Crossing Cultures:
The Owen and Wagner Collection of Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Art from the Hood Museum of Art

September 15, 2012 – March 10, 2013
In June 2010, Will Owen and Harvey Wagner gifted over four hundred works to the museum, representing the many exciting contemporary art-making practices of Aboriginal peoples across the Australian continent. These objects, in styles both traditional and contemporary, are by artists from remote communities as well as major metropolitan centers, and they span five decades of creative activity. The Owen and Wagner Collection of Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Art represents many art-making practices of Aboriginal peoples, including acrylic paintings on linen and canvas, earthen ochre paintings on bark, board, and canvas, sculpture, and photography in a variety of media.
Over one hundred works from the Owen and Wagner gift and from their private collection will be featured in the *Crossing Cultures* exhibition. The show will fill the entire second floor of the museum and offers myriad connections to the school curriculum, including storytelling, relationship to land and the environment, materials and processes in art making, and the history of colonization and the lasting impact on those colonized.
Aboriginal culture is diverse. There are over six hundred Indigenous Australian language groups.
Australia is a large continent with varied geography, climate, and natural resources. Map of Australia overlaid on a map of the United States.
For Indigenous people, art and culture cannot function in isolation. Artistic practices are very much related to cultural practices: they exist because of and for one another. This exhibition demonstrates that there are other ways of knowing and learning. The knowledge embedded in the works (ceremonial, painterly, meteorological, cartographical, astronomical, botanical, and cultural) demonstrates the complexity and richness of Aboriginal cultures and peoples.
The following quote addresses the strong relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the land, and the grounding of much knowledge and practice in that relationship.
Imagine for a moment if all the genius and intellect of all generations that have come before you had been concentrated on a single set of tracks, focused exclusively on knowing a particular piece of ground, not only plants and animals but every ecological climatic, geographic detail, the pulse of every sentient creature, the rhythm of every breath of wind, the patterns of every season. This was the norm in Aboriginal Australia.

The remaining slides in this exhibition overview provide:

- A sampling of works of art that will be in the exhibition, demonstrating the range of regions, media, and art making.

- Each work of art is identified by region, artist, and language group as well as the title, date, and medium of the piece.

- Examples of ground and body painting that are a part of ceremonies and the translation of these practices onto bark and canvas.

- Images of the landscape in different regions.

- The materials used in ochre and bark paintings, and how they are harvested and prepared.
Ceremonial ground painting has a long history and tradition in the western desert region. Many artists, especially those in the Papunya region, translate these ground paintings onto canvas.
Ceremonial designs painted on the body in Central Australia. Contemporary artists sometimes translate body painting onto canvas and bark. (Yumpululu with Paul Bruno Tjampitjinpa, 1976)
Ronnie Tjampitjinpa
Pintupi, born about 1943
Walungurru (Kintore), Western Desert, Northern Territory
*Fire Dreaming at Murmunya*
2003
183 x 122 cm
Acrylic on canvas
*Gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner; 2011.43.109*
Sometimes the symbols found in paintings can be “read” according to this chart, while other times you might see the same symbol but it could have a different meaning.
Photograph of spinifex grasses in the western desert region of central Australia. The desert is not a barren place; in fact, after the rains, it can be full of blossoming plants and grasses.
Walongkura Napanangka
Pintupi, born about 1945
Walungurru (Kintore), Western Desert, Northern Territory
*Lupul*
2005
122 x 122 cm
Acrylic on canvas
Gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner;
2009.92.321
Naata Nungurrayi
Pintupi, born 1932
Walungurru (Kintore), Western Desert, Northern Territory
Marrapinti
2005
91 x 122 cm
Acrylic on canvas
Promised Gift of Will
Owen and Harvey Wagner; EL.2011.60.32
Susie Bootja Bootja Napaltjarri
Kukatja, about 1932–2003
Balgo (Wirrimanu), Western Australia
*Kaningarra*
2000
150 x 100 cm
Acrylic on canvas
Promised gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner;
*EL.2011.60.56*
Rock art galleries in Western Arnhem Land that are up to 30,000 years old.
Panels from a bark shelter.

(Photo: G.H. Wilkins, Goyder River, Central Arnhem Land, 1926)
Ochres collected, prepared, and used to create paintings. Ochre paintings are not only of the land but made with materials from the land.
Dick Nguleingulei Murrumurru
Kunwinjku, about 1920 –1988
Kunbarllanjnja (Oenpelli), Western Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
*Barramundi*
1980
63.5 x 35 cm
Ochres on stringybark
Promised gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner; EL. 2011.60.16
John Mawurndjul collecting and preparing bark for painting.

(Photos by Jenni Carter)
John Mawurndjul
Kuninjku, born 1952
Maningrida, Western Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
*Mardayin Ceremony*
2003
175 x 72 cm
Ochres on stringybark
Promised gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner; EL.2011.60.12
Body painting designs such as these are translated onto bark.
(above) Initiates, East Arnhem Land, Photo: Donald Thomson

Narritjin Maymuru
Manggalili, 1922 – 1982
Yirrkala, Northeast Arnhem Land, Northern Territory
Banaitcha Story
1973
137 x 62 cm
Ochres on stringybark
Gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner; 2011.43.106
Tutini (burial posts) created for the Pukamani ceremony in the Tiwi Islands.
Tiwi Islands, Northern Territory

Maryanne Mungatopi
Tiwi, 1966–2003
Melville Island, Northern Territory

Purukaparli, Bima, Taparra (top left)
Purukaparli and Jinani (top right)
Jinani (bottom left)
2002
76 x 57 cm
Ochres on Arches paper
Gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner;
Clementine Puruntatameri
Tiwi, born about 1950
Theodore Tipiloura
Tiwi, born 1946
Gabriel Tungutalum
Tiwi,
Bathurst Island, Northern Territory
Tutini (Pukumani grave post)
1988
164 cm, 200 cm, 177 cm
Ochres on carved ironwood
Promised gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner
Purnululu, East Kimberley

Purnululu is the name given to the sandstone area of the Bungle Bungle Range by the Kija Aboriginal people.
Lena Nyadbi
Gija, born about 1936
Jimbala, Jeering and Daiwul Country, 2001
100 x 140 cm
Ochres on canvas
Gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner; 2011.43.54
Craig Koomeeta
Wik-Alkan, born 1977
Aurukun, West Cape, Far North Queensland
*Freshwater Crocodile*
2002
134 x 22 cm
Ochres and acrylic on milkwood
Promised gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner; EL.2011.60.47
Clinton Nain
Meriam mir/Ku Ku, born 1971
Torres Strait, Queensland
*Political Storm Brewing*
2001
124.5 x 66.5 cm overall, three panels
Bleached cloth
*Promised gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner; EL.2011.60.51*
Michael Riley
Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi, 1960–2004
Sydney, New South Wales
*Untitled (from the series Cloud)*
2004
150 x 112 cm
Inkjet print on Ilford Galerie paper, ed. 2/5
Promised gift of Will Owen and Harvey Wagner; EL.2011.60.59
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A wide range of public programs and events as well as programs and resources for Dartmouth College faculty and students and regional schools will be offered. Free tours will be available for school and public groups.

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