

NOTES FOR THE PRIME MINISTER  
 FOR THE OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION,  
 MODERN MASTERS: MANET TO MATISSE,  
 AT THE ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES,  
 SYDNEY, 9 APRIL 1975

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THIS IS PROBABLY THE MOST IMPORTANT ART EXHIBITION EVER TO COME TO AUSTRALIA. AUSTRALIANS FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO TRAVEL HAVE PERHAPS SEEN SOME OF THE WORKS, OR THEIR LIKE, IN THE GREAT GALLERIES OF NORTH AMERICA AND EUROPE; OTHERS MAY HAVE SEEN THEM REPRODUCED IN ART BOOKS; BUT THIS IS THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY THAT THE LARGE PROPORTION OF AUSTRALIANS HAS HAD TO ENJOY AND SAVOUR THE REAL THING.

CEZANNE, BONNARD, BRAQUE, DALI, DEGAS, DUBUFFET, GAUGUIN, VAN GOGH, KLEE AND OTHERS VIE WITH EACH OTHER FOR PRIDE OF PLACE; AND MANET, MATISSE, MODIGLIANI, MUNCH, PICASSO AND MANY OTHERS VIRTUALLY STUMBLE OVER EACH OTHER TO CLAIM OUR ATTENTION.

IT WOULD BE AN INVIDIOUS TASK TO TRY TO SINGLE OUT INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS OR WORKS FOR SPECIAL COMMENT - ALL HAVE THEIR IMPORTANCE AND WE MUST BE THANKFUL TO THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EXHIBITION FOR BRINGING THIS VISUAL FEAST TO OUR COUNTRY.

THERE ARE, I BELIEVE, MORE THAN 100 WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION REPRESENTING THE FINEST IN EUROPEAN ART OVER THE LAST HALF OF THE 19TH CENTURY AND THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY. THE ROLE OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, NEW YORK, IN PUTTING THE EXHIBITION TOGETHER HAS BEEN CRUCIAL, AND I THINK IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT THE MUSEUM HAS BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR BRINGING SIGNIFICANT ART EXHIBITIONS TO AUSTRALIA. OVER THE LAST 10 YEARS 8 EXHIBITIONS HAVE TOURED AUSTRALIAN GALLERIES UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE MUSEUM'S INTERNATIONAL PROGRAM.

TO THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART AND OTHER GALLERIES AND THE PRIVATE COLLECTORS WHO LOANED WORKS FOR THIS EXHIBITION I EXTEND THE THANKS OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE, AND I TRUST THAT THESE VALUABLE WORKS SO GENEROUSLY MADE AVAILABLE MAY NOT SUFFER FOR BEING HUNG UPSIDE DOWN IN THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE.

ART TODAY IS VERY MUCH AN INTERNATIONAL - OR SHOULD I SAY A MULTINATIONAL - VENTURE. GREAT EXHIBITIONS ARE OFTEN SPONSORED BY PRIVATE COMPANIES AND CORPORATIONS. THE ALCOA FOUNDATION HAS GENEROUSLY CONTRIBUTED \$150,000 TO THIS EXHIBITION, AND I SOMETIMES WONDER WHERE MODERN ART WOULD BE WITHOUT BEER CANS AND TOBACCO.

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS, OF COURSE, PLAYING ITS PART, AS IT QUITE RIGHTLY SHOULD. FIRST, IT HAS INDEMNIFIED THE OWNERS OF THE WORKS COMPRISING THE EXHIBITION AGAINST LOSS OR DAMAGE TO A TOTAL AMOUNT OF \$US 70 MILLION. WITHOUT THIS SUPPORT THE EXHIBITION WOULD VERY LIKELY HAVE NOT BEEN POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE PROHIBITIVE COSTS OF NORMAL INSURANCE COVER. I SHOULD ADD THAT THE TREASURER WHO IS UNABLE TO BE WITH US TONIGHT HAS ASKED ME TO STRESS HIS KEEN INTEREST IN THE SAFETY OF THE EXHIBITION.

SECONDLY, AN IMPORTANT AND CONTINUING ROLE IS BEING PLAYED BY THE VISUAL ARTS BOARD OF THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL, WHICH, AMONG OTHER THINGS IS MEETING THE TRANSPORT COSTS OF THE EXHIBITION.

THERE IS STILL A LINGERING PREJUDICE AGAINST MODERN ART IN ALL SOCIETIES. EXHIBITIONS OF GREAT ART WORKS WILL HELP TO DISPEL THIS; AND IT IS THROUGH REFERENCE TO THE WORKS OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF MODERN PAINTING THAT WE SHALL COME TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IS HAPPENING IN ART AROUND US TODAY.

WHEN THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL GALLERY BOUGHT JACKSON POLLOCK'S BLUE POLES IN 1973 THERE WAS CONSIDERABLE CRITICISM FROM PEOPLE WHO KNEW LITTLE ABOUT MODERN PAINTING AND WANTED TO KNOW EVEN LESS. I REGRET THAT SECTIONS OF THE MEDIA DID THEIR BEST TO PROVOKE PHILISTINE REACTIONS TO THE PURCHASE. THERE IS A CERTAIN IRONY, THEREFORE, THAT IT WAS A NEWSPAPER, THE MELBOURNE "HERALD", THAT IN 1939 SPONSORED AN EXHIBITION OF 215 WORKS BY MANY OF THE ARTISTS REPRESENTED HERE THIS EVENING.

IT WAS ONE OF THE FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITIONS OF MODERN ART IN THIS COUNTRY, AND THERE WERE FURIOUS REACTIONS WHEREVER IT WAS SHOWN. SUCH ATTITUDES PERSIST, BUT I BELIEVE THAT WE NOW HAVE A BETTER PERSPECTIVE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE PLACE OF MODERN ART IN THE HISTORY OF OUR CULTURE.

THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT IS MAKING EARNEST EFFORTS TO PROMOTE AN UNDERSTANDING AND LOVE OF THE ARTS TOWARDS IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE OF OUR WHOLE COMMUNITY. OUR PRINCIPAL AGENCY IS THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL, WHICH ASSISTS, THE INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE OF ART AND IS CURRENTLY SPONSORING (WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS) AN EXHIBITION IN EUROPE OF THE WORKS OF TEN AUSTRALIAN PAINTERS AND SCULPTORS. THE VISUAL ARTS BOARD OF THE COUNCIL HAS CONTRIBUTED SUBSTANTIALLY TO BRINGING THIS AND OTHER EXHIBITIONS TO AUSTRALIA. IT MAKES GRANTS DIRECTLY TO ARTISTS; IT MAKES SUBSIDIES TO BODIES FOR COMMISSIONING WORKS TO BE DISPLAYED IN PUBLIC; IT MAKES SUBSIDIES TO PUBLIC GALLERIES FOR PURCHASING AUSTRALIAN WORKS, AND GRANTS TO HELP ESTABLISH ARTISTS' WORKSHOPS AND PUBLIC GALLERIES AND ASSIST ART SOCIETIES AND GROUPS. THE BOARD'S BUDGET FOR 1974/75 EXCEEDS \$1 MILLION. THIS IS PART OF OUR OVERALL BUDGET FOR THE ARTS OF \$20 MILLION THIS FINANCIAL YEAR.

IN CANBERRA WE ARE BUILDING A NATIONAL GALLERY THE ROLE OF WHICH WILL BE TO COMPLEMENT THE WORK OF THE AUSTRALIA COUNCIL AND OTHER ENTERPRISES, THROUGH PROVIDING FOR ALL TO ENJOY EXAMPLES OF THE BEST WORKS OF ART AVAILABLE FROM DIFFERENT PERIODS AND DIFFERENT CULTURES HERE AND ABROAD. THE EMPHASIS ALWAYS IS ON QUALITY.

AUSTRALIA IS BY NO MEANS WITHOUT DISTINCTION IN INTERNATIONAL ART. I RECALL MY PLEASURE 18 MONTHS AGO WHEN I HEARD OF JOHN ARMSTRONG'S IMPORTANT PRIZE AT THE BIENNALE IN SAO PAULO. SHORTLY AFTERWARDS, AT THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE, I OPENED THE FIRST BIENNALE OF SYDNEY - AN EVENT WHICH I HOPE WILL COME TO RANK AMONG THE BEST OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD.

EXHIBITIONS SUCH AS THIS HELP OUR OWN ARTISTS AND GIVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMPARE THEIR WORK WITH THAT OF THE GREAT ARTISTS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES AND OTHER PERIODS. THE COMMUNITY OF SPIRIT, THE HUMANITY COMMON TO ALL ARTISTIC CREATION, MAY BE FELT AND SHARED DIRECTLY. THE RESULT IS AN ENRICHMENT OF OUR ARTISTIC EXPERIENCE AND HOPEFULLY A STIMULATION OF THE ENERGIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF OUR ARTISTS.

IN THE LAST 24 HOURS I HAVE RECEIVED REPRESENTATIONS FROM MANY DISTINGUISHED AUSTRALIAN ARTISTS, WRITERS AND OTHERS SEEKING TO REMOVE GIFTS OF WORKS OF ART FROM THE PROVISIONS OF THE INCOME TAX LAWS. I CAN WELL UNDERSTAND THAT MANY GREAT PUBLIC ART COLLECTIONS HAVE DEPENDED ON PRIVATE BENEFACTORS. I CAN ASSURE YOU THAT THIS QUESTION WILL RECEIVE THE EARNEST CONSIDERATION OF THE GOVERNMENT, BUT IT IS NOT SOMETHING I CAN PRONOUNCE UPON AT A MOMENT'S NOTICE. I BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT A GOVERNMENT WORKING TO BUILD UP THE FOUNDATIONS OF A GREAT

NATIONAL COLLECTION MUST LOOK AT WAYS OF ENCOURAGING GIFTS FROM PRIVATE OWNERS.

I WISH THE EXHIBITION EVERY SUCCESS. I AM HONOURED TO HAVE BEEN INVITED TO OPEN IT. IT WILL BE SHOWN IN SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE, AND SPECIAL GRANTS WILL BE MADE BY THE VISUAL ARTS BOARD TO ENABLE STUDENTS FROM OTHER CITIES AND STATES TO TRAVEL TO SYDNEY OR MELBOURNE TO SEE IT. I PAY TRIBUTE TO THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART; TO WILLIAM LEIBERMAN, WHO SELECTED THE EXHIBITION AND IS LOOKING AFTER IT IN AUSTRALIA; TO THE DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, MR OLDENBURG, AND HIS STAFF; TO THE GALLERIES AND INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE LENT THEIR WORKS; TO THE ALCOA FOUNDATION AND ALCOA OF AUSTRALIA; TO THE ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES AND THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA; AND TO ALL WHO HAVE HELPED WITH THE ASSEMBLING, TRANSPORT AND SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS.

FINALLY, I BELIEVE IT IS A MARK OF THE QUALITY OF THE EXHIBITION WE HAVE HERE, THAT I UNDERSTAND IT IS TO BE DISPLAYED AT THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART ON ITS RETURN TO NEW YORK BEFORE THE WORKS ARE FINALLY DISPERSED ONCE AGAIN TO THEIR OWNERS.

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ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR THE PRIME MINISTER FOR A DINNER  
GIVEN BY ALCOA OF AUSTRALIA AT THE BENNELONG POINT  
RESTAURANT, SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE - 9 APRIL 1975

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1. ALL OF US CAN TAKE GREAT PRIDE IN THE EXHIBITION OPENED THIS EVENING. IT IS APPROPRIATE THAT THIS MORE SELECT CELEBRATION SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN THE OPERA HOUSE, THE MOST BEAUTIFUL BUILDING IN THIS CITY, A BUILDING THAT SYMBOLISES ALL THAT IS MOST MODERN AND VIGOROUS IN OUR ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL LIFE.
  
2. I MUST SAY IT'S A PLEASURE TO ATTEND A DINNER GIVEN BY ALCOA AND NOT BE EXPECTED TO TALK ABOUT FOREIGN INVESTMENT OR MINERALS AND ENERGY. AUSTRALIANS DON'T NORMALLY ASSOCIATE ALCOA WITH THE ARTS, MODERN OR OTHERWISE. LOOKING AROUND THIS ROOM, I SEE QUITE A FEW PEOPLE NOT NORMALLY ASSOCIATED WITH THE ARTS.
  
3. ALCOA IS A SPLENDID EXAMPLE OF THE PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATION WHICH IS SUCH A NOTABLE FEATURE OF AMERICAN BUSINESS LIFE. (IT IS ALWAYS IMPORTANT TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN THE FOUNDATION AND THE CORPORATION.) ONE THINKS OF SIMILAR GREAT FOUNDATIONS - FORD, CARNEGIE, ROCKEFELLER. THESE BODIES HAVE GIVEN MANY MILLIONS, INDEED BILLIONS, OF DOLLARS TO THE ARTS, SCIENCE, EDUCATION, MEDICAL RESEARCH AND OTHER HUMANE CAUSES. THEY HAVE BROUGHT INESTIMABLE BENEFITS TO AMERICAN SOCIETY, AND ENHANCED THE REPUTATION, NOT ONLY OF INDIVIDUAL CORPORATIONS, BUT OF THE UNITED STATES HERSELF.

4. IN THIS ROOM TONIGHT ARE SOME OF THE MOST DISTINGUISHED REPRESENTATIVES OF AMERICAN ARTISTIC AND BUSINESS LIFE. I CANNOT REMEMBER A TIME WHEN A MORE CULTIVATED AND ESTIMABLE GROUP OF AMERICAN CITIZENS VISITED THIS CITY. I WISH ALL OF YOU A VERY HAPPY STAY IN AUSTRALIA. WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS I SHALL BE MAKING MY THIRD VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES AS PRIME MINISTER. I SHALL BE MEETING PRESIDENT FORD FOR THE SECOND TIME. NO ONE IN THIS COUNTRY DOUBTS THE ENDURING STRENGTH OR IMPORTANCE OF AUSTRALIA'S LINKS WITH THE UNITED STATES. MY OWN GOVERNMENT'S FOREIGN POLICIES, WHILE SEEKING WIDER CONTACTS WITH OTHER NATIONS AND MORE MATURE AND INDEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS WITH COUNTRIES IN OUR REGION, HAS NEVER DOUBTED THE UNIQUE VALUE OF OUR TIES WITH THE UNITED STATES. I BELIEVE THE FRIENDSHIP AND UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN OUR COUNTRIES HAVE NEVER BEEN STRONGER, OR MORE SOUNDLY BASED, THAN THEY ARE TODAY.

5. WHATEVER CRITICISMS I MAY HAVE MADE OF PARTICULAR AMERICAN POLICIES OR DECISIONS, I HAVE BEEN A LIFE-LONG ADMIRER OF THE TRULY GREAT QUALITIES OF AMERICAN SOCIETY - ITS OPTIMISM, ITS GENEROSITY, ITS ZEST FOR CHANGE, FOR INNOVATION, FOR SHEER ACCOMPLISHMENT. I BELIEVE WE SEE MANY OF THESE QUALITIES IN INSTITUTIONS SUCH AS THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART IN NEW YORK AND THE ALCOA FOUNDATION. THE EXHIBITION OF MODERN MASTERS WILL REMIND US OF THE BEST AND MOST VIGOROUS STRAINS IN AMERICAN SOCIETY.

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