The Enlightenment came to Sydney in the figure of a true believer, Governor Arthur Phillip. Its impact on Indigenous art was profound. Aborigines responded immediately to the invasion with transcultural verve. This lecture examines the rapid evolution of Indigenous contact and post-contact art in Sydney during the first forty years of the colony. The principal Indigenous artist was Bennelong, who crafted innovative aesthetic forms, firstly in his attempts to wrest political control from Phillip, and then in attempts to find a creative role for Indigenous people in the dawning modernity of this emerging metropolis.

Biography

Ian McLean is Senior Research Professor of Contemporary Art at the University of Wollongong and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Western Australia. He has published extensively on Australian art and particularly Aboriginal art within a contemporary context. His books include Double Desire: Transculturation and Indigenous art, How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art, White Aborigines Identity Politics in Australian Art, and Art of Gordon Bennett (with a chapter by Gordon Bennett). He is a former advisory board member of Third Text, and is currently on the advisory boards of World Art and National Identities.