

The Quarantined Culture



Studies in Australian History

Series editors:

Alan Gilbert, Patricia Grimshaw and Peter Spearritt

Steven Nicholas (ed.) Convict Workers Pamela Statham (ed.) The Origins of Australia's Capital Cities Jeffrey Grey A Military History of Australia Alastair Davidson The Invisible State James A. Gillespie The Price of Health David Neal The Rule of Law in a Penal Colony Sharon Morgan Land Settlement in Early Tasmania Audrey Oldfield Woman Suffrage in Australia Paula J. Byrne Criminal Law and Colonial Subject Peggy Brock Outback Ghettos Raelene Frances The Politics of Work Luke Trainor British Imperialism and Australian Nationalism Margaret Maynard Fashioned from Penury Dawn May Aboriginal Labour and the Cattle Industry Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake (eds) Gender and War Michael Roe Australia, Britain, and Migration, 1915-1940



The Quarantined Culture

Australian Reactions to Modernism 1913–1939

John F. Williams





CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521477130

© Cambridge University Press 1995

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1995

Re-issued in this digitally printed version 2010

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

National Library of Australia Cataloguing in Publication data

Williams, John F. (John Frank).

The quarantined culture: Australian reactions to

modernism 1913-1939.

Bibliography.

Includes index.

1. Art, Modern – 20th century – History. 2. Art,

Australian - History - 20th century. 3. Art and society -

Australia. 4. Australia – History – 1901–1945.

5. Australia – Civilization – 1901–1945. I. Title. (Series:

Studies in Australian history (Cambridge, England)).

306.470994

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Williams, John Frank

The quarantined culture: Australian reactions to modernism,

1913-1939 / John F. Williams.

p. cm.-(Studies in Australian history)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Art, Australian. 2. Modernism (Art) - Public opinion.

3. Public opinion - Australia. I. Title. II. Series.

N7400.W553 1995

709'.94'09041-dc20

95-11772

ISBN 978-0-521-47139-8 Hardback ISBN 978-0-521-47713-0 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.



Contents

List of Illustrations	vi
Acknowledgments	viii
Introduction	1
1 The mad kermesse	15
2 1913: A year of golden plums	36
3 1913: Nowadays we are most of us Nietzscheans	60
4 1914-19: The gilding of battlefield lilies	80
5 1919-20: Blowing the national trumpet	107
6 The return of the city bushmen	126
7 Aliens among us	142
8 Blues in the Jazz Age	160
9 Fissures in the imperial landscape	178
10 Crash and aftermath	200
11 Whatever happened to the 'lost generation'?	219
Conclusion	234
Appendix: The First AIF—a demographic sample	248
Notes	254
Select Bibliography	274
Index	281



Illustrations

Plates

1	max Dupain Pyrmont silos through windscreen 1933	
	(National Gallery of Australia, Canberra)	13
2	The Sydney press reveals 'Duchamp's Masterpiece',	
	Sydney Sun 4 May 1913	21
3	The 'scientific use of water' transforms the land,	
	Sydney Mail 26 March 1913	45
4	Modern implements to develop the backblocks, Hor-	
	dern's advertisement, Sydney Mail 12 March 1913	48
5	Presenting 'The Revolutionary Spirit in Art' to its read-	
	ership, Sydney Mail 3 September 1913	72
6	Grace Cossington Smith Soldiers Marching ca. 1917	
	(Art Gallery of New South Wales)	85
7	Third Ypres (Passchendaele): Troops moving up to the	
	front line, November 1917	101
8	Third Ypres (Passchendaele): Australian fatigue party	
	in the ruins of Ypres, November 1917	101
9	Anvil Wood, 2 September 1918	105
10	Péronne after its capture, 2 September 1918	105
11	Will Longstaff Menin Gate at midnight 1927 (Austra-	
	lian War Memorial)	183
12	A British general impugns the Anzacs, Daily Guardian	
	7 October 1927	187
13	Arthur Streeton The Gloucester Buckets 1894 (Art	
	Gallery of New South Wales)	197
14	The English cricket team responsible for the 'Body-	
	line' tactics, Sydney Mail 26 October 1932	206-07
15	Max Dupain Pyrmont Silos 1933 (Art Gallery of New	
	South Wales)	210
16	Grace Cossington Smith Circular Quay From Milson's	
	Point ca. 1928 (Art Gallery of New South Wales)	211



List of Illustrations vii

17	Max Dupain <i>The Doom of Youth</i> 1937 (National Gallery of Australia, Canberra)	229
18	Lawrence Le Guay <i>The Progenitors</i> 1938 (Art Gallery of New South Wales)	246
Fig	ıres	
1	Workers in primary and industrial production,	
	Australia: 1891-1933	18
2	Foreign investment: 1913-1914	38
3	Meat consumption, per capita, per annum: 1912	40
4	Mobilisations and losses: 1914–1918	87
5	Australians, by birthplace: 1911	144
6	Germany—imports from and exports to: 1913	157
7	Australian trade with the United Kingdom: 1910-1929	192
8	War service of eligible Australian males: 1914-1918	228
A1	Roman Catholics as a proportion of total embarkations:	
	1914-1918	250
A2	Proportions of labourers for different religious	
	groupings	251
A3	Age distribution in AIF sample group	252
A4	Married men in the AIF compared with married men	
	in Australia as a whole	252



Acknowledgments

Without an Australia Council Visual Arts Board Fellowship in 1988 this work would not have taken the form it did, and could not have been finished in 1994. It began life as a PhD thesis, commenced in 1988 in a studio at the Cité des Arts in Paris, and without Duncan Waterson's enthusiasm, knowledge, and forbearance, for what was an inter-disciplinary plunge into the unknown, I doubt it would have got this far.

More recently Jeanette Hoorn, Phillipa McGuinness and Roderic Campbell have provided, from quite different standpoints, supportive, critical and thoughtful editorial assistance. Jeanette Hoorn's reading of the draft material brought forth a string of new ideas and attitudes that introduced new insights which countered and transformed some of the assertions of the original thesis. To her my debt is incalculable. To Kate Blackmore, Bridget Foley-Griffin, Harry Knowles, Debra Phillips, Heather Johnson, Avenel Mitchell, Peter Henderson, Ingeborg Tyssen, Paul Ashton, and Maureen Burns, who passed on material from their own researches, goes my gratitude.

As it does to Colin Doxford, George Parsons, Dennis Phillips, Heather Jamieson, and the late Steven Shortus, for whom the subject was always of interest and from whom pertinent advice was always forthcoming. Ulrike Levy guided me through some sticky passages in German, Victoria Andrieu helped in Spanish and Jean Levy kept talking French to me. No less knowledgeable and generous in advice and time were Ursula Prunstler, Sandra Byron, Terence Maloon and Barry Pearce at the Art Gallery of New South Wales; Isobel Crombie at the National Gallery of Victoria, and Gael Newton at the Australian National Gallery. At the Australian War Memorial Peter Stanley was supportive and enthusiastic, while the help of Bet Dracoulis and the research staff there was quite simply indispensable.

My wife Ingeborg Tyssen is a professional artist and writer with a fulltime creative life of her own. It would be hard to count the number of discoveries she made in the process of her own not-altogether related researches that she simply passed on to me. At the right moment she provided the right support: to her I dedicate this book.