

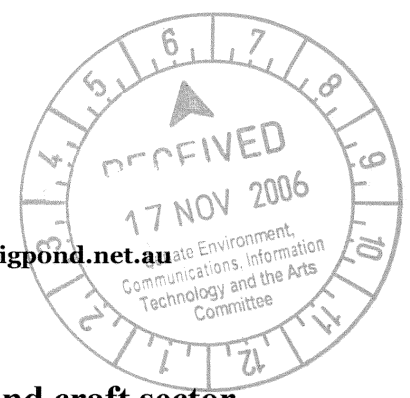
DR B KORMAN

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16 October 2006

Senate Inquiry into Australia's Indigenous visual arts and craft sector

Dear Senators

I would like to make the following submission to the above Inquiry:

I have been collecting art since 1997. The bulk of my collection consists of indigenous art works. These have been obtained from numerous sources around Australia including Raft Artspace & Karen Brown Gallery in Darwin, Thornquest Gallery on Queensland's Gold Coast, Hogarth and Birrung Galleries in Sydney, Alcaston Gallery, Gabriella Pizzi, Hi-On-Art Gallery, Koorie Art Centre, On-Shore Art, Vivien Anderson & William Mora Galleries in Melbourne, Art Mob in Hobart, Marshall Arts in Adelaide, Creative Native, Indigenart & Japingka Galleries in Perth.

I have many pieces, some quite rare and valuable. Many are on loan to various institutions. For example, a painting by Paddy Bedford entitled 'Emu Dreaming – Karnanganyjel' was included in an exhibition "blood on the spinifex" at The Ian Potter Museum of Art, the University of Melbourne, December 2002 to March 2003, then displayed in the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA) and is soon to appear in a travelling exhibition dedicated to Paddy Bedford, beginning at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Sydney.

I feel privileged to have been able to support this wonderful art movement, even if only as a buyer, at the end of the supply chain. There has been such an explosion of work by an ever-growing number of talented artists that it is impossible to see any end in view. The movement seems to be gaining momentum rather than slowing down. The number of galleries offering indigenous art either as a sole product, or alternating with exhibitions of non-indigenous art is not obviously decreasing. Moreover, the works are keenly sought by an ever-growing number of collectors and investors. Fears of non sustainability are therefore, in my opinion, misplaced.

Although there have been instances of fraud reported in the press, for example in relation to some works attributed to Kathleen Petyarre and Clifford Possum, I have tried not to allow these occasional reports to deter me from acquiring new works. I have tried to protect myself by establishing an ongoing relationship with the galleries and dealers from whom I obtain the art. I believe this to have been a successful strategy. To date, I know of only one episode of possible fraud. On this occasion, the dealer from whom I purchased the piece alerted me to the possibility of fraud and offered to take back the painting and return my money. I chose to keep the painting and the claims of fraud were subsequently shown to be baseless.

Some of the galleries I deal with only handle art derived from Community Art Centres. However most also obtain art from other sources. This usually involves dealing with the artists, either directly or through an intermediary.

In November 2004, I saw a large painting by George Ward Tjungurrayi on display in Japingka Gallery in Fremantle. I had already bought several pieces of art from this gallery and have always held the owner, Ian Plunkett, in high esteem. He has been in the industry for over 15 years, loves it, and is obviously dedicated to the task of improving public knowledge and understanding of indigenous art. He has promoted many indigenous artists. For example, without his support and encouragement, Jimmy Pike would probably not have enjoyed the success he did.

George Ward Tjungurrayi had won the Wynne Prize for landscape painting in 2004. I could see immediately that the painting in Japingka Gallery was of the highest quality. Even though it was quite expensive, in fact the most expensive piece that I had considered buying to that time, I finished up purchasing it. It was subsequently loaned to the Art Gallery of WA (AGWA) whose officials also recognised its quality.

This painting and another by George Tjungurrayi (a kinsman of George Ward) which I had donated earlier to the Art Gallery, were included in an exhibition "Western Desert Satellites" recently on display at the Art Gallery of WA. Shortly after the exhibition commenced, I received an unsolicited fax from a Jennifer Napolitano asking me where I had obtained the 2 paintings (copy included with this submission). I did not reply. I mentioned the fax to Gary Dufour, Deputy Director of the art gallery a short time later and he informed me that the same person had written to the gallery asking that these works and several others, be taken down because they had come from 'non community based sources'. Several days later, on 20 April 2006 an article entitled 'Gallery Grilled on Sources' appeared in *The Australian* newspaper (copy appended to this submission). The author, Victoria Laurie advances the hypothesis that only indigenous art sourced from arts centres should be shown in public galleries because art obtained from other sources must somehow always be unethical or tainted.

I must say that I was somewhat taken aback by the tone of the article but did not respond. I was subsequently asked to provide all relevant documentation to the Art Gallery so they could verify the provenance of the work. The paintings remained on display. After the exhibition, the painting by George Ward Tjungurrayi was included in the 'Art-in-bloom' display at the art gallery from 22-24 September.

In mid-July, I was contacted by Eloise Dortch of *The West Australian* newspaper. She informed me that she wanted to do a follow up article in *The West Australian*. Against my better judgement, I engaged in a conversation with her. She claimed that although the painting was definitely done by George Ward Tjungurrayi, the artist was very upset because it was incorrectly titled 'Soakage Water at Kirrimunya 2004', that this affected its provenance which was as important as evidence of authenticity. She demanded to know where I had bought it, how much I had paid and how much it was worth. She ended by noting that a work by George Ward Tjungurrayi with the same title had been sold at the Lawson Menzies auction on 30 May 2006 (actually Lot 144).

I responded by asking her to find out the correct title and offered to take all steps possible to have the mistake corrected by the Art Gallery. I also pointed out that I had bought a painting, not a title or attribution. I refused to discuss the price, place of purchase and possible value, informing her that it was none of her business. I certainly had no intention of allowing Ian Plunkett to become a target of vilification in the local tabloid at the hands of a junior journalist who knows next to nothing about aboriginal art. I ended our conversation by suggesting that Ms Dortch might care to pursue Adrian Newstead of Lawson Menzies and stop harassing me.

By this stage I was fed up with this unwarranted attack on the credentials of my painting. I decided to investigate the provenance further. The work was obtained by Japingka Gallery from Arnhemland Arts, Darwin. George Ward Tjungurrayi was contracted to Arnhemland Arts at that time and painted mainly for the gallery. His relationship with the owner, Reg Mason, extended over 20 years. Mason is currently ill and is receiving treatment in Melbourne but I understand that George Ward is now painting mainly for several other (non Papunya-Tula) dealers in Alice Springs.

I penned a letter to Victoria Laurie and mailed it to her early in August (copy appended to this submission). I received no reply. I also emailed the letter to several interested colleagues. On 14th September I received an email from Susan McCulloch. It contains some confidential material but the following extract is of interest:

'I am an art writer and critic who has written extensively on art including Aboriginal art over the last 25 or more years.

I was The Australian's visual arts writer and national critic 1993-2003 and now write for The Australian Art Collector and The Australian Financial Review.

I've just been to Alice for the Desert Mob show and am writing on some of that and some of the current issues about the Aboriginal art industry - which I have been writing on endlessly it seems now for years!

I don't know if you know that your letter to Victoria Laurie of 6 August was put under windscreens of cars all around Todd Mall over the last few weeks and has been circulated widely throughout the Aboriginal art world!

I think it is an excellent letter and puts the points of concern across very well.'

It seems then, that my letter to Victoria Laurie has become something of a cause celebre and I would like it to be documented by the Senate subcommittee inquiring into indigenous art.

As the committee has as one of its terms of reference the investigation of opportunities for strategies and mechanisms that the sector could adopt to improve its practices, capacity and sustainability, including to deal with unscrupulous or unethical conduct, I would like to draw the committee's attention to the activities of Paul Sweeney, Manager, Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd. Sweeney must be acutely aware that most of the well-known artists in the Papunya Tula stable are painting extensively for non Papunya Tula dealers. For example, Ronnie Tjampitjinpa, one of the few remaining artists from the original Papunya movement is very prolific but virtually never paints for the Papunya Tula cooperative.

Without offering any evidence to support his position, Sweeney has attempted to imply that artwork bearing the Papunya Tula stamp is somehow superior, could never be non-authentic and should therefore carry a premium when sold in the marketplace. I reject all three of these assumptions outright and urge the committee to do likewise. Although I have not personally visited the Papunya Tula shop in Alice Springs, reports from colleagues who have, indicate that as with most galleries, the quality of the work on display varies from mediocre to excellent and changes with time. This accords with my own experience in dealings with the host of sources listed in the first paragraph of this submission.

What evidence is there of authenticity when buying from Papunya Tula? As a rule, they don't even supply the obligatory working photographs which usually accompany art obtained from non-community sources. Who is supervising the artists while they work to make sure there are no 'helping hands'. This is really a problem with all art but magnified in the case of indigenous art because of the artists' communal-based lifestyle. I believe that this is a case of *caveat emptor* - 'let the buyer beware'. One must acquaint oneself with the particular style of the artist and buy from reputable sources with which a relationship has been established over a period of time.

Finally, the question of attaching a premium because a painting bears the Papunya Tula stamp must be addressed. As far as I am concerned, apart from satisfying myself that a painting is the work of the particular artist and has been obtained through legitimate means, the most important factor is the quality of the piece of art. This is more important than any stamp or paperwork.

In the incident above involving my painting by George Ward Tjungurrayi, Sweeney has attempted to compel the gallery to source alternative work from himself. There is also evidence that Sweeney has attempted to pressure the editor of *Australian Art Collector*, the premier art periodical in this country so as to be able to veto advertisements containing works by a Western Desert Artist (see appended email from Paul Sweeney to Susan Borham, Editor-in-Chief of *Australian Art Collector*). The extract from *The Alice Springs News* vol 13, issue 10 March 9/10 2006 appended to this submission cites the case of Mantua Nangala who found that she was no longer welcomed by Papunya Tula after painting for another party. Yet, had she not painted for this other party, she and her husband claim that they would not have been able to send their son to school in Adelaide. What right does Sweeney have to try and force Nangala to paint only for him? It is only natural to expect that as artists become popular and successful and gain confidence, that they should try and negotiate the best possible remuneration for their labours. I don't believe they can or should be prevented from doing this. In fact, I think it is behaviour that should be encouraged if members of our indigenous population are to become self reliant and less dependent on government handouts. This is an important way of empowering these talented individuals and giving them some control over their economic circumstances.

16/04/2006 12:05 +616-94553998

NAPOLITANO

PAGE 01

Ph 43814100

STAN INVESTMENTS 10 WALKER WAY WINDYBUSH

93751216

144

Churchill Ave

16/4/06

FAX 93883019
Dr Ben Korman

Sulisteno

Dear Dr Korman,

Could you please tell me

where you buy your George Junganyi's
from as I'm interested in Papunya Tula Art
& am looking for Major works.

Saw your 2 George's
at the WPAAG exhibition & jotted down
your name as you're obviously a very
knowledgeable collector

Kind regards
Jennifer Napolitano
Ph / FAX 94853998

Any advice on who you recommend to value
them would be gratefully received also.

Thanks.

DR B KORMAN

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6 August 2006

Victoria Laurie
The Australian Newspaper
34 Stirling St
Perth 6000

Dear Victoria

I must admit that I am still somewhat bemused by your article "Gallery grilled on sources" (*The Australian* 20 April). I would like to deal particularly with the painting by George Ward Tjungarrayi. You state that Clothilde Bullen contacted Papunya Tula to confirm the authenticity of the work. Obviously, the only way that Papunya Tula could verify that the work was genuine was by showing the image to the artist. I know for a fact that this was done, and that George Ward confirmed that the work was his. How disingenuous, then, of Paul Sweeney to claim that the painting 'certainly looked like the artist's work', and how convenient for you, given the tone of your article, to print this statement, rather than the obvious alternative: 'the authenticity of the painting was confirmed by the artist'.

In any event, anyone who knows anything about aboriginal art would immediately recognise the work as a genuine piece by George Ward Tjungarrayi. Not only that, but they would recognise it to be a work of the highest quality, rivalling the piece that won the Wynne Prize in 2004 and the work on display in the Art Gallery of NSW.

In your article, you help Paul Sweeney gain further traction for his claim that arts centres ensure that ethical and moral standards are maintained in commercial dealings with artists but offer no evidence to support this claim. You have also made no attempt to explain why art sourced from alternative sources should be regarded as unethical or immoral. It might interest you to know that at the time the work in question was painted, George Ward Tjungarrayi was under contract to Reg Mason of Arnhemland Art and painted almost exclusively for him. Mason is currently ill and I understand that George Ward is currently painting mainly for Adam Knight and Mike Mitchell.

In a follow-up article, you may care to investigate the reason why George Tjungarrayi and George Ward Tjungarrayi and many of the other Papunya Tula artists prefer to paint for people such as Reg Mason, rather than for the art centre. I suspect you will find that it has almost nothing to do with 'sweat shops' or 'carpetbaggers' but rather a productive ongoing relationship providing deserving artists with more money and prompt payment.

It has been reported to me that Paul Sweeney has attempted to influence the advertising policy of *Australian Art Collector* so as to be able to veto any advertisement for work by artists in the Papunya Tula fold. If this is true, one wonders how long it will take until his activities are subjected to scrutiny by the ACCC. Perhaps this could form the basis of a future article in *The Australian*?

The *West Australian* tried to follow up on your article with a piece on the painting by George Ward, perhaps with the encouragement of Paul Sweeney or Jennifer Napolitano (who appears to be Sweeney's proxy in Perth). The best they could come up with was that the title and attribution might be incorrect - hardly earth shattering! Needless to say, no article has appeared yet.

I'm not surprised that your article appeared in the form it did, given the preceding articles by Nicholas Rothwell and Sebastian Smee and the subsequent editorial but I'm quite sure that the Senate Sub-Committee will have no trouble in seeing straight through this media 'beat-up'.

Certainly when I try to explain your hypothesis, that *only indigenous art sourced from arts centres should be shown in public galleries because art obtained from other sources must somehow always be unethical or tainted*, people's eyes glaze over with incredulity before they fall about with laughter at the preposterous nature of the proposition. As Robert Nelson put it so nicely in *The Age* on 22 April: such 'high-minded poppycock'.

Regards

Ben Korman

Ben

From: "Susan Borham" <susan@gadfly.net.au>
To: "Pauline Barker" <imagesvis@vision.net.au>; "Holly Scully Power" <hscullypower@gadfly.net.au>; "Peter Gilray" <pgilray@gadfly.net.au>; "Jane Llewellyn" <jane@gadfly.net.au>; "Louise Summerton" <lsummerton@gadfly.net.au>
Cc: <paul@papunyatula.com.au>
Sent: Sunday, 30 April 2006 8:46 PM
Subject: FW: Story on Makinti

Hello everyone,

please read the email below from Paul Sweeney at Papunya Tula in relation to our upcoming feature on Makinti and any ads sold in this issue which feature work by Makinti. As and when anyone comes across any such ads, I would appreciate if Jane or I were immediately alerted to them so we may proceed to verify the authenticity of the image with Papunya. Remember that it may take time to have the image replaced, or to resell the space, so you need to let us know immediately you come across a Makinti in an ad.

Thanks for everyone's help.

Susan.

From: Paul Sweeney <paul@papunyatula.com.au>
Date: Sat, 29 Apr 2006 13:44:25 +0930
To: <sborham@gadfly.net.au>
Subject: Story on Makinti

Dear Susan,

Luke Scholes, the assistant manager at Papunya Tula Artists, is in the process of forwarding some information on Makinti Napanangka to Jennifer Isaacs for her article in your upcoming edition.

We appreciate being offered the opportunity to give your readers some accurate background on this artist, and most importantly, some examples of

her recent work. Makinti has of course been misrepresented by a number of people in recent times so this is certainly a good chance to correct that.

We do have some concerns that those same galleries will advertise in the same edition as Jennifer's article, which will only add to the confusion and misinformation being offered by them. I realise this is something that would not normally be asked of you, but I would urge AAC not to run any advertising by galleries using images by Makinti Napanangka, (unless of course they are galleries who have purchased work done by Makinti through Papunya Tula Artists). Luke or myself would be more than happy to validate any images which you may be asked to print. This is a very quick process and can be done almost immediately upon contacting us.

This may sound extreme, but sadly it reflects the current climate within the industry. Consumers are being mislead on issues relating to authenticity. We would consider running a full page add ourselves using an image by Makinti if you considered it appropriate.

Please let Luke or myself know if there is anything further we can do to help and we appreciate your consideration of this issue.

Best regards,

Paul Sweeney
Manager

Papunya Tula Artists Pty. Ltd.
PO Box 1620 Alice Springs NT 0871 Australia
Ph. 08 89524731 Fx. 08 89532509
<http://www.papunyatula.com.au>

12/11/2006

IT
ice

'We're upset' say artists

A group of around 10 artists and their families protested outside Papunya Tula Artists last week claiming that the business was making them feel unwelcome because they were working for another art gallery.

Mantua Nangala (PICTURED left, with two other Kintore artists Nanyuma Napangati and Mrs Porter), a recognised artist from Kintore, claimed she was not supplied canvasses by Papunya Tula after she began working for Chris Simon, the owner of Yanda Gallery on Gregory Terrace.

"Long time. I had no canvas. They never give us, or only little canvas. I've been getting little money."

"That's why I'm upset."

Her husband, Russell Spurling said: "We live in town and she's being told her work won't be promoted if she works for Chris."

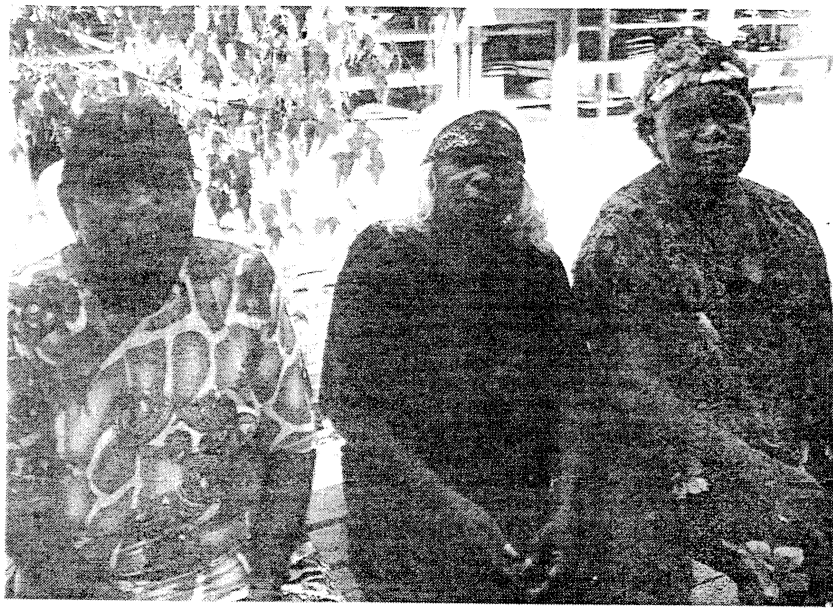
"We're sick of it."

"It's been going on since Christmas and it's come to a head now."

"We're grateful for Papunya Tula but we've put our son through Emmanuel College boarding school in Adelaide only through Chris Simon."

"It's not right that he's being discredited."

Paul Sweeney, the manager of Papunya, refutes the claims. "We would never ever turn our back on someone if they paint for someone else," he said.



smart and good business
le. They work for a co-
d also tend to have two
ree dealers they work
regularly.

I have some of the
y sought after artists
work for me, but that's
six or eight years of
ing up a working re-
lationship.

Not all Aboriginals
to stay permanently
ese communities be-
of the lack of facili-
They're no different to
r I in that they want to
opping, go to the pool
pictures.

People from the com-
ies want to utilise the
ies available in Alice
gs.

People are more mobile
When communities
started there might have
a vehicle come to town
larly but now people
substantial income so
can come in their own
nd on planes."

Mr Simon says focusing
problems which oc-
en Aboriginal people
into town "is a nega-
approach" although he
ay the alcohol issue is
xtreme downside".

People come to town
y number of reasons
as if a family member
ospital."

Mr Simon says the na-

ONT. PAGE 5.

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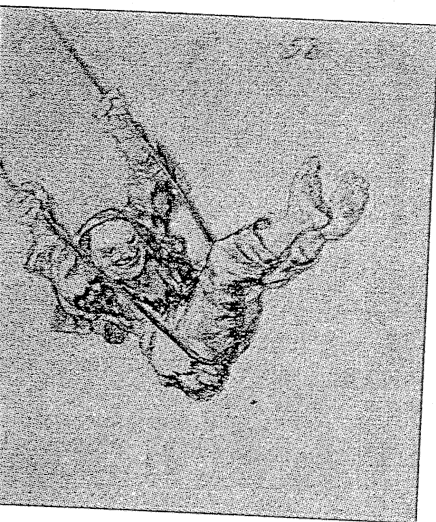
Northern Territory Government

Department of Business, Economic and Regional Development

Imagination



Mysterious: Goya's *Portrait of a Lady*, 1824



Exultant: The artist's *Man on a Swing*, 1824

lack everything, and
the only thing I have in
cess is willpower'

disco de Goya y Lucientes

darkness. There are nostalgic memories and
epic social commentaries, heartfelt emo-
s and satirical mockeries, mad flights of
easy and sad visions of suffering.
often seen as the deaf exile's way of talking
himself, these drawings present almost a
al journal. They pour on to the paper a
m of consciousness bearing testimony to
extraordinary and indefatigable expressive
ers. Perhaps none captures Goya's spirit
r than *Man on a Swing*, a grinning
tric soaring exultant as a child in a game,
y upwards, barefoot and free before the

inevitable downward fall. This is the artist who, whatever his age, could — and did — revel in an astonishing freedom.

The visitor sees this in his incredible etchings. Lithography was a fairly recent invention at the time, but Goya, who had experimented with the medium in 1819, set off for Paris within a few days of arriving in Bordeaux, not to meet Eugene Delacroix and other artists who admired him enormously but to contact a lithographer and learn.

The series of four bullfighting scenes that the Frick has assembled reveals his wild, free-wheeling approach to this medium. He captures the surging drama of the arena with an unbridled energy, anticipating an approach that only much later would become current.

Old man Goya was anarchically free and nothing reveals this more expressively than the series of miniatures that form a focal point of this show.

In Bordeaux, Goya was living with Leocadia Weiss — a woman more than 40 years his junior (their relationship has provoked endless excitatory speculation) — and two of her children, one of whom, Rosaria, is often assumed to be his daughter (though his failure to provide for her in his will may suggest otherwise). Teaching the artistically talented little girl, he turned his hand to miniatures. But not for him the patient stippling of most masters of this form.

Blackening the surface of a minute ivory plaque (some are barely 5cm square), he let a drop of water fall and spread, opening up patterns. Peering through a magnifying glass, he then worked on these blotches, improvising images of shadow and light, shapes that he effortlessly reins in with dark outlines, refines and touches with the tip of a precise point. The apparitions that emerge, as if by magic, are possessed by an almost manic intensity. They are like miniature versions of the murals that billowed and shouted from the walls of his lost house in Spain. They are spirits conjured by his passions and demons and obsessions.

To peer into the tiny precious pictures on their slivers of ivory is to spy into the density of the imagination. It is headstrong and dizzying and undiluted.

The spectator has descended into the cramped basement rooms of the Frick, gazed into the depths of densely atmospheric paintings, become lost amid the choppy, staccato strokes of the etchings, disappeared amid visions preserved on scraps of paper. He has felt the world of this artist constricting about him like the life that was closing around the ageing man.

Now he bends even closer and, using a magnifying glass (don't forget to take one if you visit the exhibition), spies into these fecund miniatures. Suddenly an entire universe seems flung open like a window. It exposes the wide world of Goya's imagination. You can feel its energy wild as a wind. You can hear it, even amid his deafness. It roars loud as a snowstorm inside your head.

The Times

Goya's Last Works is at the Frick Collection, New York, until May 14.

Gallery grilled on sources

Victoria Laurie

THE Art Gallery of Western Australia has been criticised for exhibiting two Western Desert paintings of uncertain provenance.

The two works, *Snake Dreaming at Ngukalupalka* by Pintupi artist George Tjungurrayi and *Soakage Water at Kirrimalunya* by his kinsman George Ward Tjungurrayi, are hanging in an exhibition, Western Desert Satellites.

The artists are among 90 represented by the community-owned Papunya Tula art centre. The works in the show were bought elsewhere by private collectors, who have lent one and given the other to AGWA.

The disclosure comes on the eve of a meeting between federal Arts Minister Rod Kemp and Aboriginal art centre managers in Melbourne today to discuss problems of identifying indigenous art works' provenance, an explosion of inferior work for sale and exploitation of artists by so-called "carpetbagger" art dealers.

Papunya Tula art centre manager Paul Sweeney, who will attend the meeting, says he is disappointed AGWA decided to show works that had not come from a community art centre. "I'd prefer they didn't show them or accept them. They certainly looked like the artists' work, but if the West Australian gallery was interested in works from the Western Desert, you'd like to think they'd come to us directly."

What's more, paintings hung in public exhibitions gain immeasurably in status and market value.

Sweeney says AGWA contacted him late last year to clarify whether the two works had been painted by the artists.

"My initial reaction was surprise that they had approached us when the paintings hadn't actually come from us. I supplied the information but explained that this situation hadn't arisen before... It may have been that they weren't making an informed decision by including the works in the show."

Australia's 30-odd desert community arts centres were established, in part, to ensure that ethical and moral standards were maintained in commercial dealings with artists.

"Buying from the right places means you're contributing to the longevity of the industry. You'd like to think state galleries would be leading by example," Sweeney says. "Nine times out of 10, private gallery owners [who] don't have any association with art centres have absolutely no commitment to the artists. You'd like to think a state art gallery would be on the side of art centres."

Sweeney says he believes the Art Gallery of NSW, for instance, does not accept works that come from "off-community sources".

"I'd like to see all public art galleries adopt that policy," he says.

Judith Ryan, the senior curator of indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria, "prefers to acquire works painted for and documented by community-based art centres or co-operatives when such organisations exist".

The NGV extensively researches the provenance, attribution and documents

other colours, too

extraordinary and indefatigable expressive
wers. Perhaps none captures Goya's spirit
tter than *Man on a Swing*, a grinning
iatric soaring exultant as a child in a game,
ing upwards, barefoot and free before the

You can hear it, even amid his deafness. It
roars loud as a snowstorm inside your head.

The Times

Goya's Last Works is at the Frick Collection,
New York, until May 14.

other colours, too



er Rudd, left, and the dishevelled knight Bob Geldof

Pictures: David Sproule

the Flames (grey would have been more
posite) swing hard through a set of well-
lumbered standards, and to see Bob Geldof,
e of his Band Aid yoke, cavorting around
Mojo stage like a lesser Mick Jagger. (The
hevelled knight did his *Great Song of
ifference* so many times, indifference set
LA legends Los Lobos, the epitome of a
at band, had fans of yore drooling with
ir hard-hitting roots rock.

Young and old took particular pleasure in
stringed instrument pyrotechnics of
grass band the Greencards and the

equally effervescent Mexican guitar-slingers
Rodrigo y Gabriela. Japanese taiko drum-
ming ensemble GOCOO + GoRo, the perso-
nification of power and grace, would have
been another delightful discovery for most
festival-goers.

For once, the weather gods smiled on
Bluesfest, bestowing dry, warm days and
balmy nights. Even the storm that dumped
200mm of rain on Byron in five hours had the
good grace to wait for the conclusion of
Saturday's program.

Tony Hillier

accept works that come from non-
community sources".

"I'd like to see all public art galleries
adopt that policy," he says.

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Victoria, "prefers to acquire works painted
for and documented by community-based
art centres or co-operatives when such
organisations exist".

The NGV extensively researches the
provenance, attribution and documenta-
tion of all works acquired for its permanent
collection or borrowed for exhibition.

AGWA deputy director Gary Dufour
tells *The Australian* his gallery does not
have a formal policy for the sourcing of
Aboriginal artworks. "We tend primarily
to buy from art centres when we can and
from dealers with a strong reputation."

The two works in question were not
bought by the gallery. "Both works were
purchased by a local collector," Dufour
says. "One is on loan to the gallery and the
other became a gift to the gallery some
years ago." The works were purchased
from two galleries in Perth, he says, and
each has a certificate of authenticity.

When the exhibition was being orga-
nised last year, the gallery's curator of
indigenous art, Clothilde Bullen, contacted
Papunya Tula in a routine process of
confirming the works' authenticity.

Papunya Tula confirmed the paintings'
authenticity but objected to the proven-
ance of the works. "It was a short
exchange of emails and it never came up,"
Dufour says. "If it had been an issue, I
would have thought there was an oppor-
tunity then to discuss it."

He understands that art centres are
concerned about artist exploitation and he
accepts that the centres provide "the
lifeblood of indigenous art". But he, in
turn, is concerned that channelling all
indigenous art purchases through art
centres may create a monopoly.

"It sounds like a single desk for the
wheat board and that got them into
trouble," Dufour says. AGWA does not
propose removing the two paintings from
the present exhibition, he adds.

COMEDY FESTIVAL 2006

you could end up in stitches

smus

se Theatre, April 13.

oran

ne Town Hall, April 14.

key

itol, April 15.

Martin

ne Town Hall, April 15.

oy

um Theatre, April 16.

val continues until May 7.

in a play, a gothic romance and a
matic farce. Claims that the troupe's
f physical comedy is somewhere
Monty Python, the Marx Brothers
uel Beckett are, however, lamentably
y boast. It all starts off promisingly
with a damsel in distress being
in an isolated mansion. So far, so
murder mystery. But things become
more stupid as a balding Spanish
a lecherously sinister butler and a
lord of the manor all start competing
tion. For cheap laughs, the four
ly transform into stereotypical Chi-
acters performing — what else? —

martial arts. A short while later they're
Orthodox Jews beating each other up in the
manner of Groucho, Zeppo and Harpo. Bubble-
gum pop dance and song numbers break up the
already muddled narrative. It's all very under-
graduate but, then again, if you like gratuitous
nudity, fart jokes, silly accents and ping-pong
balls flying out between legs, then *Cooped* may
raise some sniggers. Otherwise, it's about as
mirth-making as a wet week in April.

Hurrah, then, for festival stalwart Demetri
Martin. While his comedic peers spray invective
and froth at the mouth over societal
slights, this American turns the criticism
inwards. Here his gentle, self-deprecating
humour is once again on display.

This show is hosted by his unseen therapist
(a midget with a high-pitched voice) who takes
us through young Martin's various neuroses.
Martin's chronic lack of cool is illustrated with
the aid of line drawings, watercolours and
childhood snapshots.

It's hard not to laugh at this self-confessed
introspective nerd who's good at maths and
palindromes ("Ya, get an ID, robust subordi-
nate gay"), but amid the laughter lies a lot of
empathy for his social awkwardness.

Danny Bhoj is another comedian for whom
the word charming might have been invented.
Supremely confident, with a disarmingly
cheeky grin, Bhoj is a consummate performer
who seems to love his audience almost as much
as it loves him. His latest show is loosely based
on his Scottish heritage and he oscillates
between mocking the bagpipes-and-black-
pudding aspects of it to fondly recounting its
high alcohol, poor diet and non-sporty culture.

But Bhoj digresses from nationalistic pride
often, venturing into a wide range of material
including jokes about online Scrabble, hymns,
French accents, menu listings, bogans and
fireproof flags. If you're planning to see a few
international acts, the boyish Mr Bhoj should
be one of them.

Those who are fed up with scatter-gun
stand-up and want a bit of well-proven wit may
enjoy *Ridiculusmus*'s take on *The Importance
of Being Earnest*, in which two blokes cross-
dress their way through the nine characters of
Oscar Wilde's play. It's well worth seeing for
the increasingly manic pacing, the ill-fitting
wigs, the paisley-papered fridge and Lady
Bracknell with a chicken adorning her head.

Thuy On