



**PRIME MINISTER**

**\*\*PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY\*\***

**ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER, THE HON P J KEATING, MP  
OPENING OF COLIN LANCELEY EXHIBITION, SHERMAN GALLERIES,  
SYDNEY, FRIDAY, 27 AUGUST 1993**

Colin and Kay Lanceley, Gene Sherman and William Wright, ladies and gentlemen

I'm very pleased to be here this evening to open this exhibition of Colin Lanceley's recent work.

I wanted to make time for this event among the post-Budget feeding frenzy because I like Colin Lanceley's vision and ideas. I also like his paintings.

I mean, how could you not like someone who says that great art looks as if it was breathed onto the surface by angels?

It's always tempting for politicians to try and draw analogies between what they do and what is done by the people we talk about in our speeches. Real people - like painters, and opera singers.

Some of you may remember a previous instance when I did this, and the interesting events that followed.

So rather tonight I'll content myself with saying, quite seriously, that I think I know what Colin means when he says that in trying to come to terms with Australia, you've got to try and put it together in some meaningful way, so that if it's real it will live in the imagination afterwards.

I have to say that I find the way he puts it irresistible: he says, "We need to develop a profound understanding of our place and to shape it with what is our finest sensibility. I think we've got to create the kind of place where we get echoes all the time, and resonances. ... In a soulless environment where we aren't able to have those resonances - our culture won't develop, and we'll become a satellite."

Dare I say it sounds a bit like Manning Clark, whose great achievement was to imagine Australia - what it was and what it might become. And he did it so well he helped us all do it.

It is not Manning Clark's politics which some conservative Australians object too. His politics were hardly radical. And it's not the way he wrote history - the way is always open to anyone who wants to write it better.

Wha  
term  
achi  
  
Whi  
arts  
will r  
  
The  
diffe  
  
I kno  
cons  
  
It wa  
at al  
and  
  
I kno  
enou  
  
We  
cult  
  
And  
  
As I  
arts  
  
The  
mult  
  
The  
not  
  
The  
wha  
  
Able  
  
A cr  
  
Anc  
  
I kno  
  
Too  
muc  
  
Yet  
thea  
  
And  
ach

What they fear is his imagination, and imagination - like a sense of humour is a terrible threat to people without one. When it is coupled with a massive achievement and imagination becomes a source of envy as well as fear.

Which is why I suppose Manning Clark will always be under attack: Why the arts will always be a bitchy place: And why the conservative parties in Australia will never support the arts as the arts should be supported.

The Australia that Colin Lanceley returned to after eighteen years away was very different from the Australia that he left in the 1960s.

I know that in those days many creative people felt the need to leave what they considered to be a stultifyingly conformist society.

It was an era when the arts were treated by politicians - if they considered them at all - as at best a subject of bemusement, and at worst a matter for suspicion and hostility.

I know too that the situation has changed from those days, but not changed enough.

We still need to bring cultural concerns more into the mainstream. To make our cultural development a part of our national development.

And we'll get there, with help from people like Colin Lanceley.

As I've said before, my view of the arts is a simple one. I believe that when the arts flourish we flourish with them.

They are a measure of our identity and our guiding force. In an ever changing multicultural Australia, the arts are out there at the front, leading and defining.

The arts project to the world the truth about Australia in a way that no-one or nothing else can.

They show, as I'm sure Colin would agree, that we are a people able to imagine what we might be.

Able to imagine our future in the region and the world.

A creative people, able to make things which the world wants.

And a people prepared to lead rather than willing to follow.

I know that most Australians are enormously proud of our artistic achievements.

Too often I think we project ourselves as a pretty unsophisticated bunch without much care for the life of the mind.

Yet the achievements are there daily - in writing, painting, dance, film, music, theatre.

And I have no doubt that Australians are very proud of their artistic achievements.

It is my belief that we should be doing more for our artists, and for those who will follow them.

And we intend to.

That's why we are working towards putting into place a national cultural strategy.

Bob McMullan, as some of you may be aware, is currently engaged in a wide consultation process around Australia. In fact, today he has been here in Sydney at an Evatt Foundation forum on cultural policy in Australia appropriately entitled, "From Fossils to Films".

Which gives you an idea of the size of the task.

By the end of the year, he will be in a position to come back to Cabinet with a considered view about the role and responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government in relation to our cultural life and heritage. From this the Government intends to develop a cultural map to guide us into the next century.

It's an ambitious enterprise, and one that hasn't been attempted before. And it will be of great benefit to us all.

But we haven't just pulled up the drawbridge while we wait for this to happen.

In the Budget last week we delivered a 12 per cent increase in arts funding.

It's perhaps hard to believe, but some people have viewed this with alarm.

One commentator in the Sunday papers last weekend suggested that "the electorate can look forward to an explosion of Balmain basket weaving" - which to say the least, showed scant regard for intellectual copyright.

I don't subscribe to this notion that, unlike every other human activity from banking to baseball, the arts does best on a starvation diet. I think it's a philistine view. I think it's primitive. I think it's a fundamentally Tory view which confuses excellence in the arts with exclusivity in the arts.

I believe that the approach we developed in the Budget was a sound one. One which was economically responsible, practical and efficient in its delivery.

An approach which not only provided direct Government assistance for artists, but which also encourages arts organisations to be innovative in exploring opportunities for non-government support.

The arts need patronage. We need to get more Australian companies involved in sponsorship of the arts. It is a sad fact that Australian business is not in the habit of providing patronage - at least not on the broad and imaginative scale that it is done in many other countries.

Artists should be rewarded in ways that are commensurate with the rewards they bring Australia. I look forward to the day when more Australian companies come to the realisation that by helping Australian artists they are ultimately helping themselves.

And  
imm  
sus

Rea  
Pref

Bec  
doin  
exp  
sup

And  
toda  
sche

All o  
think  
sper

The  
that

Now  
to a

You  
than

So in  
about

I wo  
there  
is a

It's h  
with

Colin

As F  
to th  
of La  
natu

And

Ladi  
a mu

Thar

And I hope this day comes soon, because the arts are in need of more immediate assistance than the Government is able to provide. Furthermore I suspect that this will always be the case.

Real artists, I'm inclined to think, don't choose to be artists. As Colin says in the Preface from which I've already quoted, painting is compulsive.

Because they reward artists of excellence like Colin - who really shouldn't be doing anything else - and give them the kind of mid-career support they need to expand their horizons and go on to better things, I've always been a strong supporter of the Australia Council's Creative Fellowships.

And that's the other reason that I was delighted to come and open this exhibition today. It's a tangible expression of the results of the Creative Fellowship scheme.

All of these works were created while Colin has been on his fellowship, and I think that no-one could deny that this has been Commonwealth money well spent.

The more observant among you will have noticed that this is the first reference that I have made tonight to the works that actually comprise the exhibition.

Now it's no secret, I'm sure, that hitherto my attention has been primarily directed to a different school from that of the Australian Modernists.

You will also probably not be astounded to hear that I have a somewhat less than nodding acquaintance with the Annandale Imitation Realists.

So in these circumstances you will undoubtedly all be relieved that I am not about to embark on a detailed critique of the exhibition.

I would however, make the observation, that even with a limited understanding there is a real spirit in these works that no one can fail to appreciate, and there is a real feel of Australianness about them.

It's hard to put my finger on why this is so, but I suspect that it has a lot to do with the colours.

Colin Lanceley clearly is a great colourist.

As Robert Hughes says, his paintings "record a rapturous sensitivity of response to the light of high summer, to the weird buzz in the bush... There are no artists of Lanceley's generation to whom the diction of colour seems to come so naturally."

And none whose work I would think it a greater privilege to open.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a sincere pleasure to open this exhibition. I hope that a multitude of people have the opportunity to see it.

Thank you.