live, invented songs, dances and paintings remembering their acts and late in the creation period they created humans to succeed them (Broome, 2002:13-19). When their work was finished they returned to certain places in the land where they once emerged. There they still are today, still taking part in the creation of things (Morphy, 1998: 67-72). That is why the Dreaming is not just something from the past. Present-day Aborigines across Australia trace their descent from these Ancestral beings that have manifested themselves in topographic features where they have left their spiritual powers (Isaacs, 1999: 5). Therefore Aborigines claim that all living things are connected to the land and that the knowledge of this land and its resources is an important part of their culture (Ibid: 6).

view to appreciate Aboriginal art for its aesthetic value (Weichart, 2000: 154-155), a lot of people, often tourists, want Aboriginal art to be as traditional as possible (although there are of course people with a more nuanced view). That would correspond with their ideas of Aborigines as a primitive, spiritual, exotic or pristine people (Littrell, Anderson & Brown, 1993: 199). Now what is exactly meant by this authenticity, especially considering commercialisation and tourism?

To start with, authenticity is a cultural construct of the modern, western world. It has got to do with our search for an authentic cultural experience, unspoiled, pristine, genuine, untouched and traditional (Handler, 1986: 2). An authentic culture would be a culture that is an independently existent entity. Thus, a culture that would only exist with its possessors (ibid: 4). This impossible idea about authenticity, especially in today's interconnected world, coincides with the common idea that Aboriginal culture is static and unchanging. In tourism the notion of authenticity is still relevant when it involves the representation of 'the Other' (Wang, 1999: 350). Although it simplifies the complex nature of authenticity in tourism, the authenticity of material culture is mainly based on the criterion of whether it is made by local people according to custom and tradition or not. The consumer demand for authenticity would be driven by a search for products that provide elements of differentness in their lives (Spooner, 1986). Art made by 'the Other' can often provide this element. When this art is then produced in a non-traditional way with non-traditional materials, it is often not seen as authentic. In that way, it is not an expression of tradition anymore. Interesting is the point that people seem to forget, that already when they buy a work of art made by the 'Other', it has been taken away from its original context and therefore it would not be authentic anymore in their line of thought.

What I think is most important considering authenticity is that Aboriginal culture and art are not static, that it is part of a complex reality and therefore art can never be 'authentic' in the above described way. In that way, authentic art would not exist at all. Cultures change through time and are never free from external influences. Commercialisation does not necessarily mean a destruction of the meanings of cultural objects. Cohen (1988: 383) describes that these objects can acquire new meanings for the locals because for example they become a mark of self-presentation towards outsiders.

This does not mean that old meanings just disappear; they can change or new meanings can be added. Therefore so-called 'non-traditional' art can stay authentic.

By producing art for sale, the contemporary context has therefore become part of Aboriginal art (Morphy, 1998: 141). So even though designs are often still connected to the Dreaming and painting the art is usually constrained to specific rules (such as those concerning gender and age) (ibid: 184), the art is now produced to be sold and in many instances not to be used in ceremonies. When looking at the history of Aboriginal cultures and art we see that over time Aborigines have always found ways to incorporate non-Aboriginal influences into their local symbolic universe. For Aborigines this was a way of adjusting to new circumstances without disrupting the traditional framework of knowledge. In Aboriginal societies the value and meaning of art changes every generation. By doing so, they are incorporating it into the world in which they live and therefore these elements become part of their identity (ibid: 221-224).

So instead of just being part of the Aboriginal world, Aboriginal art is also part of the intercultural world nowadays. What has to be clear is that Aboriginal culture (and thus art) is part of a complex reality in which there is continuous interaction between the local and the global. Although place is very significant in Aboriginal art, the art cannot be reduced to the local level anymore. Aboriginal art is ultimately produced for the 'white market'. You won't find these paintings on walls in Aboriginal houses. Art for art's sake has never been part of Aboriginal culture. Therefore the consumption of Aboriginal art is a non-indigenous matter. While locally a meaning is given to this art, the art circulates in a wider context and gains new meanings along the way.

Howard Morphy (1991) proposes that Aboriginal art should be considered in two frames, namely an Aboriginal and a European one. For Morphy, a "frame" is "the encompassing set of cultural practices and understandings that defines the meaning of an object in a particular context" (1991: 21). In his study of the art of the Yolngu from Arnhem Land, Morphy draws attention to the "intercultural frame" that comprises of both the indigenous and non-indigenous cultural contexts. He notes:

> All Yolngu artists are increasingly operating in both the European and the Aboriginal frame, and in doing so are actors in the transformation of their society. Both frames

> are essentially European creations, for until the Europeans came the Yolngu frame was the Yolngu world; only through invasion did the other frame begin to affect their lives. (1991: 26)

Fred Myers (1995, 2002) also locates Aboriginal art in "an intercultural space," but focuses on the representation of the art in discourse along the art's trajectory from Aboriginal producers to Western consumers. With my research being about Aboriginal art, tourism, commercialisation and authenticity and the ideas of artists, intermediaries and possible consumers (tourists) about it, both the Aboriginal and intercultural context and its discourses are covered.

By looking at both the Aboriginal and intercultural context and at the movement of the art within and between these contexts we are actually looking at 'the social life of things' (Appadurai, 1986), in this case Aboriginal art. Aboriginal art for sale is moving along the trajectory, from producer eventually to consumer. The art and its identities are put in motion and pass through different contexts. This is what Marcus and Myers (1995: 34) describe as circulation. Besides circulation they use two other analytical concepts in 'the social life of things': appropriation and boundary. With appropriation they mean the assimilation of difference by stripping cultural materials from their original contexts. So for example Aboriginal art moving out of the producers context and being assimilated in a new context. Boundary is related to this and shows us "the resistance to and ambiguities of appropriation as seen by people both within the art world and those appropriated by it." (Ibid: 33). These three concepts we see when looking at Aboriginal art moving through different contexts. In these different contexts art is gaining different meanings, as is its authenticity, and actors are in a constant dialogue about these meanings. As Kopytoff (1995: 90) would say about the art's trajectory: "[it is about] classifications and reclassifications in an uncertain world of categories whose importance shifts with every minor change in context. As with persons, the drama here lies in the uncertainties of valuation and of identity." Let us have a look at the first context: the art producers.

4. ART PRODUCERS: ARTISTS AT WOOLANING

In this chapter I will elaborate on the art and its production in Woolaning community, Litchfield National Park. As an example of Aboriginal artists, these artists at Woolaning represent the 'producer's context' of this study. I will show the importance of art production for the artists and the community they live in. Also the style of the art and its meanings in the Aboriginal context will become clear. Furthermore I will explain the consequences of commercialisation for the artists and their ideas about the authenticity debate that surrounds this commercialisation.

Art production at Woolaning

Woolaning community is one example of a local[10] context in which Aboriginal artists produce art in their community. At the time, approximately fifteen people lived at Woolaning permanently (but the number of inhabitants fluctuates as people come and go all the time). These fifteen people were all interrelated in the western sense of the word. There were the two elders, Daisy and Tom; their son Glen, with his wives Marlene and Debby and their children; their daughter Wendy with her husband Norm and their children and Douglas, also related. So it was 'one big family'. This was also clear when looking at the art production and sales.

The two people at Woolaning that were really active in art production and sales happened to be Daisy, my main informant, and her daughter Wendy. They produce art all year around. From acrylic to ochre paintings and from painted stone slates or rocks to didgeridoos. Even though the Marinja Aboriginal Corporation formally runs the shop at Wangi Falls, it is mainly Daisy and Wendy who, especially during the busy dry season, take turns in painting and running the shop. Still both Wendy and Daisy are telling me "everyone here is an artist." They explain that everyone, even the children have got the gift of being an artist. A few of the paintings that are being sold are paintings done by the children. While I was at Woolaning none of the men produced any art. I was told though

[10] The use of 'local' can be problematic. Just as the concept of 'culture', it seems to indicate a certain artificial bounded entity, like some kind of microcosm. When I use the word 'local', I don't use it in that way. With 'local' I mean 'in a certain place at a certain time.' This is especially important to realise because I'm showing the interconnectedness of different contexts in my analysis. So instead of looking at the 'local' context as bounded, I see it as overlapping with other contexts.

that they also paint every once in a while and also produce spears and didgeridoos. At that time however, art production seemed to be more of a 'women's business'.

What I did notice is that the whole community was involved, in one way or another, in this art business. To start with, a large part of the people at Woolaning were members of the Marinja Aboriginal Corporation. Furthermore it was Daisy and Wendy painting, but usually it was the men who went out to get the wood for didgeridoos or stone slates to be painted on. Marlene assisted Wendy and Daisy in the sale of their paintings. Even the children were involved in art production. Every year the children produced some paintings and sold these at Wangi Falls themselves. This way they helped raising money to pay for their school trips.

It was clear that art production kept the whole community busy, but also that the sales of art provided the main income (also see Guse & Marjar, 2000: 13). The money that was earned by Daisy and Wendy was usually shared with other community members. Tom, Wendy's father, tells me for example that Daisy has really helped the community with her art. She made it possible to buy some cars and a generator to provide the community with electricity. As Daisy calls it: "We help each other out." There was this unwritten obligation to share.[11] Also the fact that people at Woolaning usually spoke in terms of "we", shows this communal sense of thinking. That was something that became really clear to me in that month. It that month it was especially Daisy earning money with her art sales. That made her the main food provider, which meant that at 'the shed', where Daisy and I lived, there was always food. The children usually visited their 'nanna' in the morning to get breakfast and often after school for some 'tucker'[12]. The others came over to drink a cup of tea or coffee with sugar and milk and often to get some tobacco. In this case it might have been Daisy helping the others out, but I was told that in other situations the money, food or tobacco would be returned to her. In that way there is always something for everyone. When for example Douglas, Glen and Norm go out hunting, the catch is shared with the others as well.

Woolaning is thus a good example of the fact that nowadays Aborigines are involved in a traditional subsistence economy, but also in the mainstream economy.

[11] For theory on communal sharing, see for example Fiske, 1991
[12] Tucker is the name they use for food

Hunting and gathering is still an important part of their lives but, living in a western world as well, money is too. When talking to Stephanie Hawkins, manager of ANKAAA, the Association of the Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists, (but see also Altman, 1988: 63,145), it became clear that for many Aboriginal communities, arts and crafts production is one of the only ways to be involved in the mainstream economy. For the art production itself not a lot of infrastructure is necessary and people don't need any certificates or degrees for it. With Aborigines often living in remote areas and often having a low education level (and thus frequently lacking necessary certificates) (Broome, 2002: 218), being an artist is one of the ways to make money. Daisy explains this involvement in two economies or maybe even cultures, really well: "I combine two worlds and try to combine the best out of both." She realises very well that they are living in a western world where money is necessary: "You need money nowadays." She is clear about earning that money herself by being an artist. On the other hand she wants her children and grandchildren to know and live the traditional way of life. That is why they tell stories, teach the children about Aboriginal law and bushtucker and teach them how to go hunting and fishing. One world does not exclude the other. This will also become clear later on when discussing the views on Aboriginal art. So even though I'm describing the Aboriginal context here, it is clear that in this context the intercultural frame is already present. I think it is still possible though to distinguish between these frames. Indigenous elements can often still be distinguished from other elements, but they do get more and more interconnected.

A relatively unknown art style

At Woolaning a variety of art is being produced. Mainly acrylic paintings, but also ochre paintings, stone slates or rocks (mainly by Wendy) and didgeridoos. Daisy and Wendy made it clear to me that there is not one style characteristic for the area. Their style is different from the central and western desert style, different from the styles in Arnhem Land and Kakadu, different from the styles in the Kimberleys and different from the styles at the Tiwi Islands. Gunn (1991) who has been researching the rock art in Litchfield, and with a lot of Daisy's paintings being based on this rock art, comes to the same conclusion:

> Interestingly however none of the major pictograph styles of either of these regions [Arnhem Land and Upper Daly-Victoria River Region] are represented in the Litchfield sites. Given the social connections between Litchfield Aboriginal communities and those on the Daly River and the close connections between these and those within the Victoria River District the lack of any positive art connection is indeed surprising. (Gunn, 1991: 33)

According to Daisy the styles in Litchfield National Park are not well known because knowledge about the area is only recent. It has only been a National Park since 1986. Daisy explains that before 1986 people did not think there was any rock art in the area at all. She explains that anthropologists and historians have had an interest in Arnhem Land and the Desert areas for quite some time already. Their interest in Litchfield has only arisen since the National Park has been established. This also becomes clear when I compare for example Litchfield National Park to Kakadu National Park. From personal experience I know that a large part of the information given about Kakadu is about Aboriginal culture, with an emphasis on rock art, while information on Litchfield hardly even mentions Aboriginal culture in the region and is more based on its natural phenomenon.

At Woolaning the artists actually explained that they all have personal styles. Even though the designs they make are similar, mainly animals, they have different styles of painting. I will start by explaining Daisy's artwork. Daisy explains to me that she, following the old rock art in the area, has developed two different styles of painting. A large part of the rock art in the area depict animals or animal tracks (Gunn, 1991: 18-19), so do Daisy's paintings. The first style encompasses the animal totems. Aborigines in the area all belong to one of the 21 clans (see Appendix two). Most of the clans have natural totems, mostly animals. These are the animals Daisy paints. These animals she fills in with intestines, for example fish with bones, crocodiles and turtles with eggs and a stomach; cross-hatching and dots. Sometimes she fills the area around the animals with flowers or seaweed (when painting fish). Usually these are small to medium-sized paintings with just one or two animals. The second style she describes as 'rock art style'.

Figure 3: Daisy's rock art style ©

Figure 4: Long neck turtles filled in with eggs and intestines; Daisy's animal totem art ©

Figure 5: a painted stone slate by Wendy depicting a Goanna ©

Figure 6: Materials ©

So here she also paints the animals and footprints, but these paintings are usually quite large and there are several animals on one painting. “Rock art paintings have got to be big to get everything in.” She describes it as “paint over paint”, layer upon layer, similar to the actual rock art. Because there are so many animals in the painting, she doesn’t give the animals any infill. Compared to the first style, which is mainly done with acrylic paint on canvas, this rock art style is usually done with natural ochres (in the colours red, brown, yellow, white and black) on canvas. The reason is that for the actual rock art ochres were used as well. Because it often takes a lot of effort to go out and find, and after that prepare (crush and mix with glue), the ochres, most of the artwork is painted with acrylics and thus the majority of the paintings are done in the first style. Sometimes Daisy is not pleased with the acrylic paint though because it is too shiny and therefore does not resemble the natural ochres enough.

Besides these animal paintings she also paints landscapes sometimes, usually Wangi Falls, the creation place (see paragraph 4.3.). According to Daisy these paintings are less popular:

> People tell me ‘that’s not you’. That’s silly of them to say. What do they mean ‘it’s not me’? It *is* me. As an artist I’m a creative person, I can paint whatever I want. I painted it. It comes from my heart, soul and mind.

She then explains that people find her landscapes to be too European; for Aboriginal art it is not traditional enough. Here we already see an example of the different notions on tradition or authenticity between producers and consumers. In the time I was at Woolaning I have only seen Daisy paint animals, not a single landscape. Maybe because they are not that popular and with only a few tourists (because of the wet season) and thus low sales anyway, it would not bring in enough money.

When Wendy tells me about her style she says:

> I don’t always paint traditional Aboriginal art. I like to do other things as well. (…) My style is different to my mothers’ style, different then my dads’, my nieces’ or

> my nephews'. It is simple and easy. When I paint I've got it in my head. It comes from my heart and soul. It's how I feel. I put a lot of details in it. The painting is me; it is part of me. I do animals, which represent clans. That's traditional. (…) I do landscapes, portraits, modern art and abstract art as well.

Wendy explains what it is she means with traditional Aboriginal art:

> In the old days we didn't have canvas, but we painted on bark. In my eye, animal paintings [which represent clans] on canvas are as a traditional painting, but it is not on bark. The fact that it has a clan motive on it makes it traditional. (…) You can't go back in time.

Morphy (1998: 248, 252) explains that Yolgnu designs are often constrained to specific rules, such as those concerning gender and age. At first, when painting for commercial reasons started, painting was a men's business, as it was in ritual contexts. However, gradually women began to take an increasingly prominent role in painting from the 1960s onwards. This can be looked at as a process of adjusting to new circumstances and responding to new opportunities. This is what we also see at Woolaning, painting seems to be mainly a women's business. Besides gender, people's rights in knowledge of paintings and paintings itself can extend out from their own clan to those of other clans because of kinship and ritual links (Ibid: 158). Tom already made clear that the 21 different clans in the area are all interrelated. So even though they, as an individual, all belong to just one clan totem they are allowed to paint the other totems too. Tom explains:

> (…) We know who is our next-door neighbour. We and our neighbouring clans share a common knowledge. We have permission of other clans to paint their totems. Only the ritual leaders can paint the [real] rock art, the totems. We paint it on canvas, because it gives tourists an insight into other clans in the area.

Even though the artists are allowed to paint the other clan totems, they explained that they are not allowed to elaborate too much on the stories connected to these totems because they don't 'own' those stories.

In this paragraph I have elaborated on what artists at Woolaning paint and how they describe their styles. It has already become clear that the designs are usually concerned with clan totems or landscapes. What exactly is the meaning of this to the people from Woolaning?

Converting Dreaming to canvas

"Do you see the crocodiles?" Daisy asks when we look out of the shed. When I look out I see a few hills in the distance. To Daisy and her family these hills represent crocodiles. To the left-hand side there is a saltwater crocodile, to the right-hand side a freshwater crocodile. The story goes that in the creation time the saltwater and the freshwater crocodile got into a fight to sort things out spiritually. The freshwater crocodile bit the saltwater crocodile's nose of and that is why the saltwater crocodile has got a short snout and the freshwater crocodile a long snout nowadays. After this fight the saltwater crocodile stayed in the swaps and the freshwater crocodile moved to the floodplains.

For Daisy all life started at Wangi Falls, *Nuandjul*, the place where she is making her living nowadays by selling her art.

> In the middle [of the falls] there used to be a crack, with a Banyan tree growing out of it. These represent the woman's genitals. On the left are the testicles and the penis of a male [rock formation] and also the water is male. They had sexual intercourse and the mermaid was born. Then the rainbow serpent, Puli Puli, created the rest of the waterways. The mermaid followed him until she disappeared on the flood plains. Then all animals, kangaroo, saltwater and freshwater crocodiles, turtles, all of them, emerged out of the earth. And then we humans came into being. We were given birth by the earth. (...) We are part of the land as much as the land is part of us.

Figure 7: Wangi Falls ©

With this story Daisy explains the importance of the cultural and spiritual affiliation with her land. For indigenous people the conceptual landscape is different to Western conceptions (Guse & Marjar, 2000: 24). Concerning the landscape there are many different layers of knowledge, which are based on their complex social, religious and economic ties to the land. A lot of the important places in the landscape are Dreaming places or tracks, which are often sacred sites. From Guse & Marjar (2000: 30) it becomes clear that there still is a close association with Dreaming tracks and places among the community members. This shows the importance of the spiritual connection to their country. Each clan, or Dreaming, often represented as animals, have got their own mythological story that is represented in the landscape. But within this area there are particular places with which individuals identify strongly. Think of Daisy, as a freshwater crocodile, showing me the 'crocodile hills'. There are also a lot of sites that are named after human body parts and the places of 'spiritual conception' (see Morphy, 1998: 77-79) where people get their personal totem. The Dreaming is thus as much part of the past as it is of the present and the future. The difference between the Dreaming and the everyday life is only in the sense that these are two different dimensions as Hume (2002: 50) explains. The one existence is the mirror of the other. The Dreaming is then also a world where ancestors live and where dead people go. Daisy, for example told me that sometimes she can actually still see her deceased parents at Wangi Falls for example or that she can 'feel' spirits at particular places.

Most of the artworks Daisy and Wendy create are based on their association with the country, which was established in the Dreaming. As Daisy mentions while working on a freshwater crocodile painting:

> I'm connected to the animal I'm drawing. (…) When Europeans are painting a house, it's just a house. Maybe their ancestors build it, what makes it special. But with Aboriginal people the motif is very special. It's very special because that's my identity. That's who I am. I'm born with it; it's not something we made up overnight. (…) I've never been to school to learn art, my parents were very artistic. This area is part of my land and we paint to express to the people our identity, like a freshwater crocodile, we come from the earth. It's just another way of communicating with people, so they understand what we are all about. Some people understand, some are ignorant. (…) I tell some people to buy our painting, which says 'this is us, this is our land.' (…) Overall it's a way of communicating; to me it's also spiritually.

And Wendy:

> Everything I do is connected to the Dreaming, even for example the portraits [non-traditional art]. I suppose for me, what I see, I paint. It connects to (…) the dreamtime story, your land, the earth, new life, the stars, the sun, the water, trees, animals; they all connect like a little road. (…) When you paint, you're not forgetting about your people. It doesn't matter if it's on canvas, it doesn't matter if it's on bark. It's your identification. It's who you are.

So both Daisy and Wendy explain that because their paintings are connected to their Dreaming, these paintings show or are part of their identity. Most of Daisy and Wendy's artwork is in some way related to their Dreaming not just by the objects they paint, but also the infill they use for the animals. The dots, lines and cross-hatching used for the infill are quite often original body markings in ceremonies. Their strong connection to the Dreaming through their paintings coincides with the common idea about Aboriginal art.

> The Dreamtime, or the Dreaming, is crucial to the understanding of Aboriginal art. Art as a means of access to the Dreaming, a way of making contact with this spiritual dimension, and yet in turn it is the product of the Dreaming. (Morphy, 1998: 67)

Wendy describes this as: “When someone buys mum’s or my painting, a piece of us is gone, a piece of our soul is gone, spiritually.”

Although Daisy and Wendy both mention the importance of the Dreaming for their art and say that their art is always in some way connected to the Dreaming, they also express their feelings that as an artist you should be able to paint anything. They also emphasise that as an artist you are a creative person and therefore there are no restrictions to what you can or cannot paint. Still, all their artwork had this connection to the Dreaming. At Woolaning there did not seem to be any obvious rules concerning gender or age about who is allowed to paint what. Whoever paints, usually paints the clan animals, but everyone in his or her own distinct style.

Art is thus the lifeline of this community. First because it provides the necessary money and second because it keeps the connection to and the knowledge about the land, the Dreaming and the ancestors alive and it is a way to communicate their culture to the rest of the world. At Woolaning art therefore has a double function. It is produced for the market and therefore beneficial to Woolaning. They have created the opportunity to engage themselves in their culture and make a living out of it. On the other hand the paintings are also used to refer to the country and to make, among others, the children conscious about their identity. I think this is the main thing to keep in mind; that Aboriginal art nowadays is linking two worlds and that, to understand the art, looking at both these worlds is necessary. Cohen (1988: 383) makes clear that things can acquire new meanings, which does not necessarily mean that old meanings disappear, new meanings can be added to it. That is exactly what we see here, expressing the Dreaming remains an important factor, but making the necessary money is added to this. Before I continue with this commercialisation of art, I will first show how not just the painting itself is an expression of the Dreaming, but also how the process of painting is connected to it.

Connecting

Ceremonies have always played an important role in Aboriginal societies.[13] In ceremonies, in which music, dance and painting are often combined, acts of ancestral beings are replicated by which the realm of the Dreaming is entered. Ancestral beings are replicated by the way the performers' bodies are painted, the way they dance and the way they sing (Morphy, 1998: 183). These performances create energies and emotions, which enable people to experience the presence of the ancestral being (Kranenbarg, 2004: 43). Similarly, the process of painting also makes people experience the Dreaming.

Wendy and Daisy could spend hours, usually sitting on the ground in the shade of a roof or inside their houses, painting. This could cause trance-like states. As Wendy mentions: "When I'm painting I'm in a different world altogether. I'm totally switched off. I wouldn't hear a thing. It comes from my heart." So while Wendy is painting she is totally connecting to the thing she is painting. It was a wonderful experience to sit beside Daisy and observe the creation of her paintings. Usually she did not talk. She explained to me that she prefers painting quietly while on her own and in the evenings. That is when she can really connect to the painting. Sometimes, when her grandchildren kept visiting her, she could not concentrate in the bush and moved to her flat in Darwin for a few days. There she could be on her own, load her energy and be one with her painting again.

Another important way to be one with land is literally connecting to it. People at Woolaning usually walk barefoot. This way, they can connect to the land. Wendy describes it as: "I want to feel the earth and things on my feet, just connect," While painting they usually sat on the ground, being most comfortable that way and connecting to the land as well.

Paintings for sale

So far I have mainly explained the importance of Aboriginal art in the Aboriginal context. Here I will move further into the intercultural frame and explain the commercial part of the art produced at Woolaning. What made the artists decide to commercialise the art, how have they created a demand, how do they respond to that demand and does the

[13] also for outsiders. Ceremonies used to 'prove' to outsiders that a culture was authentic. See for example Povinelli (1994).

commodification affect the authenticity of the artwork? Besides that I will shed a first light on the opinions of tourists on the matter by looking at the interaction between Daisy, Wendy and the tourists.

Commercialising the artwork

Painting for commercial reasons is relatively new to Woolaning artists. Besides the ancestors who once painted on the rocks, Daisy was the first person in the area to start painting for sales. What made her do that? Daisy:

> If I go back, in the 1960s and 1970s Aborigines worked on the [cattle] stations. Nobody got paid money, only tucker. Then there was the move for land rights, which happened in 1976. That's when people got kicked of the stations. We [Daisy and Tom] started hunting for crocodiles. We had clothes and tucker, we were self-employed. In 1989 we got kicked of the reserve. I knew I still had the gift of painting. (…) We had children and needed to make money, but because I had always been self-employed, I didn't want to work as an employee. So I used the gift of being an artist. Nobody taught me how to paint, my parents were very artistic. (…) In 1985 the Park came to be a National Park. I think then we started selling art. We've always been taking tourists hunting or shooting buffalo, so tourists were not new to us. In 1989 we opened our bark shelter at the falls. Because it became a National Park it brought employment. Otherwise we would've been on the dole. As soon as we started selling up there, we never looked back.

Interesting is thus that the artists have always had the knowledge of painting and rock art, but realising they needed money, living in a western society, Daisy and Tom started to commercialise their art activities. The Aboriginal and intercultural context are obviously interconnected. Clearly, painting is for Wendy and Daisy an expression of their Dreaming (as could be seen in the previous paragraphs), but as Wendy explains:

> Art is an important source of income. I have to survive. Both sharing culture and the money are important. But I know one thing, nothing comes cheap nowadays.

> You have to pay for everything. I share my culture with people, but for me, if they want something of me, it'll cost them.

With commercialising their art Daisy and Wendy have created a demand for their art. Nowadays Daisy and Wendy paint because: "…there is a market here, there is a big demand." Tourism makes sure they can make a living. The increase in tourists visiting the Park has made them increase their art production and has made them decide to open an art shop. Daisy also explains that tourism and the Marinja Aboriginal Corporation gives her grandchildren a future. Tourism is there to stay and brings the necessary employment. The fact that the rock art in the area will always be there, her grandchildren are artists as well and that Litchfield, with growing visitor numbers, is a threat to Kakadu National Park[14], is positive for her grandchildren's future.

Compared to the first years of selling art, sales have definitely increased for the community. According to Tom this is, on the one hand because of in increasing number of tourists are visiting the area, but on the other because more and more people have heard of their art and therefore come and look for it. The fact that they control the painting and sales activities themselves, puts them in a unique position in the art's industry. Although independent artists are a growing category in the Aboriginal art's business (Altman, 1990: 6), in most cases a number of intermediaries are involved. Quite often art's advisors and coordinators play a big role in what is being produced by Aboriginal people as 'marketable' products (personal communication, M. West, April 11, 2006). Concerning the market itself, it is hardly ever the case that individual artists sell their own art. Usually art centres or cooporations, or commercial galleries are intermediating. So Marinja Aboriginal Corporation, being completely independent, is exceptional. As Wendy and Daisy say: "We're selling our own art. It really feels good inside. It makes us proud. (…) Why should a white person sell Aboriginal art? He doesn't know about the details; what it means."

[14] Kakadu National park is the main tourist attraction in the Top End. Kakadu is famous for its natural beauty, mainly the waterfalls, and especially the Aboriginal rock art. In the tourist perception Kakadu is 'home of the Aborigines' (Palmer, 1985: 6) So far tourism in Litchfield has not pushed the 'Aboriginal culture angle' because rock art sites are not yet open to tourists. But because the park is closer to Darwin and there are ideas about opening rock art sites to tourists, Litchfield could become the 'new Kakadu' in the future.

Customers are often surprised to see Daisy and Wendy selling their own art. Occasionally they ask Wendy or Daisy who is in charge of the shop, on which Daisy answers: “you’re looking at her.” People often respond by saying that Daisy and Wendy are the first Aboriginal people they see selling their own art. Daisy and Wendy are very well aware of this unique position. Daisy says: “You don’t often see independent artists. (…) [Most of the artists] have got a manager who’s doing the wheeling and dealing. It is not the Aborigines who sell their art, they only paint.” According to Daisy ever more people are aware of the fact that galleries are too dear and that artists would not get a fair price for their work at galleries. Besides that Daisy and Wendy also know that in Litchfield they do not have any competition of other people selling Aboriginal art.

Market demand

To keep the market interested in their art, artists at Woolaning do respond, to a certain extent, to the consumer demand. Daisy and Wendy keep assuring me of the fact that everything they do is still true because they, as true, land-based Aborigines, paint the art and the art is still connected to their Dreaming, even though they have made some changes.

As Wendy mentioned before, times have changed. In the old days they used to paint on bark with natural ochres. Nowadays there is wide variety of material available, such as canvas and acrylic paint, so they use that. The motifs and designs stay the same, but why not use new mediums? To them a different medium does not change the substance of the painting. “To keep up with the demand and to stay within the art world, you have got to look around”, Daisy says. She explains that she is interested in doing a screen-printing course. She thinks people might be interested in her designs printed on fabrics as scarves, skirts, sarongs and tea towels. For these artists it is not about their art getting less ‘real’ by this, but it is just being smart; it is responding to the market demand *and* being able to communicate their culture in a different way.

There are all sorts of ways in which Daisy and Wendy try to respond to this market demand. First thing is that they both want to have a great variety of products to offer. “When you want to make money, you do different things, so it is an eye-catcher to the people who want to buy it (…). There are people with different tastes, so you have got have different paintings”, Daisy and Wendy explain. Besides having a variety of products,

especially Daisy, paints certain animals more than others. At the time she made sure she always had some catfish, barramundi, brolga's and kangaroos, because she knew it would appeal to people: "They sell. People have seen them; they have seen the brolga's dance. They know it and that's why they buy it."

The same can be applied to the colours they use. Although they mostly paint in traditional, natural colours, both with acrylic paint and natural ochres: yellow, orange, red, white, grey, black and pink, especially Daisy has also noticed that some people like brighter colours. Therefore she makes sure she has always got some paintings available with brighter, 'non-traditional' colours. There is a demand for both types, so Daisy makes sure she has got both. Even though traditionally the natural colours had particular meanings; red as the mermaid's blood, yellow as the mermaid's urine and white as a love potion for example, these meanings do not seem to be of a lot of importance in commercial paintings nowadays.

Other ways they use to respond to the demand is to make sure they have always got paintings with different background colours and frame colours. In that way there is something for everyone's taste. Also realising that a lot of tourists are on a budget, Wendy and Daisy make sure they have always got a great variety of smaller, affordable paintings, A$ 20,- to A$50,-, and stone slates for A$20,-. Besides being affordable these paintings are easier to transport while travelling. They are not too big and not too heavy. Taking transportation into consideration, the artists deliberately haven't got their painting framed. Now people can just "roll them up and they will not take up a lot of space". Would the painting be framed, it will get more easily damaged and is a lot bigger.

Finally, not directly related to their art production and sales, but not less important, community members are responding to the market demand by trying to organise an Aboriginal cultural tour. At the time, the Marinja Aboriginal Corporation was trying hard to set up a tour focusing on their rock art, bush tucker and spear throwing. From visitor comments they realised that a lot of people are interested in Aboriginal culture and were wondering why, comparing it to Kakadu, they cannot find it in Litchfield National Park. Therefore organising a tour is responding to the market demand. Daisy also thought that once people can see the actual rock art, they will buy the 'rock art style' paintings more easily.

Taking all these things into consideration, it is clear that the people at Woolaning are very well aware of the present market demand. Without renouncing their culture, their art still being a strong expression of the Dreaming as has become clear earlier, they are able to respond to the customer's wishes and make their living out of it. Art from Woolaning artists is therefore neither totally an outcome of the artists' ideas, neither is it only a product of external influences. As will become clear later on, opinions on this matter vary.

With this market demand at hand, I was still interested in why they thought people specifically bought Daisy or Wendy's art. Tom explains that they have never advertised the art, but the fact that they are there, as 'tribal bushmen', to explain their own art, which is different from other Aboriginal art people have seen, makes sure it sells. "The word is travelling around." According to Daisy their art is in demand because it is different and understandable:

> I know why they are interested in my paintings. It's different from other styles, and you see, a lot of people say Desert art is overrated. It's hard to understand. Now, for example the brolga I paint; it's understandable. It's a dancing bird in the reeds. Desert art they can't understand, but buy it anyway because the patterns and colours are good. But then they come here and ask me: 'Why do they paint dots? What does that mean?' I say to them: 'Sorry, it's not my place to tell you. It's their art, their style. I don't know their language, don't know their culture.' Then the Arnhem Land art. People ask the same: 'Why do they paint stick-men?' I say: 'I can't answer that question either, I don't know their art.' Generally when people come to us at Wangi Falls they say: 'This is the most beautiful art I've ever seen. I can understand that painting.' I explain to them that the brolga is a bird dancing in the reeds and that that is were we get the sound and dance of the didgeridoo from. People can identify the animals we paint. There is rock art about it; there is a history of us. (…) It gives me a warm feeling when people say they understand our paintings.

Now I have explained how Daisy and Wendy keep the market interested and why they think people are specifically interested in their artwork, I will continue showing the actual art sales; the interaction with tourists and their responses to the artwork.

Art sales at Wangi Falls

As I mentioned before the Marinja Aboriginal Corporation has got its own shop at Wangi Falls. They started in 1989 with a bark shelter, now replaced by a tin shed, which can be folded out, so it is one huge wall on which the paintings can be presented. The advantage of this is that people can see the art from afar. Because it was wet season when I was there, Daisy was not able to open the shop. If it started raining it would take too much time to take all the paintings down and they would get wet. Alternatively, during the wet season, Daisy and Wendy just spread out their art on the grass and on one of the picnic tables, being able to collect everything quickly when it would start raining. At the time the Marinja members had plans to get a 'real' shop, instead of the shed they have got now. In that way they could be there all year around and could leave their art at the shop, not taking everything down at the end of the day. This shop should also serve as a cultural centre where they could present information on their history and culture. They think that having a proper display would make it all look a lot more professional, which would be beneficial for the art sales. According to Daisy, the way they present their art now, "makes people shy away."

At the time their stock was limited. Daisy told me that this season actually was the season to stock up, because of the limited amount of tourists and thus limited sales. Because of the season it was also a time "to give and take"; people could negotiate prices, in comparison to fixed prices during the peak season. In the dry season they are at the falls daily. Now Daisy and Wendy only go once in while. Often busdrivers or people from the restaurant or shop in the park notify them when the big tour buses are coming to the park. In that way they can make sure to be there in time with their art. In a months' time, there were six occasions on which Daisy, twice with Wendy, went down to the falls to sell art. I joined them these six times to help and to observe. Daisy explained to me that she knows a lot of the tourguides. As most tourists visit the park on organised day-trips, the artists relyquite heavily, especially during the wet season, on the tourguide taking his tourists to

Figure 8: Wendy working on a stone slate ©

Figure 9: Daisy working on a painting ©

their art. Tourguides they know often mention on beforehand to the people on the trip that Daisy and Wendy could be at the falls with their art. This way they have already got people interested in the art before these tourists actually see it. With a new tourist season on its way, there were also a lot of new tourguides. This resulted in quite a lot of customers on the one day and only a few on the next. On days with quite some tourists, there usually was a lot of interaction between Daisy, Wendy and the tourists. I found this interaction especially interesting. What were these tourists' questions and interests?

As I already mentioned, a lot of the tourists are surprised to find Aborigines selling their own art there. Interesting was that *if* people asked questions they all asked the same sort of questions which can be divided into three categories. The first kind concerned the paint and the colours: "What colours do you use? What paint do you use? Are these traditional?" Daisy tells them the same thing she told me about using acrylic paint, natural ochres and the fact that some people are looking for bright colours, others for the natural colours and therefore she has got both. Especially the question about whether the colours are traditional or not, was asked a lot. The second category of questions considers the style of the paintings: "Is this what you call contemporary Aboriginal art? Are they traditional designs?" Usually people could not recognise the style: "this is not what they showed us at the museum", therefore doubting whether it is traditional or true Aboriginal art or not. Daisy then explains to all these people that it is *her* style and that the art is about clan totems and traditional rock art. The third set of questions was about the knowledge stored in the paintings: "Do these paintings have a story? What does the painting mean?" As I mentioned before, Daisy couldn't do much more than explain that the animals as clan totems and are important in their Dreaming.

These are exactly the questions around which the authenticity debate revolves. All these questions really put the artists in the position of having to defend their art. With almost every single question having to do with the art being traditional or not in one way or the other, it seemed as if people were doubting and checking its genuineness. Only if they could make up out of the answer that the art is traditional, they seemed to believe the art to be authentic. These ideas reveal people's limited concepts of tradition and authenticity. It coincides with the general idea that Aboriginal art should be an expression of unspoiled tradition and the living past (Weichart, 2000: 154-155). It turns out to be quite

a general idea, also seen when discussing the ‘tourist’ questionnaires. In most cases, Daisy did not forget to mention though that people should realise that as an artist she is a creative person and is therefore allowed to paint anything, traditional or not.
When people really made an effort to show interest in their work, Daisy and Wendy took the time to explain things about the art, themselves and the business. Almost every time Daisy explained that they sell their own art, because they do not want to sell through galleries for the above-mentioned reasons. This to explain to people that it would be better for them to buy a piece of art here at the falls, then at a gallery in town. This way, she said, people were also making sure they bought art made by an Aboriginal person and therefore a true, genuine piece of Aboriginal art. Daisy: “(…) Then I tell them [the tourists] that if they want traditional and genuine art, they have to go out to the communities, meet the artists and buy their art at a reasonable price.” By mentioning this every time it showes that Daisy is well aware of the fact that consumers consider this to be an important factor for authenticity.

Figure 10: Art sales at Wangi Falls during the wet season ©

Another issue the artists at Woolaning were well aware of are copyrights. Even though their work didn't have official copyrights, Daisy and Wendy tried to prevent people from taking photos of their artwork (and of them). Afraid of the fact that others could make easy money out of their designs, they only let people take a photo if they purchased a work and then only of that artwork.

Freelance artist

Although the main place of selling art for Woolaning artists is at Wangi Falls, Daisy occasionally sold her art at some other places. The main reason for that was the lack of tourists at Wangi Falls because of the wet season. To make the necessary money, she sold her art at several other places: tourist restaurants, a roadhouse and sometimes to galleries. What Daisy was very clear about though, was that this was only a necessary measure in less prosperous times. She knows she is getting less money then when she would sell it herself. These other places are often selling it for double (or even more) the amount they give her. But she tells me to look at it from the positive side: "You've got to give and take." The only place where she gets what her art is really worth is at Wangi Falls. If she would ask these other places for more, she would get nothing. By doing it like she is doing it now, she has always got money, tucker and fuel. As Tom says:

> What Daisy is doing in the wet is necessary, but is taking the focus away from the artist. (…) The person who buys her art doesn't know what it is about. I recommend that tourists buy straight from the artist

People at Woolaning are quite negative towards art galleries in town. First of all they think they are greedy; they are not giving you what your art is worth. Second, according to Daisy and Wendy quite often the art that is for sale at galleries is painted by Europeans and afterwards gets an Aboriginal nametag and story. This way these "middlemen are manipulating Aborigines" (Tom). Though Daisy sells her art to galleries every once in a while, she would never ever sign a contract with one of them: "that's the worst thing an artist could do." Her freedom would be gone; she would only be allowed to produce art for that one gallery. Therefore she calls herself a freelance artist. Only if necessary she will

sell to other places, otherwise she will sell it herself. Wendy even goes further, she refuses to sell her art anywhere but at the falls; she wants people to know who made the art and to hear the true story about it. Besides that she feels galleries are not paying her what the art is worth:

> I feel safe when I sell it on my own. Galleries sometimes make up the stories, the artist didn't say that, but people want stories. (…). People say that my work should be put in a gallery. *This* [Wangi falls] is my gallery. If I took my painting to a gallery and ask $10,000,-, they'll work it down to $500,-. (…) My art you will never find in a gallery.

All these factors mentioned above, concerning art sales and interaction, show again that Aboriginal art is not limited to the Aboriginal frame anymore. The art might be an expression of the Dreaming, but it is also being sold. Boundaries are blurred; Aboriginal art is more and more part of the intercultural frame that comprises both the indigenous and non-indigenous cultural contexts.

Figure 11: Daisy's didgeridoos for sale at Banyan Tree (tourist restaurant and campground) ©

Other art

So far I have mainly spoken about commercial Aboriginal art and mainly about paintings. While the information I got about ceremonial art is limited, I do want to mention it shortly. Furthermore I would like to discuss didgeridoos, which are also being produced at Woolaning. These didgeridoos are especially interesting concerning the authenticity debate, as we will also see when discussing the art galleries.

Ceremonial art

Common for Aboriginal art is that artists use their life experiences and the knowledge they have accumulated throughout the years for the stories they intend to tell through their paintings. As knowledge is continuously evolving, the substance of paintings is practically infinite. However, paintings that are produced for public use, limit artists in revealing knowledge. Sacred knowledge cannot be exposed to outsiders, as this can harm both the artist as the non-initiated person (Kranenbarg, 2004: 41). Therefore, whenever I mentioned ceremonial art to people at Woolaning the response was something like: "We cannot talk about that." Obviously ceremonial art for people at Woolaning contained sacred, inside, knowledge. It would be too personal to elaborate on this art. I was told that if I would go to a sacred place I would probably only see a rock and the art, while they can actually feel the spirits in that place.

> A lot of the [rock] art is at sacred sites, but I can't talk to you about that, because it's sacred. It has to do with the Law. It can be harmful for people who don't know about it. There are five of these sites in the Park. We've never put them on photo. Actually this men's sacred site is one of the most spectacular art sites in the Park. You don't show people where it is and hardly record it on GPS and stuff like that. (Tom)

Daisy and Wendy explain to me that aspects of this ceremonial art are never transferred to the art they sell. Wendy: "It's personal, it's nobody's business to know. There is no secret knowledge in our paintings, we leave that out." Their commercial art has got a new style, though based on the some of the rock art. Myers (2002: 67) also emphasises that

nowadays, in commercial art, the ritual representation of the art is not important anymore; the art is made for a different audience.

Didgeridoos

Daisy explains to me that didgeridoos traditionally were used in the area from Arnhem Land through to Litchfield to Port Keats. They used it, and still do, as instrument in men's ceremonies, burial ceremonies and also just for "happy hour" when people sing and dance to its music. Traditionally they were coloured with ochres and sometimes they had some animal footprints on them.

Nowadays didgeridoos are sold to tourists throughout Australia. It has become one of the major symbols of Aboriginal culture throughout the world (see for example Neuenfeldt, 1997). Often they have got a range of animals and dots (western desert style) painted on them. Daisy does not mind the didgeridoos going to tourists nowadays: "it's a different era." She explains though that more and more they sell plain didgeridoos because: "they look more genuine that way." People want to be able to see the wood to make sure that is actually is a termite eaten tree. Besides that, in the old days they were not painted on, so for didgeridoos to be "real", there should not be any paintings on them. This is interesting considering that for a lot of consumers it has to be as traditional and authentic as possible, without realising that actually selling didgeridoos *and* to non-indigenous people is something non-traditional. This shows people's limited notion of tradition and authenticity, instead of looking at it from the artists' point of view. Think for example of bamboo didgeridoos. Daisy explained to me that, even though bamboo has been introduced a few hundred years ago, ever since, they have used bamboo didgeridoos. For them they are traditional instruments. But: "They [tourists] reckon it's not indigenous. It won't sell, people see Asia." So even though they themselves see it as authentic and traditional, consumers do not. The same for the animal prints on the didgeridoos: "Animal prints are for tourists now, traditionally they just had ochres on it. But still it's true, because animal prints are totems from the area and we still use them." This shows again that things can get new meanings without the old ones getting lost. Animal prints are still clan totems, but are also used for didgeridoo decorations nowadays. This example of didgeridoos shows the

different views on tradition and authenticity very well: the static notion and the more flexible one.

Other utilities they traditionally use are for example dillybags and boomerangs. These objects are too time-consuming to make for sales though. Dillybags and boomerangs would not bring in enough money in comparison to the time it has cost to make them; the artists would not be able to get the value back. Spears on the other hand are easier to make, but harder for people to transport. Therefore, besides didgeridoos, artists at Woolaning focus less on artefacts and more on paintings.

Authenticity

One of the fascinating issues surrounding Aboriginal art ever since it has been commercialised on a large scale is 'authenticity'. Elizabeth Coleman has described how in two Australian television documentaries commercial Aboriginal artworks have been qualified as inauthentic (2001: 385, 2005: 102). The four claims that were used for this qualification were: the paintings would not be spiritually motivated, the use of non-traditional materials for the paintings, some paintings would be produced by non-Aboriginal people and some paintings were not produced by the person that signed them. Aboriginal groups have challenged these claims. They argue that artworks that are considered inauthentic from a western perspective are in fact authentic. Ross Bowden (2001) adds to this that in the Aboriginal frame, where art was traditionally used for ceremonial display, a work of art was seen as authentic when the person who had painted the work actually 'owned' the motifs used in the work. A particular group held copyright of those motifs. He then explains that considering modern Australian art, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, which is primarily produced for commercial reasons, "an authentic work is one that was actually produced by the person (or persons) to whom it is attributed." (Ibid: 7). According to Bowden though, authentic commercial artworks can be produced *not* by the person it is attributed to. This is possible because traditionally Aboriginal artworks were often produced co-operatively and also because the people who owned the motifs could authorize its reproduction to others (including non-Aboriginal people).

Obviously these different perspectives proceed from different ontological theories. Most common westerns notions on the matter tend to associate authenticity with something

traditional and fixed, 'uncontaminated' by external influences; as has become clear from the questions tourists posed at Daisy and Wendy about their art. This creates a myth similar to the notion of a culture as a static, independently existent entity. To actually understand Aboriginal art, I believe it is necessary to look at authenticity from the artists' perspective. Why can modern elements be part of Aboriginal art without threatening its authenticity?

As has become clear from the previous chapters and paragraphs, art from Woolaning is produced for the market and usually with non-traditional materials. Yet, the artists claim that their art is authentic. Authenticity in their point of view does not exclude changes, as it does from a western point of view. The first claim the documentary makers made was that commercial art would not be spiritually motivated. As could be seen in paragraph 4.3. and 4.4, it definitely *is* spiritually motivated. Nowadays a new purpose has been added to the spiritual function of paintings: making a living. The second claim about using non-traditional materials is also waved aside by the artists. They realise they are living in a different era, which consumers often try to ignore, in which new materials and mediums are available. Why not use them? It does not influence the actual, spiritually motivated, substance of the painting. This freedom in developing their style of artwork does not make their work less authentic. Also the fourth claim for authenticity is not considered as relevant because sometimes artworks at Woolaning are also produced with the help of several people, but signed by only one person. As Bowden (2001) has showed, sometimes works are produced co-operatively.

Daisy and Wendy do agree with the documentary makers on the third claim though. They themselves have actually got two main criteria for authenticity of their art. One is that their art is an expression of the Dreaming. Their second criterion is that Daisy or Wendy as true, land-based[15] Aboriginal people have produced this art. Because of the fact that they live on their traditional lands, they consider their art to be more genuine than Aboriginal art from some urban artists, who according to them do not have this connection to their traditional land anymore. So important for Aboriginal art to be authentic, is that is has been painted by an Aboriginal person who has not lost his or her spiritual connection to the land (so here they disagree with Bowden's opinion). Here Daisy and Wendy make a distinction between being an Aboriginal artist and an artist in general, because although all their art is

[15] Land-based means that they are living on their traditional lands.

actually spiritually motivated, they also mention that as a creative person you should be able to paint whatever you want.

Important is to understand that with innovations and changes in the artwork, the art itself does not become less authentic in their view. What I have tried to make clear is that the western ideology of authenticity should not simply be applied to Aboriginal art. The artworks might have become commodities but are also still spiritual in most cases. With these innovations they actually have the power to challenge the ideas about Aboriginal culture as ancient and unchanging and make people understand the dynamism of their culture. New elements are included and new uses for clan totems are added. Furthermore, the people at Woolaning are, just as any other people, participating in an intercultural world.

5. INTERMEDIARIES: ART GALLERIES IN DARWIN

Now we have seen what art and art production means for its producers, it is time to look at the next section of the art's trajectory: the intermediaries. In this chapter I will first show how commercial gallery owners and managers look at commercial Aboriginal art and its authenticity. Next the views on these matters by the representatives of Aboriginal art centres will be explained.

Aboriginal art in the intercultural context

From the picnic table at Wangi Falls to the art galleries in town: Litchfield and Darwin were two different worlds. At both places indigenous art was sold, but this occurred in two rather different contexts. The art sales by the people from Woolaning in Litchfield National Park are exceptional. That is, a lot of the art made in remote communities is often exhibited in art galleries, connecting for example Woolaning and Darwin. This art is then being sold and can end up on a wall perhaps somewhere in Europe or the USA. With the art often being an expression of culture, they are in that way exchanging knowledge with people far away from the original context. In that way the art is not limited to the community anymore, but ends up all over the world. So Aboriginal art produced in a local context moves into a wider, global context.

All over the world there is the possibility to come across Aboriginal art, for example in galleries, museums or in people's living rooms. Especially in the last few decades, Aboriginal art has increased in popularity. While in the 1960s Aboriginal art was hardly known and excluded from being art in a western sense, in the 1980s galleries specialising in Aboriginal art were rising (Morphy, 2001: 39). In the past, Aboriginal art as products of a 'primitive', antique and static culture stayed in the ethnographical, museological domain (Isaacs, 1999: 9). Just as it began to gain recognition as actual art in the western art world, it had to face a new challenge: Aboriginal works of art produced with new materials or according to new concepts, were often thought of as inauthentic. Slowly, with for example the emergence of the Papunya art movement in the 1970s, new art forms began to gain recognition from the wider public (Myers, 2002). By the mid-1980s, Aboriginal art was more and more acquired by art galleries, and presented as mainstream contemporary art, in opposition to a more ethnographic approach (Morphy, 1998: 29). Soon Aboriginal art was proving to be a commercial success, although the issue of authenticity appears every once in a while, especially, as we will see later on, within the tourist market where people still have fairly conservative ideas about authentic Aboriginal art (Finlayson, 1990: 61-62).

There is not just one answer to why Aboriginal art has become so successful. On the one hand the role of Aboriginal agency in making Aboriginal art part of the Australian agenda is being emphasised (Scott-Mundine, 1990: 52). Think for example of the establishment of Aboriginal art centres and cooperations in which Aboriginal members are involved in the decision-making process, and the way the art has been used as a political tool to gain land rights (Morphy, 1998: 254). On the other hand more structural factors like the introduction of the 'self-determination' policy by the Labour government in 1972 (Borsboom, 1987: 222) have played a role. The idea was that indigenous people should be found a place in the mainstream economy that was culturally significant to them (Myers, 2002: 130). Promotion of the arts and crafts business fitted well in this goal. Besides that we also see an increasing promotion of Aboriginal culture, including art, as a tourist attraction (Huyton & Ryan, 2002: 632). These developments have given Aborigines a way to make a living and to "communicate our culture and show them we're still here", as Daisy says. On the other hand, working in an artworld that is 'not their own', Aboriginal

artists still have a long way to go to match the status of white artists in the same artworld (Scott-Mundine, 1990: 54).

Due to the growth in the popularity of Aboriginal art in recent years, with the demand for Aboriginal art doubling every year between 1980 and 1990 (Burchett, 1992: 4), a new range of institutions has arisen. Besides the Aboriginal art centres and cooperations, who collect and wholesale a majority of the arts and crafts, there has been a rapid increase in commercial galleries and agents who are dealing directly with the artists (Review Committee, 1989: 49, 58). Art galleries, besides community art centres, are therefore an important link between producers and consumers and are thus intermediaries between different worlds. They are institutions that have arisen from the western perspective on art, but displaying non-western Aboriginal art. Exhibiting Aboriginal art can therefore be a complex matter. Often their customers are for example not very well known with the Aboriginal art context. Here the important role of the art gallery as a 'translator' comes in. Opinions on this matter, on which I will elaborate in paragraph 5.2.1, are varied though.

Most of the galleries that can be found in Darwin are commercial art galleries. With most of the community art centres and cooperations situated in remote areas, there are only a few galleries that represent these Aboriginal art centres in town. All the profit these galleries make is returned to the art centres and the community. Of about eight commercial art galleries in Darwin at the time, I interviewed six: RAFT Artspace, Mason Gallery, Fine Art Gallery, Read Back Gallery, Indigenous Creations and the Didgeridoo Hut. Besides that I interviewed all three galleries that represented community art centres: Maningrida Arts and Culture, Tiwi Art Network and Larrakia Nation. I will start with an overview of the commercial art galleries.

Commercial galleries

A distinction can be made within the commercial art gallery category. Although all of the galleries had artwork ranging from about $50,- to thousands of dollars, some were more focused on tourists, others more on exclusive collectors.[16] Of the galleries I visited, there

[16] Although it is hard to draw an exact line between a tourist and a collector, I stick to the definition art galleries usually used. When they speak about tourists, they speak about people travelling, looking for a

were two galleries with their main focus on tourists; Indigenous Creations and the Didgeridoo Hut, two galleries with their main focus on collectors (with all high-priced works); Mason Gallery and RAFT Artspace, and two other galleries who served both, but whose main customers were tourists; Fine Art Gallery and Read Back Gallery. The reasons for this were that the last mentioned were *and* situated in the town centre (where a lot of the tourists can be found), *and* sold both high-priced work and a wide variety of more affordable work.

From looking at what kind of art is being displayed and in what way, it also became clear what the main target group of the galleries is. When looking at the two galleries whose focus is on collectors, we mainly see large paintings displayed on empty white walls. Beside the paintings there were small signs saying who painted the work, were it was painted, its size and the materials used. On the other opposite, in the galleries whose focus is on tourists, we see a wide variety of artwork and souvenirs: among others, small to medium-sized paintings, didgeridoos, wooden carvings, emu-eggs, postcards, woven baskets, spears, necklaces, plates, pillow-cases, art books and bags. In comparison to the empty 'collector galleries', these places were packed. Here the paintings often had a 'certificate of authentication' attached to them, to 'prove' that they are real (more about this in paragraph 5.2.4). The galleries that served both tourists and collectors were emptier again, but still offering a wider variety of products than the 'collector galleries'. Here more white walls could be seen again on which a variety of small to medium-sized and large paintings were displayed. Besides that, also a small amount of other artwork as for example wooden carvings and woven baskets could be seen. A lot of the artwork is also piled up on the floors. Especially the smaller artwork has again the 'certificate of authentication' attached to them.

Art for art's sake?

Fascinating is that the two galleries who mainly focused on collectors, shared the opinion that Aboriginal art was just as other western art, "art for art's sake". So art praised for its

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souvenir; don't know exactly what to look for and usually buy cheaper and smaller, 'suitcase-size', artwork. Collectors on the other hand are those people 'passionate' about Aboriginal art and spend a certain amount on art every year. They are looking for specific pieces or artists and are usually interested in the more expensive and larger works. For them it's not a reminder of a holiday, but a new acquisition for their art collection.

aesthetics. They acknowledged that in most cases Aboriginal art is an expression of culture, but did not want to 'push that angle'. This is also evident when looking at the way the art is displayed, namely like western art. According to the owner of RAFT Artspace:

> It's all contemporary in the sense that they are paintings for the western art market. It's breaking away from what the anthropological viewpoint is... in America, a lot of people still see it as tribal art. Art is never static anyway, nothing really is. Even before white contact you could see various styles; it has always been evolving. It is aesthetics besides being knowledge. (…). And, sometimes the story is there and sometimes it's not, but other times you know that there is a lot of story behind the painting and you can feel it. Whether you [get that] or not depends on whether the art centres has organised enough to have some linguist or anthropologist sit down and record the story. But that should have no bearing on the work. Because eventually that is just a way of still looking at it in an anthropological sense and it's so much more than that.

An ethnographic perspective, focused on myth and narrative, is not emphasized in these galleries. As many art critics, they have developed an antipathy towards this anthropological approach because it would be too scientific and too much focused on understanding instead of on the aesthetics of the art (see for example Morphy, 2001). In comparison to a lot of museums, where the art used to be presented as traditional and bounded (Ibid: 38), these galleries try to show Aboriginal culture as more dynamic. With not pushing the 'Dreaming/story' angle at all, or only a limited amount of information and context, the meaning and the history of continuation of this art does not become clear at all. While looking at it from a purely western perspective, the Aboriginal context, which is also still important, tends to be forgotten. Of course these paintings are made for sales, but they are more than just that. New meanings have been added because the art has become part of the intercultural context, but old meanings from the Aboriginal context have not just disappeared.

Of the galleries who mainly focused on tourists, only at the Fine Art Gallery I was told not to forget that: "it's primarily art, the point is that it looks nice on a wall. Art is art

first." All the others pushed the other opposite, taking every opportunity to show that 'it is more than just a pretty painting'; on signs beside the paintings, which say that with every piece of art the customer receives the Dreaming story (if applicable) and the artist profile or the so-called 'certificates of authentication'. This over-emphasising of the Dreaming story is of course an example of rushing into the other extreme, making Aboriginal art look like an expression of a static and traditional culture. They explained to me that they do this because in that way tourists will buy the art more easily; they are looking for 'an authentic, traditional expression of culture.' (we will also see this in Chapter 6, when discussing the views of tourist consumers). So in this way, they react to the market demand as well.

These two ways of exhibiting Aboriginal art show how difficult and complex displaying Aboriginal art is. A lot of the galleries are either focused too much on tradition and authenticity or too much on the modernity of the art, without providing the cultural or historic context the art emerged from. In my view, Aboriginal art, being taken away from its original context nowadays, should be displayed with some background information. This is necessary for the art to be understood and also to be appreciated by the viewer. I do not think polarisation between these two approaches has to be necessary; a work of art does not have to be looked at as either *art* or ethnography. Aboriginal art can very well be praised for its aesthetics, but to be better understood, attention should be paid to the cultural and historical context in which it has been produced.

Acquiring the art

The commercial galleries used some distinct ways to acquire the art for their galleries. Again a division can be made between those galleries mainly focused on tourists and those mainly focused on collectors. To start with the 'tourist galleries'.

Remarkable is that all four of them bought the majority of their work straight from the artists (as also the Review Committee [1989: 58] noticed). Usually not at the communities, but from people who just come in and try to sell their work. They do not want to work with contracts or through art centres, wanting to keep full control. One exception, Fine Art Gallery buys both, straight from artists and from community art centres. In the art centres, art coordinators[17] are involved, which usually means that the

[17] See paragraph 5.3.

artwork is very well marketable. This is at the same time the gallery that also sells quite a lot to collectors. This gallery also has so-called ‘artists-in residence’:

> Normally we have one or two artists in the gallery. [This] because the public likes to, they enjoy seeing artists painting. So mainly it is for the public. They like to see an artist actually doing the work. [The artists] also often explain the different stories, explaining to the people what it is.

Read Back Gallery and the Didgeridoo Hut also had ‘artists-in-residence. All for the same reason: “It’s good advertisement for the gallery.” In that way customers can actually see artists working which gives the whole atmosphere more ‘authenticity’, especially important for tourists according to Read Back Gallery. This is one of the ways these galleries respond to the customers’ need for authenticity, hence able to reach their goal of making profit.

The Didgeridoo Hut never bought through community art centres. The reason for that was that the owner felt the art centres looked down on them as commercial galleries. He thought these art centres felt like: “You are intruding on their ground. You are taking something that they think they belong, were it is not.” He also felt that community art centres did not pay the artists enough money:

> The money they get is very, very little. We just can’t compete with the art centres in the sense of selling to the public because they sell so cheap because they don’t pay anything for their art. So we have got to pay a lot more money for our art, than what a community art centre does.

This might be a reason for this gallery owner not to deal with art centres, RAFT Artspace, one of the ‘collector galleries’, on the other hand had other reasons *only* to deal with art centres.

> I believe in art centres. Art centres are set up for artist’s benefits in a community and they have a much broader reach. What goes to the community art centre stays

> within the community. Often it's the only form of income coming to the community through the art centre. It also encourages new artists and looks after artists. It's just performing so many different roles. (...). When you show indigenous art, you have certain responsibilities. When you are dealing with art centres you are mindful of all those things, whereas if I would be targeting at artists directly it would only be about money. I do believe that there are some people out there that have good relationships with artists and do look after them, but there are a lot who don't. So to me, and what I encourage is a good, strong ethical reputation and develop a good relationship with art centres in the long-term.

Although all the other commercial galleries also assured me of the fact that they pay their artists enough, 'fair' money, RAFT Artspace just wanted to be completely sure to 'do the right thing' and work in an ethical way. This view coincides with the views of the galleries representing the community art centres on which I will get back in paragraph 5.3.

The other 'collector gallery', Mason gallery, operates in a mixture of all the above ways: "Some [paintings] we purchase from other people, other dealers, other galleries, art centres and directly from the artist. We are not fixed in one area."

Knowing in what ways all these galleries operate, we can now look at the authenticity of the art they sell.

Traditional versus contemporary art

Traditional and contemporary both are complex concepts in relation to Aboriginal art. Even in literature there are different ideas about what these two concepts mean. Sometimes traditional Aboriginal art is seen as art with traditional, original designs; designs Aborigines already used before European contact. Contemporary art is then art in which European influence is visible, more like the urban Aboriginal art for example. On other occasions traditional art also has to be made with traditional materials, otherwise it would be contemporary art (see for example Coleman, 2001). Traditional art can then for example be thought of as authentic art and contemporary art as inauthentic. Or think of Aboriginal art in a contemporary sense as 'art for art's sake' and in a traditional sense as ethnographic.

Also among the different art galleries, there were different ideas on what traditional and contemporary art is, sometimes connected to ideas about authenticity.

At Read Back Gallery I was told that traditional dot and rarrk (cross-hatch) paintings were hardly selling at the time. Bark paintings from Arnhem Land were authentic because of their material and the fact that they used to be utensils in the old days. But, they were not selling. It was mostly contemporary artwork that was profitable. With contemporary art, abstract art was meant, for example meadow leaf paintings from the central desert, and paintings with lines and circles. Also art with acrylic paint and new mediums was seen as contemporary art. Instantly I was also told that this does not affect the authenticity of the work though. Contemporary and traditional art were both authentic as long as an Aboriginal person had painted it. Another criterion for art to be traditional was that it had to be painted by older people who have had a traditional upbringing. Nowadays a lot of Aborigines grow up in the cities; their art could not be considered as traditional art: “People are moving out of their homelands, to the cities. Traditional law, culture and customs disappear and so do traditional paintings.”

There were a few reasons for contemporary art to be so popular at the moment according to Read Back. First, because some of the ‘big names’ have become more contemporary in style. “The investment pieces in the top market have become more abstract and that’s why we’re leaning towards this style now.” Another thing was time. Often a work from Arnhem Land takes about a month to complete. A contemporary work can often be done in an hour. More traditional work, like the fine dot or rag style is really time consuming, which means higher prices. And to be famous in the art world, you have got to be productive, which means producing contemporary art.

Fine Art Gallery also described traditional art as art made by traditional people, ‘full-blood’, land-based people. Part Aborigines would have been more influenced by European styles and their art would therefore be more contemporary. At this gallery I was also told that contemporary desert art is most popular with collectors. The most important thing though would be that these paintings still have a traditional story. So in this line of thought, most contemporary art is still traditional art because it has usually got a traditional story attached to it. This then was mostly art from Arnhem Land and the Central and

Western Desert, because they would be based on rock art, which “has been there for thousands of years.”

I was told the same at the Didgeridoo Hut: traditional art is art made by ‘full-blood’ Aborigines. The fact that part-Aborigines don’t know all the stories anymore and thus make contemporary, urban, art, would not make the art less authentic though. Traditional also had to do with the connection of the painting to the Dreaming or the land. Colours and material were less important on the other hand. Nowadays “you also see blue and green in traditional paintings. (…) But art is evolving through time. It’s moving along. It is still very traditional, but it’s moving along.”

At Indigenous Creations a distinction between three different styles was made. First they had traditional art, which was Arnhem Land art. Then they had dot paintings, which were not traditional because: “it only started in the 1950s. They [the artists] had nothing, their tradition came out when they saw paint in a tin.” Their third style was contemporary art, which basically comes down to everything that could not be classified as the first two styles, like meadow leaf art from the desert. So because dot paintings and contemporary art are only recent art expressions, they cannot be traditional. On the other hand, somewhat contradicting is mentioned that Aboriginal art is traditional when “the artist has a clan to symbolise what it is.” Is this not possible with dot or contemporary art?

In contrast to the other two galleries, at Indigenous Creations and at the Didgeridoo Hut, Arnhem Land cross-hatch art was most popular. The reason for Indigenous Creations would be that: “We’re in the land the work comes from.” This style would count for 50 % of the sales. The other 50 % was shared by dot and contemporary art. For the Didgeridoo Hut the reason was that their ‘artists-in-residence’ mostly came from that area.

> We know more about that, we can give you more information on it, about the lines, this, that and anything else. We can give you a lot more info and information is really important because the more information you can give people on where it originates, what’s the story, who painted it, it’s a good selling point.

At Mason Gallery, where for commercial reasons mainly Desert art was sold, the art was considered as:

> It's very contemporary these days and it is contemporary because (...) they are using acrylic paint now and they have got so many different colours that they can use. And the designs that they paint these days are so obscure from traditional images. When you look at a Kathleen Petyarra, like the one on the floor there, there is nothing traditional about that, it's spinifex grass. They never painted that as a traditional painting and that's fine. [Then this one] here on the wall, with the circles and the pathways, that is a traditional type of a painting. (...) The colours are traditional, the yellow and the browns, and the circles are traditional images and the lines between the circles are again a traditional image. So you get some paintings that are very much so and you get others that don't have any resemblance to being traditional at all. And then again you get some that have a slight mixture of the two.

RAFT Artspace had a completely different idea about traditional and contemporary art than the other galleries. The owner did not look at the individual paintings, at the designs, colours or the artist, but at the art in general. His line of thought was that Aboriginal art is produced for a western art market nowadays and is in that sense thus contemporary.

> There are a couple different levels, were the painting is art in a contemporary, western, sense, it a source of knowledge, but it's also a source of income. It's something to do. And then it is a form of creative expression

This gallery owner emphasised that "yet it's informed by inherited visual language, it's contemporary art." This coincides with his ideas discussed in paragraph 5.2.1 about art being 'art for art's sake'. Just as at the Didgeridoo Hut the fact that Aboriginal art has always been evolving was emphasised.

It is clear now that there are a lot of different visions on what is traditional and what is contemporary. Very striking though is that at none of the galleries tradition was automatically linked to authenticity. This link, as mentioned before, used to be common in the discussion about authenticity in the western art world. In this debate, all the above-mentioned opinions on contemporary art would have been enough to call this art 'inauthentic'. I was quite surprised that this is not what happened at the galleries. All six of

them agreed that authenticity only had to do with the person who made it. As long as it was an Aboriginal artist who painted the work, it did not matter if that person was a so-called 'full blood' or a part Aborigine, the art was seen as authentic.

Selling authentic art

All these six galleries agreed on the fact that there is only one criterion for the authenticity of Aboriginal art, which is: 'that the art is made by an Aboriginal person'. There was no doubt about that. They did realise that usually Dreaming stories were relevant, but did not see this expression of the Dreaming as important for a work's authenticity, as Daisy and Wendy do. So again people agreed with the documentary makers on the third claim for inauthenticity and disagreed partly with Bowden's opinion on authenticity: a work done by an non-Aboriginal person could not be considered authentic. The galleries' representatives all understood that 'made by an Aboriginal person' did not necessarily mean that the work had to be produced by an individual, which is often seen as important for a painting's authenticity in the western art world. It is quite common for some Aboriginal paintings to be done by several people, but signed by only one person. The galleries all realised this and did not consider it as an issue for the art's authenticity.

What these galleries did realise though, is that their customers could still have other ideas about authenticity and that they were often looking for sufficient proof of this authenticity. For most of the galleries it was most important to prove the authenticity to its customers in all possible ways. I already mentioned the (in)significance of the Dreamtime story in paragraph 5.2.1, so I will not attend to this matter any further. At Indigenous Creations the sign outside the entrance said: "Authentic Aboriginal Art." Most important to prove this authenticity to tourists is:

> First the story behind it [the Dreaming story] that has to be written on the back of it; it has to be signed by the artist and dated; to prove authenticity. The artist has to show what clan they come from, what line. This is all put in an 'authenticity-and-valuation-of- Aboriginal-Art-certificate', signed by the owner of the gallery. Another important thing is a photo of the artist holding the piece. It actually proves that it's theirs.

At all the galleries so-called ‘certificate of authentication’ were provided, usually with name, origin, skin, clan, language group and if available the ‘story’ of the work. With all this documentation the work is valued more. Although this information is of no relevance to westerners, it is a ‘proof’ that the art is made by a ‘real’ Aborigine: for western consumers they are features of ‘otherness, which show a society that is different to their own. Providing these documents has therefore become a convention in the Aboriginal art world. I was told that almost all the people who visit the galleries are actually looking for these certificates. All this information about the artist and the story of the painting makes it a meaningful, more authentic, painting that they are looking for. Mainly at the ‘tourist galleries’ the photos of the artists, with or without the piece of art, were extremely important for customers. As I am being told for example at the Didgeridoo Hut:

> If I can’t take their photo, I don’t really like to buy the piece of art because it’s too hard to sell, very hard. (...) If you walked into a shop and liked a piece of art, I could tell you a story, but if you don’t really know who has painted it and where it is from and this and that, anyone could have painted it. If we can get a photo of the person with the art it sells more easily, it’s a proof to people an Aboriginal person has painted it. (...) It’s like if you go and buy a car you want the papers to say it’s yours. Make sure it’s a Toyota, not a Volkswagen, yes it is important.

At the Didgeridoo Hut they actually wanted to go one step further: setting up a video camera to put the whole painting process on a DVD that comes with the painting.

At the two ‘collector galleries’ they considered proving authenticity with photographs to be going too far. On the one hand it is not even a real proof that the person in the photograph actually painted the work. On the other hand they also thought that besides the ‘certificate of authentication’, which is important to most of the buyers: “they [customers] have to get some reassurance that the work is from or done by who it is said it is done by”. But, your reputation should be enough to prove authenticity, is what they thought. “It’s all based on trust”, as RAFT Artspace explains. This gallery especially emphasises that working through community art centres already verifies the authenticity of

the artwork; it is an ethical way of working and all the artwork is catalogued. Both the galleries thought that providing the 'certificate of authentication' was enough proof for authenticity.

An issue that does arise when providing photographs at the other galleries is that some customers still doubt whether a person is indigenous or not. A lot of the artwork in the galleries is done by so-called 'part Aborigines'. Often their skin colour is very light. Because of that, many people think they do not *look* like Aborigines and therefore *are* no Aborigines. According to Indigenous Creations "that is stupid." I'm being told that "the family tree, clan or bloodline can go back sixteen generations." At the Didgeridoo Hut, and similar at Read Back Gallery, I'm actually told that:

> Unless you are a really good painter, if you have got light skin, half-caste, quarter caste, three quarter caste; your paintings are harder to sell, in the sense that people don't class you as an Aboriginal person. They think that to be an Aboriginal person you have got to be a full blood person.

Other important issues at the 'tourist' galleries were: having 'artists-in-residence', to which I already paid attention, and also being 'Aboriginal owned'. This was significant for the Didgeridoo Hut and for Fine Art Gallery. At Fine Art Gallery the words 'Aboriginal owned' were painted in big, bright letters on one of the outside walls. At Didgeridoo Hut I'm told about the fact that they are Aboriginal owned: " we push that pretty hard in our marketing". Being Aboriginal owned was pushed at both galleries because it would be a proof for people that the art they sell is 'real' Aboriginal art, authentic art: "Because of all the fakes going around, people look for that [= being Aboriginal owned]." (Didgeridoo Hut).

To conclude this paragraph I will shortly say something about didgeridoos, especially because this was also an issue at Woolaning. Both at Indigenous Creations and at the Didgeridoo Hut, the authenticity of didgeridoos was mentioned. They were both concerned with the amount of fakes on the market nowadays. A lot of the didgeridoos for sale would be didgeridoos made mechanically and hand-painted in Bali and therefore not authentic. At the Didgeridoo Hut the owner actually had a Bali-made didgeridoo, split in

half, to show his customers the difference with a real termite-eaten didgeridoo. Termite-eaten was also the criterion used at Indigenous Creations. For a didgeridoo to be authentic, it has to be hollowed out be termites and not by people or machines. Also stressed was that a didgeridoo should not be valued on its painting. So, as long as a didgeridoo is termite eaten, even with a dot painting on it (originally there were no didgeridoos in the central and western desert), it is authentic. What I found especially interesting was the following remark: "The guy next door sells bamboo didgeridoo's (...), that is NOT a didgeridoo! An authentic didgeridoo is termite eaten, the ones we have are a 100 % termite eaten." When comparing this to Daisy's remarks about bamboo didgeridoos, this shows us how in different contexts, there are different ways of looking at authenticity.

As has become clear, with a shift in contexts, there is a shift in notions of authenticity. In the Aboriginal context there were two main criteria of authenticity, a connection to the Dreaming and the fact that it has to be produced by an Aboriginal person. However, for art galleries, especially the second criterion is important. In comparison to the Woolaning artists, these galleries do not push the 'land-based' criterion though. The galleries that are focused on tourists do push that first 'Dreaming' criterion in their marketing because they realise that for a lot of their customers it still is an important criterion for authenticity. Now do these galleries see a change in authenticity due to commodification of Aboriginal art?

Commodification

With these galleries being *commercial* galleries selling authentic Aboriginal art and their criterion for authenticity being 'painted by an Aboriginal person', commodification has not changed the authenticity of Aboriginal art itself. It has changed the art-producing context though. According to RAFT Artspace and Mason Gallery, commodification of Aboriginal art has made Aboriginal art more and more part of art in a western sense. Because I have discussed this in paragraph 5.2.1, I will not discuss it here any further. So first, according to *all* the galleries, commodification has increased the number of people being confronted with Aboriginal art. Therefore the market demand has been growing drastically. This has put a pressure on the artists. An ever-increasing demand means that more and more art has to be produced. This sometimes affects the quality of the work. "People are asked to do

work and they are working for more people now than they ever used to. And they try to squeeze them in and as a result, the artwork quality drops off", is what the owner of Mason Gallery explains. Another affect of this is that there is also a lot of artwork on the market, which has got Aboriginal designs and an Aboriginal name on it, but is not painted by Aborigines. In their view on authenticity, this means that this work is 'inauthentic'. So a lot of 'inauthentic' work circulates among real Aboriginal art. Commodification has therefore not changed authenticity itself, but has lead to the presence of more 'inauthentic' Aboriginal art. For RAFT Artspace this is the reason just to buy from art centres. Besides that, the pressure can affect the creativity of the artist as I was told at Read Back Gallery: "Often people are just thinking of feeding their families." They see that certain designs sell better and thus start imitating those designs. The galleries agreed on the fact that the art nowadays is mainly (but not exclusively) made for commercial reasons, to make a living. The art might have become 'more contemporary' or 'less creative, or is in any way evolving, still they all feel it is authentic because it has been painted by an Aboriginal person. Because of the fact that a lot of customers still apply different, 'outdated', static criteria for authenticity, galleries have to strain themselves to prove authenticity of commercial art to customers (as could be seen in the previous paragraph). Questions by customers as 'Is this didgeridoo authentic?', 'How do we know it is done by an Aboriginal person?' and 'How much does the artist get?', are common.

Another issue that was mentioned, also at Read Back Gallery, is that with the commodification of the art; wholesalers, art coordinators, but also gallery-owners have an influence (at least to a certain extent) on what is being painted. They know what is marketable and want to make the most out of it. Often art will only be bought if certain popular designs or colours have been used. So on the one hand creativity of people might be affected by the fact that they just want to 'feed their families' and thus produce what sells. On the other hand however, they are also pushed from the outside on what to paint. For example at the Didgeridoo Hut:

> I just don't let my boys use blues and greens and stuff like that. We only use the four traditional colours [white, black, yellow, red]. It's part of the culture, it has been there for a long time; the colours and the skin groups and everything all goes

Figure 12: Indigenous Creations, “Authentic Aboriginal arts and crafts” (on the yellow sign) ©

Figure 13: Fine Art Gallery, “Aboriginal owned” ©

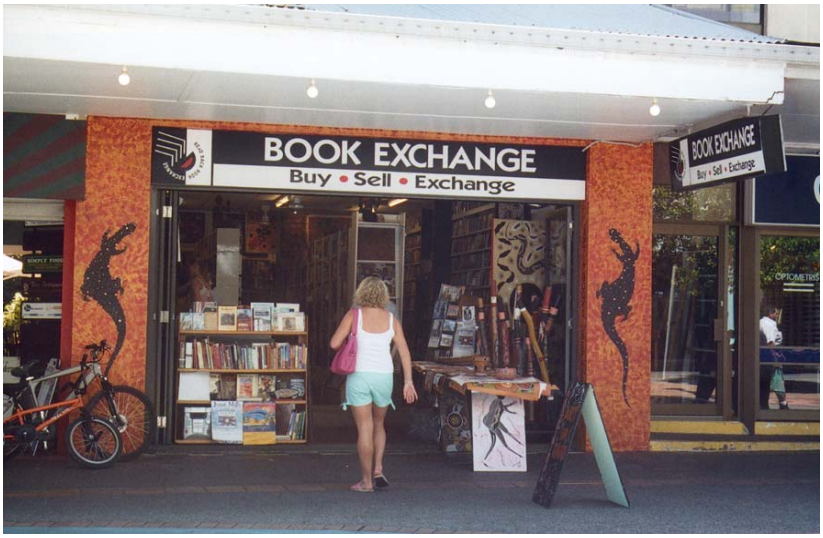


Figure 14: Read Back Gallery ©

> together. If we start letting them break away we are getting away from what we should be doing.

This is interesting when thinking of the owners' strong opinion that the art is evolving and always has. It seems as if, in that way, he still wants to keep it static. This is also because, according to him, these traditional colours appeal most to customers.

As could be seen, commodification has definitely created a new context for Aboriginal art. New meanings have been added to Aboriginal art nowadays. Because the works of art have been commercialised, they have become intercultural products. Therefore the ideas of customers about the art and its authenticity have become ever more important. Thus, galleries feel it is ever more important to prove that the work they sell is still authentic. All the possible is being done to make people believe they are buying 'the real thing.'

Galleries representing Aboriginal art centres

Besides commercial art galleries, Darwin also has a few galleries that represent Aboriginal community art centres: Maningrida Arts and Culture, Tiwi Art Network and Larrakia Nation. Maningrida is a place situated in Arnhem Land, Tiwi are the Tiwi Islands, north of Darwin, and the Larrakia are the original inhabitants of the Darwin area. With Larrakia Nation as an exception, most community art centres are situated in remote areas. The art that is for sale is then predominantly produced at the communities. In the Top End of Australia most art centres are part of ANKAAA, the Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Aboriginal Artists. ANKAAA is an advocacy and support agency for these art centres, active in consultation, lobbying, resourcing, training, promotion and protecting artists' interests. The organisation started in 2001 with 15 art centres and has grown to 37 art centres in 2006 (S. Hawkins, personal communication, March 23, 2006).

The biggest difference between art centre galleries and commercial galleries is that art centre galleries are Aboriginal/community owned and controlled. This means that all the profit goes back into the community art centre. Community members are involved in decision-making. Besides that, as could be seen in the comments of RAFT Artspace, they play an important socio-cultural role in communities. Another characteristic of art centres

is that they usually provide the artists with material and also promote new artists. This in the way that they buy all the artwork that is offered. This has got two reasons according to Maningrida Arts and Culture:

> Because that way people who have never tried painting or weaving before can have a go and find out if they want to pursue. It's also one of the only ways Aboriginal people, in Maningrida, can engage in the mainstream market, and earn money away from welfare.

Another important feature is the involvement of an art advisor or coordinator. That person is both a commercial and cultural mediator between the artists and the market. He or she is in constant dialogue with the artists, buying their work and giving them advice on how to improve and keep up their work. Besides that he or she also is in a dialogue with the market by coordinating the sales to galleries, museums and other buyers. Furthermore the artists are paid directly for their work and the price is negotiated between the art centre coordinator and the artist. What are the other differences?

Obvious might be that while at commercial galleries a variety of Aboriginal art styles are being sold, at the art centre galleries only the art of the particular art centre is presented. And while we see that at commercial art galleries only profitable/marketable work is being bought, at art centre galleries work of all artists is being displayed. A frequently repeated remark at commercial galleries was that they hardly buy any bark paintings because there is just no market for it. At the opposite, at Maningrida Arts and Culture I was told that in Maningrida a lot of bark paintings are being produced and that at the time it was the right season for bark paintings. That is, in the wet season it is easy to take the bark of the trees and therefore it is the right time to produce, buy and sell bark paintings. So while other galleries do not sell bark paintings because they look to 'ethnographic' to customers and are therefore not profitable, at Maningrida Arts and Culture they are specialised in bark paintings and actually say:

> I think people are really starting to see the beauty of them. I think for a long time people have looked at them like ethnographic and not really as an art form itself,

> but I think that has really started to change. (...) Besides that, Maningrida artists just mainly paint on bark.

Because these three galleries are all in different stages of development and have different intentions, I will present my findings for every gallery separately.

Maningrida Arts and Culture

Of the three art centre galleries, Maningrida Arts and Culture is the gallery that looks most like a 'real gallery'. It is quite a large open space with white walls on which the art is presented. Outside there is a sign, which says the gallery is 'Aboriginal owned and controlled'. The gallery opened its doors because the art centre wanted to stop dealing with the smaller galleries in the Darwin CBD. This mainly because of their "unethical practices". They were described as 'carpet baggers':

> People, commercial gallery owners, go out to the community and exchange goods for art and it can be money, but more often than not, we find it can be a second hand car, which is in pretty bad condition. Unfortunately a lot of times as well it's probably alcohol, and gunja [marihuana], that happens a lot.

Trying to put a hold to these practices they opened their own gallery in town in 2004. Still Maningrida artists are independent and can sell to other places if they would like to.
The art centre does encourage the artists to go to the art centre because they spent a lot of time marketing the artists and establishing their profile, which they do not believe other, commercial, galleries do. The fact that there is a gallery in the CBD that is 'Aboriginal owned and controlled' is attracting possible customers. This being the only bigger gallery in the Darwin CBD working through art centres, works in its favour says the manager: "because for a person who really is aware and wants to do the right thing, this is really their only option." According to the manager ever more people are becoming aware of the 'unscrupulous' practices going on in the arts business. Therefore the idea is that to be sure to acquire an 'honest' and 'authentic' piece of art, you would have to buy through an art centre.

In accordance with the commercial art galleries though, at Maningrida the main criterion for authenticity is also seen as 'painted by an Aboriginal person'. The art centre is able to provide some documentation about who painted the artwork and where the art comes from. The manager finds the 'certificates of authentication' with photos, provided by commercial galleries offensive for the artists. He does not think it is right to show a photo of the artist to 'prove' that an Aboriginal person really painted it. If you are a reputable gallery, were the profit goes back to the community, you do not need this photo, is the idea. At Maningrida art centre, all the work is catalogued so that it can be tracked. "So if it goes on the secondary market it still has the Maningrida code and we can locate it and follow who painted it and the story can be found." This story is not thought of to be necessary though for a painting to be authentic (as it is according to the documentary makers' criteria shown in Coleman's article (2001)).

The manager explains that every painting has got two sides: a public and a sacred side.

> What we see is the public side of it, everyone is allowed to see that; women, children, initiated, uninitiated, blackfella, whitefella. (...) But there is a lot more to it, we're not allowed to know. We can't say anything about that because we simply don't know.(...) So with Aboriginal art there's always a whole lot of stuff we don't know about because we are not supposed to.

He also explains that Maningrida artists only paint or create things that belong to them. It's not really that every artwork has got a story. He gives the example of the camp dogs (fibre sculptures), they don't really have a story. Bark paintings usually do have a story; it can be part of their Dreaming. Although, according to him, people are looking at Aboriginal art more and more in a contemporary, western, sense, it still happens a lot that people want to know the story. Here he shares the same view with the 'collector galleries'.

> Does it matter? Do you like the way it looks? Great!! Well, that's what it is. You don't always ask a story when you see a painting in a museum. You don't always need a story; you can appreciate it for what it is. People think that there is

> something deep and musical about it that they want to know, but I think do you really need to know? And I think it's starting to happen more now that people start to realise to appreciate for its beauty and aesthetics.

He also does not agree with the idea that Aboriginal art has to be an expression of 'antiquity' to be authentic. He explains that people often think that Aboriginal art does not change for 10,000 of years; that it is still the same. "But there are no hard and fast rules; it changes". Important for art galleries and centres is to show how dynamic and fluid and ever-changing works of art are. He explains that:

> The Kunwinjku[18] only started producing mimi's[19] like 30 years ago and last years in particular, it has really boomed. The fibre sculpture is only around for like 10 years. Fish traps were traditionally used and made. But 4, 5 years ago, since Maningrida art won the sculpture award with a fish trap in the Telstra Art award, it sort of reinvigorated again. People are making them a lot more than they traditionally would. They have changed the design of them a bit so they are made for the art market more than for utilitarian purpose. The same for bark paintings. These are only being produced since 200 years. Before that bark shelters were also painted for entertainment, but were abandoned. A lot of the designs on the bark now, do come from traditional motives painted on the body during ceremonies or from rock art, but people are slightly disappointed when they hear it's a new form of expression. They say: "I don't want something new, I want something old." People sort of have the idea that it has got to be static.

At Maningrida Arts and Culture the manager does not think that the meaning of the art has changed due to commodification. According to the manager, people paint for several reasons nowadays: "for fun, to make some money, because they have the desire to create, but it is also still part of their culture. (…) They may express that meaning in a different way, but it's still there." So even though this is not seen as a criterion for authenticity here,

[18] people from Western Arnhem Land
[19] mimi's are spirit figures

as it is at Woolaning, it still is an important point to realise that the art is an expression of their Dreaming or connection to the land. He thinks it is important to show people that Aboriginal art is not static and in that way trying to adjust people's ideas about authenticity.

Still, because this gallery is mainly focusing on tourists as well, it tries to respond to the market demand to a certain extent. The manager gives a few examples of this. He explains that once they had one and a half to two meter high mimi statues. Because they are harder to transport they only sell smaller statues now. He also noticed that certain mimi's with more aggressive facial expressions sold less easily. He therefore does not buy them that much anymore. And, didgeridoos: "we have them because people look for them, so you're sort of obliged to sell them." Still, it's mainly up to the artists. He explains that sometimes there are requests for certain artwork, but the art centre cannot guarantee anything. It depends on the artists.

So even though Maningrida Arts and Culture also thinks it is important to look at Aboriginal art in a contemporary sense and agrees with commercial galleries on the authenticity criterion, they have a different approach. Here less directly, attention is being paid to 'proving' to customers that an artwork is authentic. More attention is being paid to show them it is a reputable gallery and therefore the work is authentic. Instead of thinking more from a customers' point of view, as the commercial art galleries do, at Maningrida there is more focus on the artists' point of view. So instead of mainly offering what people are looking for, they are offering what artists provide them with. Nevertheless, the art is being exhibited in a gallery to be sold and is thus being produced for the market. Again it turns out that Aboriginal art is not just part of the Aboriginal context anymore, but is circulating interculturally. Although Maningrida Arts and Culture has a different way of approaching Aboriginal art, it shares the opinions on authenticity with the commercial galleries and does not think the art has become less authentic due to commercialisation; different, but not less authentic.

Tiwi Art Network

On the Tiwi Islands, off the coast north of Darwin, four art centres are situated. Three of these art centres entered an alliance in 1998 in the 'Tiwi Art Network'. Instead of all

working individually they decided to have joint promotion and joint marketing. Because of a growing demand for Tiwi art, the art centres became too busy to do the marketing and promotion themselves.

Tiwi Art Network has got its main office in town. At the same time this is their place to sell Tiwi art in Darwin. Art sales in Darwin are not its main activity though. The main art sales still happen at the art centres on the islands. Although there are plans to further develop the art sales in Darwin, they are not yet in the position to realise these plans. Most of the income the Network still gets from the government and is thus not yet in a position to experiment.

Therefore the main activity of the Tiwi Art Network is organising ‘art tours’. On these tours people fly from Darwin to the Tiwi Islands to visit the art centres, get demonstrations in for example carving, get a chance to talk to artists and eventually purchase some art. Because this tour is just focused on art, it does not aim at general tourists. They are usually looking for a ‘cultural experience’ for which this tour is too much specialised on just art. So they mainly aim at gallery owners and art lovers and also at academics, retirees and trades people. There are plans to further develop this art tour. “There will be promotion, but there is not a clear strategy yet.”

Again art production is the main income for people on the islands. Besides that the art centres also play a role in:

> (…) improving the health and well-being of the artists. It’s basically giving them a project, somewhere they can go and it’s a safe environment were they can produce artwork. And the artwork is such an important part of their culture as well. It keeps their culture going.

The manager gives an example of the ‘Pukimani Poles’ for which Tiwi art is known. She explains how traditionally they were used in burial ceremonies and were ‘a very individual representation of the person who passed away’. This pole was placed beside the grave. Therefore Pukimani poles play an important role in cultural practices. Nowadays these Pukimani poles are also produced for the market and are therefore not created for a

particular person. This does not diminish the fact though that they are still an important part of their culture. A new meaning has been added to the Pukimani poles.

At Tiwi Art Network the flexibility of culture was also emphasised. Instead of being an expression of a static culture, the art "reflects their views on the world and the community they are living in now." New mediums and technologies are being used to express images in a different form. In producing art there is a lot of space for individual improvisation. The artists don't want to term their art as traditional or contemporary, because too often traditional is seen as more authentic and more valuable as contemporary art. (Barnes, 1999: 31). They see all their art as authentic. Nowadays Tiwi art has got a variety of purposes. Artists produce work for the marketplace in addition to ritual use. Besides this ritual and financial purpose they also are aware of the fact that their art can communicate their culture to non-Tiwi people.

Then looking at their views on authenticity, the Tiwi Art Network manager also explains that authenticity is about the person who painted it. Therefore the Network provides certificates that give details about the artist; skin group, country and description of the painting, and make sure every piece of art is catalogued. That way people can be sure an Aboriginal person has produced the painting. So again the opinion on authenticity and the 'non-influence' of commodification on this is shared with the other galleries.

Larrakia Nation

Larrakia Nation has been established in 1998. Besides an art retail outlet/art gallery, they are active in land claims, public art projects and care for elderly people. Because the art centre only exists since 1998, their art business is 'still in the first stage of developing', as they describe it. At the time they did not have an art coordinator yet. Though an art coordinator was seen as quite important for a proper marketing of the art and thus for becoming self-sustainable. So far their art sales has been about self-promotion. An art coordinator was also seen as important because: "Our art sales is a loose systeem (...). We don't have the knowledge of product and pricing and GST."

At the time they had just moved to a new location and were setting up a new art gallery. With this Larrakia art centre they would like to focus both on wholesaling and retailing and on exhibitions overseas. The gallery itself would mainly be focused on

tourists. For the artists the gallery has been (at the former location) and will again be the main source of income. Part of what the artists produce at the art centre will go to the Larrakia gallery and a part they can sell to other galleries if they would like to. They produce a range of products from paintings on canvas to textiles, boomerangs and ceramics.

What is strongly being emphasised at Larrakia Nation, besides again the fact that the art has to be painted by an Aboriginal person, is that their art is always connected to the Dreaming and therefore authentic. Although every work of art is an individual expression of this Dreaming, there are no 'right or wrong' interpretations of the Dreaming stories. Everyone expresses it the way they have been taught. "It's a powerful expression of who we are. It is always about spirituality, Dreaming, totems and ceremonial body designs. It says who you are culturally" As at Woolaning, besides being painted by an Aboriginal person, authenticity is also about this connection to the Dreaming. This is quite striking. At the commercial galleries I was looking for the opinions of the gallery owners. At art centre galleries this was a little different. Because the Aboriginal community art centres own the art centre galleries, I could not speak directly to these owners (because of their remote location). Therefore I spoke to the gallery managers on behalf of the community. This was actually different again at Larrakia Nation. Because Larrakia Nation has got its art centre in Darwin, I *was* actually speaking to the owners. Striking then is that of all the galleries I have been to, this is the only one who mentions, just as at Woolaning, that for authenticity there are two criteria: painted by an Aboriginal person and a connection to the Dreaming. So when speaking to indigenous people about their own art, moving back into the Aboriginal context, these two criteria for authenticity came up. When speaking to all the other 'outsiders' (I'm not talking about the consumers yet) only the first criterion came up. This shows that there is a difference in standards between different contexts.[20]

Besides their art being an expression of the Dreaming and being commercial products, they also see their art as part of their activism. I'm being told that Larrakia people find it hard to express themselves in a direct way. Therefore: "Art says it all. It can be a voice. It shows our pain and suffering, our country and our responsibility to that."

[20] With this study I have not been able (because of a lack of time and because of the fact that at Woolaning community there were only two artists active) to look at possible differences in opinions within the producers' context.

Commodification definitely has got an influence on the art according to Larrakia Nation. Artists are for example well aware of colours, designs and depictions that attract buyers. They want to be able to give customers what they want, but fundamentally it is identifiable as part of the artists style.

> I hear some artists say about what they are painting or the colours they are using: 'People like this". It's good, they learn about marketing. I think it's really clever that they can do that without damaging the cultural designs and its significance. (…) Times have changed, but our expression of authenticity and cultural meaning is still very strong.

At Larrakia Nation there are plans to commercialise their art even further. "We live in a commercial time." They would like to go into 'lines'; en masse produce commercial products "through which we can generate some greater economic return." Also the designs themselves they see as an opportunity for greater returns, because these can be printed on commercial products as clothing, interior design or jewellery. There would be an expectation of the market to diversify Larrakia art to which the artists are willing to respond. A condition though is that they will not undermine the design itself: "We have got to maintain our cultural integrity. Therefore intellectual property rights are important as well " This again would be were the art coordinator comes in.

So again it is thought that commodification has changed the context of Aboriginal art, but has not affected its authenticity. Let us now look at the ideas of the consumers in these matters.

6. CONSUMERS OF ABORIGINAL ART: TOURISTS IN DARWIN

As I mentioned before, Darwin, as one of the two the tourism centres of the Northern Territory (together with Alice Springs), is *the* place in the Territory to find tourists and Aboriginal art galleries. A lot of the tourists come to the Northern Territory to experience Aboriginal culture in some way. Quite often this experience means purchasing a piece of

Aboriginal art.[21] Because in Darwin most often the consumers of Aboriginal art are tourists, I have conducted a survey among 51 tourists. I have questioned them about their views on what Aboriginal art is and its authenticity. Of these 51 people, 24 were male and 27 female. 92 % of the people I spoke to were between 18 and 31 years of age. There was no one between 32 and 46 and the remaining 8 % of the people were between 47 and 68. They came from a wide variety of countries: Canada, Italy, the Netherlands, France, Israel, Australia, the UK, Bosnia, Germany, the USA, Denmark, Austria, Estonia, Norway, Japan and Sweden.

Interest in Aboriginal art and culture

People's main reason to visit Darwin and the Top End was in the first place, with 66 %, the nature, especially the surrounding National Parks; Litchfield and Kakadu. Another 35 % said to be in Darwin and the Top End to learn about and experience Aboriginal culture (see Table 1**)**. For them the Northern Territory was '*the* place of Aborigines' because most Aborigines live in the Territory, and is thus the best place to experience their culture. For example by visiting rock art sites, going on an Aboriginal cultural tour or buying a piece of Aboriginal art. Other reasons for a visit to Darwin were the climate, meeting new people and finding a temporary job.

Table 1. Reasons to visit Darwin and the Top End. Because of the possibility of multiple answers, the total percentages exceed 100 %.

	Male %	Female %	**Total %**
Nature/National Parks	63	70	**66**
Aboriginal culture	21	48	**35**
Climate	13	7	**10**
Meeting people	4	4	**4**
Job	8	11	**9**

[21] See for example the surveys conducted by the Australia Council in 1990, 1993 and 1998 about 'International Visitors and Aboriginal Arts'

A difference can be seen between men and women considering their reasons to visit the area. Table 1 shows that women usually seemed to be more interested in Aboriginal culture than men. 48 % of the women were interested in comparison to 21 % of the men.

Next I asked people specifically if they were in any way interested in Aboriginal art. In total a great majority of 80 % of the people questioned, were interested in Aboriginal art. In table 2 we can also see again that women are usually more interested than men.
89 % of the women were interested in Aboriginal art in comparison to 71 % of the men.

Table 2. Are you in any way interested in Aboriginal art?

	Male %	Female %	**Total %**
Yes	71	89	**80**
No	13	7	**10**
A little	17	4	**10**

I asked people to explain their (dis)interest for Aboriginal art. There were a lot of different reasons for being or not being interested in this art.

When we look at the ten percent of the people who did not like Aboriginal art, we see that the main reason for that was that they did not find the art aesthetically appealing. It was also mentioned once that the person had no interest in art in general. For the other ten percent who liked Aboriginal art a little bit, the reasons were that they thought Aboriginal art was beautiful, but they had no particular interest in Aboriginal art or did not know anything about it. Another remark was that someone had no special interest in art, but did have an interest in Aboriginal history and thought that art was part of that.

The reasons of the 80 % of the people that were interested in Aboriginal art can be divided into six categories. The first and most common category of answers had to do with the fact that they considered Aboriginal art to be an expression of culture. The following answers or answers alike, were mentioned 23 times: ‘the pictures tell stories’, ‘the paintings teach about their culture’, ‘it is different to other art because it has got a story’, ‘it

is symbolic, everything in the painting has got a meaning; it tells a story' and 'it's a way of showing their bond to nature and what is going on around them.'

The second category of answers has got to do with the fact that people were generally interested in cultures or Aboriginal culture and history. Answers like 'it's the oldest culture in the world', 'a general interest in different cultures', 'Aboriginal people are the original people of Australia, so their culture is important and precious' and 'it's a huge part of Australian culture', were mentioned 13 times.

The fact that people were interested in art in general or were artists themselves and therefore interested in Aboriginal art was mentioned six times. Only on five occasions it was mentioned that people purely liked Aboriginal art for its aesthetics, they just thought it was beautiful. The fifth category, which was only mentioned twice, was the fact that people like the variety of different styles in Aboriginal art. Last, only mentioned once, was the fact that a person liked Aboriginal art because of its earthy colours.

Interesting here is that the majority of the people thought Aboriginal art to be interesting because of some kind of cultural factor of which it would be an expression. This we see again when asking people what they think characterises true, authentic Aboriginal art.

Authentic Aboriginal art

When asked about the characteristics of true, authentic Aboriginal art, people usually had a variety of answers. Because people generally had multiple answers, the total amount of answers exceeds 51. With an overwhelming majority of 43 times, authentic Aboriginal art had to do with being an expression of Aboriginal people living close to their land and the nature, their culture, Dreaming and the fact that the painting in that way 'meant something' or was 'telling a certain story'. For almost everyone in the survey the art should, in some way, have a spiritual background, show the importance of 'ancient beings' and nature and be symbolic. With this being the main criterion for authenticity, we see that among consumers Aboriginal art had to be quite traditional to be seen as 'real'. The 'tourist galleries' were right in their ideas about customers' notions on Aboriginal art. This idea about authenticity coincides with the ideas of artists themselves about the authenticity of their art. The difference in opinion between producers and consumers actually comes in

when discussing the commodification of the art. I will further elaborate on this in the next paragraph, 6.3.

The second most important standard for authenticity was that the painting had to be produced with ‘traditional, earthy colours’; black, white, red and brown and yellow, or with natural materials. This was mentioned 20 times. Third comes ‘the way they paint’, being mentioned 14 times. To be authentic, people mentioned that the art had to contain ‘dots or stripes’. Some thought that all the art had to look like this. Others realised that every region has got its own distinct style. But ‘the way they paint with certain traces and symbols’, was seen as an important criterion.

Maybe because for a lot of people it was too obvious, only six people mentioned literally that a painting had to made by an Aboriginal person to be authentic. Later on in the survey it turned out that most people thought this to be self-evident and therefore did not mention it. It did turn out though that the main point was, that if not painted by an Aboriginal person, it could never be authentic Aboriginal art, an idea that also existed among gallery owners and representatives.

Finally, the answers that were only given one or two times: once it was mentioned that authentic Aboriginal art had to be ‘old’, twice that it had to be done on rocks and once that it needed to be simple; an expression of primitivism. Interesting is that of the 51 people, only two had no ideas about authentic Aboriginal art. Striking was also that only one person at this stage of the survey mentioned that he thought commercial art to be inauthentic. Aboriginal art had to be produced for “traditional and Aboriginal purposes like teaching, cultural beliefs and values, life lessons and story telling. Art for commercial gain and galleries is inauthentic.” When getting to the next question about the influence of commercialisation on the authenticity of Aboriginal art, more people started to doubt the authenticity of *commercial* art.

Commercial Aboriginal art

After asking people what they thought characterises authentic Aboriginal art, I asked them if they thought Aboriginal art that is produced for the market, so for sales, is true, authentic Aboriginal art and if they could explain why it is or is not. It turned out that 49 % of the people questioned, 54 % of the males and 44 % of the females, believed that

commodification of Aboriginal art made authenticity of the art questionable. 31 % did not think Aboriginal art for sale was still authentic. Only 14 %, of which 8 % were males and 19 % females, thought the art to be still authentic, irrespective of the commodification of it. And only 6 %, two males and one female, had no idea (see table 3).

Table 3. Do you think that Aboriginal art that is for sale is authentic?

	Male %	Female %	**Total %**
Yes	8	19	**14**
No	29	33	**31**
Questionable	54	44	**49**
Don't know	8	4	**6**

Let's start with the reasons of the majority of the people, 49 %, to believe the authenticity of commercial Aboriginal art is questionable. Again multiple answers were possible. The main reason to question this authenticity was that people were not sure if an Aboriginal person still painted the work. 15 Times people mentioned to be afraid that the art was 'made in China' or made by white Australians and therefore not 'the real thing' anymore. The second most important reason was that people were not sure if Aboriginal art for sale still had that 'cultural meaning' or 'story'; its traditional purpose, to it. This was mentioned 12 times. They were afraid that if art would be made for profit, it would be more like mass-production and therefore would say less or nothing at all about the meaning it used to have traditionally. Also the fact that you see brighter colours nowadays, which were not used traditionally, made people question its authenticity. So these reasons have all got to do with the art moving away from how it was traditionally and thus moving away from being authentic. These two categories of ideas were most important. On the other hand some people did realise that 'in this world everybody needs money' or 'they also have to survive and adjust to the capitalist world.' Besides that I got two other answers, which in a way also correspond with the idea of the art losing its traditional meaning. The first answer was that the art would still be authentic if people were still serious about the painting, as long as

it was not just for ‘alcohol-money’. So painting had to be about more than just that. And the other answer was that someone was afraid that now the art is commodified it would not be the artists’ own choice anymore. If Aborigines were forced by white people to produce for the market, it would not be authentic art anymore. If it would be the people’s own choice, there would be no problem. Finally, another reason to doubt the arts’ authenticity, mentioned four times, was that because of its popularity, people were scared that the art would not be ‘unique’ anymore.

The next 31 % of the people thought, without doubt, that commercial Aboriginal art was not authentic anymore. Again, with a majority of 11 times, people found that through commercialising the art, it had completely lost its traditional purpose and meaning. ‘The paintings are not representing their culture anymore, it has no meaning’, ‘it’s just for the money, it’s not about the Dreaming anymore’ and especially the remark that ‘the real art they used to make for themselves, this art is just for profit, it’s made like the market wants too have it’, was heard a lot. Again the remark that the bright colours were not traditional and therefore not authentic was made. There were two other categories of answers. The first one, only mentioned three times, was that because it is for the market, it is all mass-produced and therefore all copies (and thus not produced by an Aboriginal person) or not unique anymore, and thus ‘inauthentic’. The last category also very much based on western notions on art, with only two remarks, is that art that is for sale is ‘not true art anymore’. “True art flows from your expression of mind. Why would you profit from this, it’s a love.”

Besides the 6 % of the people who had no idea, a minority of 14 % thought that without a doubt, commercial Aboriginal art was still authentic. Everyone had the same kind of answer for that: “The art still has a meaning, it is still about their culture, but it is also to make a living. It’s evolving. They have got to move with time. Culture and art have always been evolving.” These people acknowledged that already existing meanings can change through time and that new meanings can be added.

Furthermore I asked people what they themselves would look at when they would buy a piece of Aboriginal art. Their answers could be divided into eight categories, see Table 4.

Table 4. If you would buy Aboriginal art, what would be important, what would you look at? Because of the possibility of multiple answers, the total percentages exceed 100 %.

	Male %	Female %	**Total %**
Aboriginal made	29	41	**35**
Story/Symbolic/Meaning	25	30	**27**
Aesthetics	12,5	26	**20**
Unique/Quality work	12,5	19	**16**
Natural depictions	4	22	**14**
Natural colours	8	11	**10**
That is can be used	12,5	0	**6**
Size/Style (fits in home)	4	7	**6**

Again the two main focus points were first that an Aboriginal person should have made the artwork, 35 %, and second that it has got to have a story or a meaning and that it is symbolic, 27 %. In third place comes that it has to be aesthetically appealing. This does seem to be more important among women than among men. Same for the uniqueness of the work and the fact that is should have natural depictions. For men it is more important that the artwork can be used. Here the men mentioned they would look for an instrument, mostly a didgeridoo.

Finally I asked people that *if* they decided to buy Aboriginal art, where they would most likely buy it and why (See Table 5).

First, the specific place to buy the art: 20 % of the people mentioned the importance to buy the art in the Northern Territory, where it comes from. This mainly because most Aboriginal people live in the Territory and therefore it would make sense to buy it there, 'in its context'. Furthermore, coinciding with people's focus on the fact that the art has to be produced by an Aboriginal person, 61 % would most likely buy directly from the artist or from a community art centre. The main reason for this was thus that in that way they could be sure to acquire an authentic, 'real' piece of art (showing that the fact that an Aboriginal person should have produced the work is a criteria for authenticity). Other reasons were that in that way the money they pay for it reaches the artist and not an

intermediary and, that the artist can explain the story or the meaning of the work. In that way people know where the art comes from.

Another 18 % mentioned to buy it at an authorised art shop or at least at a place where the salespeople have enough knowledge about Aboriginal art. This also to be sure it is authentic and to know the meaning of the artwork. 4 % would buy the art at an Aboriginal owned shop (not necessarily a community art centre), this also to know that the work is authentic. Another 4 % would not buy any art at all and the last 4 % would buy it at any shop, as long as they liked the artwork. So also in buying Aboriginal art, it seemed very important to people that they not just bought any artwork, but an authentic piece of art.

Table 5. If you would buy Aboriginal art, where would you most likely buy it?

	Male %	Female %	**Total %**
Aboriginal artist/ Community art centre	58	63	**61**
In the Northern Territory	12,5	26	**20**
Authorised art store/ 'a shop who knows'	12,5	22	**18**
Any shop	4	4	**4**
Aboriginal owned gallery	4	4	**4**
Wouldn't buy	8	0	**4**

What we have seen among the majority of the people questioned is that they often agree with the documentary makers on why Aboriginal art would be inauthentic nowadays, discussed by Coleman (2001, 2005). Considering Bowden's conception, I could not get a clear idea of people's opinion on the first part of it. The second part though, they definitely disagreed with. What is interesting when looking at most of the ideas these people have about commercial Aboriginal art, is that the majority of the people questioned, the ones

who doubted the authenticity or were sure about the 'inauthenticity' of commercial Aboriginal art, in some way link authenticity to tradition. This coincides with what Weichart (2000:151) mentions about how especially western society shows great interest in Aboriginal spirituality and objects that are expressions of it, like paintings. This interest is mainly based on people's fascination with an ancient and conservative culture, different from their own. Something that is not traditional anymore can therefore not be authentic anymore. They forget indeed, what the people who agreed on commercial art to be authentic mentioned, that culture is evolving and that people have to go with time. Things are not static, as a lot of people believe them to be. Aboriginal art nowadays are intercultural objects and have therefore acquired new meanings. This does not mean that the old meanings just disappear. Different meanings can go together. I agree with Margie West (personal communication, April 11, 2006) that a lot of the consumers think it is impossible for sales and culture to go together. But, it only makes sense that Aboriginal people also need to make a living nowadays. One of the ways indigenous people can do that in this society is to produce art. This does mean that usually the artists still paint for example their country or Dreaming stories. These two do not exclude each other. People often do not want to realise that indigenous people are participating in the mainstream economy as well. They still have a romanticised, static image of Aboriginal culture. Art has to be as traditional as possible and should certainly not be showing western influences. This we have already seen when Daisy explained that her landscape paintings were less popular. These ideas definitely become clear from people's answers in this survey. As Morphy (1991: 24) says:

> (…) the European purchaser wants Aboriginal art to be from the Aboriginal frame and not produced in the European one, because the purchaser wants to maintain the illusion that Aboriginal art is an exotic art- art from another culture whose inclusion in the European present creates a shift of time.

But, even though these notions on Aboriginal art are predominant, it is important to realise that ideas are slowly becoming more nuanced. The people who thought the art to be still authentic, but also a part of the people who questioned the art's authenticity *did* realise that

Aborigines are also participating in the 21st century and therefore have to make money and that the inclusion of western elements (for example materials) does not make the art less authentic. The 'tourist views' therefore not only consist of static notions of Aboriginal art, but also show a more nuanced, dynamic view.

Furthermore it also seemed important for authenticity that the artwork has to be produced by an Aboriginal person (and preferably in the Northern Territory). 35 % of the people thought this to be relevant when purchasing Aboriginal art. This we have also seen among the artists and the galleries. Among the actors in the art's trajectory we first see that the artists do not think that commodification has affected the authenticity of their work. As long as they as Aboriginal people have produced the artwork and it is an expression of the Dreaming or the land, it is authentic. Among the art galleries they also did not think the authenticity of the work has been damaged due to commercialisation, as long as an Aboriginal person has painted the work. Some galleries realised that consumers might think that commercialisation *has* affected the art's authenticity and therefore tried to prove the art's authenticity in all possible ways. As shown above, this survey indicates that consumers are a lot more doubtful about the art's authenticity then the artists or the galleries and are indeed often looking for 'evidence' of authenticity.

7. CONCLUSION

In this thesis it has been my aim to shed some light on the commodification of Aboriginal art and particularly its consequences for the authenticity of the art in different contexts along the art's trajectory. I have shown the different ways in which artists, intermediaries and consumers look at Aboriginal art for sale and how they value the art's authenticity.

Indigenous art from Woolaning shows clan totems, often decorated with ceremonial body designs, which have a strong connection to the artist's Dreaming. The artists sell their own art at Wangi Falls, one of the main tourists attractions in Litchfield National Park. The art happens to be bought by numerous tourists and sometimes by galleries. While maintaining its value in Aboriginal contexts, with Woolaning as an example, Aboriginal art in general has also become part of a process of incorporation into a wider context due to production for commercial reasons. Therefore it has taken on additional functions and meanings. In the Aboriginal frame the art is important because of its spiritual dimension, but nowadays also because it provides the community with money; art galleries might praise the art for its aesthetics and tourists are often attracted to the art because it represents an exotic, spiritual "Other". The fact that the art is produced for a market also makes some people feel sceptical about its authenticity.

Most of the art at Woolaning, as is most other Aboriginal art nowadays, is produced with introduced materials, such as canvas and acrylic paint. Although there is a tradition of rock art in the area, the paintings made by Daisy and Wendy are 'exclusively' produced for the market. For them this commodification of their art is not an issue at all. It was a logical step to take and is necessary to make a living. And, besides that, it is the perfect way to express themselves as artists and to express their cultural identity to others. As Wendy says about her and Daisy's art: "It is a piece of our soul." It is a way of communicating their culture and showing people that they are still there. By (mainly) painting the animal totems of the clans in the area, the art has an important connection to the Dreaming. This Dreaming dimension is entrenched in the past (think of the rock art in the area) and yet continues in the present. The artists are therefore *not* concerned about authenticity. For them this authenticity is self-evident. Daisy and Wendy consider their art as authentic because it has this spiritual connection and, most important, because they, as land-based Aboriginal people have produced the art. The supposed criteria of inauthenticity; the use of

introduced, thus non-traditional, materials and the non-traditional purposes of the art are waved aside. The artists are very well aware of the fact that different 'worlds' are intertwined nowadays and they incorporate these changes into their world. Also the fact that artworks are sometimes produced by several people, but only signed by one person is not considered to affect a painting's authenticity. Many Aboriginal artworks traditionally were produced co-operatively.

Hence, at Woolaning art has a double function. It is produced for the market and therefore beneficial to the artists. With their unique position of selling the art themselves, the artists have created the opportunity to engage themselves in their culture *and* make a living out of it. On the other hand the paintings are also used to refer to the country and to make, among others, the children conscious about their identity

I have demonstrated that with the art moving into a different context, the one of the art galleries, authenticity all of a sudden does become a matter of importance because of the consumer's ideas about it. The gallery owners and managers themselves all agree on the criterion for authenticity: most important is that the artworks have to be painted by Aborigines. This coincides with the views of the producers at Woolaning. Less important in this intermediary context turns out to be the spiritual connection. Although the gallery owners and managers do realise that it often is a significant element in Aboriginal art, they do not consider it to be essential for its authenticity. Especially the galleries that focus on tourists do emphasise this 'Dreaming element' for authenticity because they think that is what consumers are looking for. The galleries more focused on collectors do not push this angle, but look at Aboriginal art more from a western notion (with hindsight however that a western notion on art also includes a variety of functions and meanings): art for art's sake: art praised for its aesthetics.

There is one exception within this context of galleries. When speaking to people from Larrakia Nation, an Aboriginal art centre, so also indigenous people who sell their own art, notions on authenticity coincide with the notions at Woolaning. So the criterion for authenticity is not just that the work has to be made by an Aboriginal person, but again also that the work is an expression of the Dreaming. So when speaking to indigenous people about their own art, moving back into the Aboriginal context, these two criteria for authenticity came up. When speaking to all the other 'outsiders' in the intermediary

context, only the first criterion came up. This does show that *when moving away from the Aboriginal context the Aboriginal point of view becomes less relevant for the art's authenticity*. So along 'the social life of things' (Appadurai, 1986), of Aboriginal art, we see that the art and its identities are put in motion and gain new and different meanings.

The spokespersons of the galleries acknowledge that the art's context has changed due to commodification, but do not believe that it has affected its authenticity. But the galleries, as the intermediaries between producers and consumers, also realise that a certain part of the consumers, usually tourists, might have different opinions on the matter: the more traditional, the more authentic the art. The *commercial* galleries who mainly focused on these tourists, had to respond to those opinions. For galleries more focused on collectors this seemed less important. Collectors are usually just looking for pieces as supplements to their collection.

When moving into yet another context, ideas change again. The survey provided an implication for the idea that tourists are often in one way or another doubtful about the art's authenticity because of commercialisation. Commodification was often considered as pressure on the artist or resulting in mass production, reducing the art's uniqueness. The majority of the people questioned were therefore doubtful about Aboriginal art still being painted by Aborigines and most importantly, thought that the art in some way had lost its connection to either culture, land, spirituality or Dreaming. The meaning or 'story' was lost due to commercialisation, and thus the painting was seen as less authentic or even inauthentic. Art has to be as traditional as possible, with western influences making it 'less real'. But still, the art does sell. The galleries who mainly sell to tourists therefore do everything in their power to convince their consumers of the genuineness of the art. Certificates of authentication often complete with Dreaming story (if available) and photo are provided everywhere and with every piece of art.

Besides the predominant 'traditional' view of the possible consumers, part of the people questioned, *do* have a more nuanced views about Aboriginal art. They *do* realise that culture is evolving and that Aborigines also play a part in the mainstream economy and in the 21st century. Making money is necessary and art can provide that money.

What is clear now is that among the actors along the art's trajectory there are differences in opinion on what is authentic Aboriginal art. However, all the actors agree on

one criterion of authenticity. While Bowden (2001) and Coleman (2001, 2005) might believe that an Aboriginal artwork can still be called authentic even though the person to whom it is attributed would not have produced it, opinions on this matter seem to be different in this study. Both the authors explain that these artworks can still be called authentic because traditionally Aboriginal artworks were often produced co-operatively and also because the people who owned the motifs could authorize its reproduction to others, including non-Aboriginal people. As has become clear, both the artists and the art gallery representatives agree with Bowden and Coleman on the first part of this statement. The consumer's opinions on this matter have not become clear. *No one* in this study, however, believes the second part of their ideas. Authentic Aboriginal art *has* to be produced by an Aboriginal person. This I found among artists as well as intermediaries and consumers.

So while artists and intermediaries show that they are conscious of the fact that Aborigines are also fully participating in the 21st century (with their notions on commodification and authenticity), the majority of the tourists still seem to ignore this. These different interpretations of authenticity proceed from different ontologies. In the west authenticity is often an equivalent of tradition, in the sense of 'uncontaminated' by external influences. In Aboriginal conceptualisations tradition and authenticity do not exclude changes. We do see that among 'western outsiders', when looking at the art galleries and also among a part of the possible consumers for example, ideas have been and still are changing. People have become more open-minded.

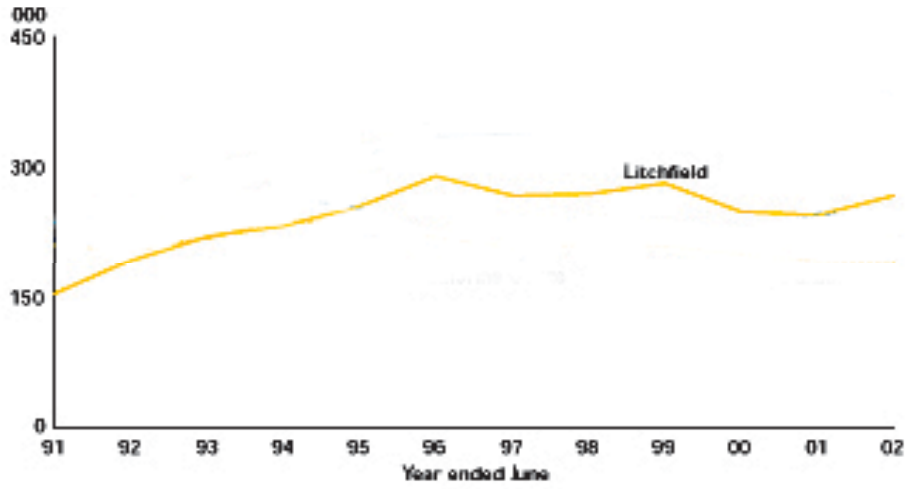
I therefore think it is important that instead of defining authenticity externally or even labelling Aboriginal art as authentic or inauthentic, it has to be understood from the perspective of the artists, the people who actually produce and 'own' the art. If art producers claim the art to be authentic, it is important to understand it in their conceptualisation(s). This may demand a reconsideration of the western conceptualisation of authentic material culture as a traditional, 'frozen' and bounded expression. Commercial Aboriginal art can confuse people who are not familiar with the historical and cultural background of the art, and with its continuing function for indigenous people. Aboriginal art nowadays can best be described as products for cultural purposes, which can also be distributed and exchanged for economic purposes. I think that Aboriginal art and its

innovations have the power to challenge the remaining static ideas about Aboriginal culture. They can make people accept and appreciate Aboriginal culture and art as dynamic and thus build a bridge between different cultures. In this process independent artists as Daisy and Wendy, selling their own art and interacting directly with consumers, can play an important role. They can give first-hand information to consumers about the background, the functions, the process of creation and the changes of the art and their society. I also believe that art dealers, galleries as well as Aboriginal art centres, should play a more pro-active role in educating the public about the complex issue of authenticity. Especially those galleries that are focused on tourists should actually use their position to teach tourists and not, like it still happens now, try to respond as much as possible to those preconceived ideas of part of the consumers. In that way these static notions on culture will be maintained. I think that Aboriginal art is a perfect example of a cultural element, which shows the entanglement of different contexts in which it gets a multitude of meanings, which are constantly being negotiated. Therefore it has the ability to challenge the notions that Aboriginal art is static, and show that it is part of a complex, ever changing reality. When 'authentic' art should be an unchanged expression of a continuation of the past in a world that is ever changing, the concept of authenticity would be useless. This because it is impossible for 'authentic' art in this way to even exist. People should realise that a culture and its elements in the 21st century are never free from external influences.

Thus, commodification of Aboriginal art does not cause a destruction of the art's meanings or functions and it does not make the art less authentic. With moving into the intercultural context the art has shown to be dynamic. Already existing meanings and functions (as for example an expression of the Dreaming and educating the younger generation) remain relevant, but new meanings and functions have been added. As times change, artists and their work adapt and evolve according to contemporary needs.

Appendix I: Visitor numbers of Litchfield National Park

In 1990 Litchfield National Park had about a 130,000 visitors. From 1990 onwards we see a growth in visitor numbers as can be seen in the figure below (Northern Territory Treasury, 2003-2004: 92). There is an increase in visitor numbers until 1996, with about 285,000 visitors in that year. After 1996 there is a decline until about 2000-2001 with 250,000 visitors in 2000. In the last five years, from 2001 onwards, there is a huge increase in the total yearly amount of visitors. Statistics of Parks and Wildlife of the Northern Territory (personal communication, February 8, 2006) show that the park had 321,000 visitors in 2003; 339,000 visitors in 2004 and a little less, 331,000, in 2005



Appendix II: Aboriginal clans in the Litchfield area

The 21 most important clans in the Litchfield area and surroundings, based on a conversation with Tom Petherick (February 2, 2006) and an unpublished book by Tom's father, Ray Petherick (2000).

1. Freshwater Crocodile (= Tjingurr)
2. Kangaroo
3. Barramundi
4. Catfish
5. Longneck Turtle
6. Goanna (=Werak)
7. Cycad Possum/Sugarglider
8. Blue Tongue Lizard
9. Echidna
10. Emu
11. Snapping Turtle (=Nalawanga)
12. Waterrat
13. Watersnake
14. Goose
15. Darterbird
16. Blowfly
17. Diarrhoea
18. Saltwater Crocodile
19. Whipsnake
20. King Brown
21. Mawthowe (=tree clan)

(Usually clans are patrilineair, but in Daisy's case an exception has been made. Because Daisy and her five sisters were the last of the freshwater crocodile clan, it is now unilineair. Daisy and Tom's children are now both Tjingurr and Werak or can choose between the two.)

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