

JONATHAN GREEN:

-Bringing all this together and also putting together a website which we will share the link to later, which has wonderful information both on Meanjin covers and more generally, and there is a display if you are in Melbourne of the ground floor of the library at the University of Melbourne.

I would like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land I am on today, all of you will quite likely have other traditional owners to whom respects should be paid. Here it is the Wiradjuri people of the Kulin Nation inner Naarm or Melbourne. 80 years of a colonial project like Meanjin is very shallow time indeed in contrast to Indigenous Australia, 60-80,000 years of custodian ship of the land and waterways of this place. I pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

We have a panel here to offer their insights into the cover of this little magazine. As you will see shortly it has been a very movable feast over its 80 years. We will have a brief visual introduction to that in a moment. Let me first introduce your panellists, Sophie Cunningham, author of six books, 'City of Trees' being the most recent and also the editor of 'Fire, Flood, Plague: Australian Writers Respond to 2020'

She was the editor of Meanjin from 2008-2011.

WH Chong has been designing for Text Publishing since it began. He has been inducted in the Australian Book Designers Hall of Fame. He has an avid portraitist, he has probably drawing as we speak. He will be drawing you now. I give you fair warning.

He was the designer for Meanjin from 2002 until 2008.

Daniel Huppatz is the author of 'Design: The Key Concepts' and 'Modern Asian Design'. And Christopher Marshall, he is the associate professor of Art History and Museum Studies at the University of Melbourne. Time forbids us from listing them.

In the top right-hand corner of your screen you will see 'view' and if you select 'Gallery' that will be reasonably illuminating. Let's begin and I will ask our invisible help at Chelsea, there is a little GIS, a short history of Meanjin in its major cover incarnations. It is starting in 1982, that's one possibility, we will let it run through a couple of times and you will get the idea.

Beginning in 1940, and on it goes. Thanks, Chelsey.

It is certainly a magazine, Chris, if I can begin with you, a magazine which has many moods. As an art

historian, how does that selection, that short visual history strike you?

CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL:

Yes, it's an amazing journey it has taken. Meanjin is something I have tended to live with, like many of us, it is amazing to have a chance to stand back and look at it as an unfolding landscape. What a journey. On a basic level, thinking about this in preparation for today, I've been struck by where it has got to now from where it started.

Where it started was a, relatively speaking, closed circuit of a small group of people who were all interconnected with each other and knew each other. They felt they were toiling in some senses in an inhospitable landscape of the arts at that stage, many of them with strong European and emigrant feeling, it has a sort of European overcoat feeling to it, the early issues.

And then it kind of exploded, this very Australian, multicultural, multidimensional way, to now a much more global... In some ways the consistency has gone but what you have instead is an unbelievable diversity and energy. And that is very much reflected in the covers.

JONATHAN GREEN:

I wonder if we could have that second slide and Daniel, this slide includes the first edition, Christmas 1940, and 1948. Daniel, the footprints, the early motif and some details about Percy Stanhope Hobday, the designer of that time, this introduces us to the first of our vexed issues around indigeneity and Meanjin intersection in its name and material with Indigenous ideas and Indigenous culture.

Daniel tell us more about this cover.

DANIEL HUPPATZ:

Following what Christopher mentioned before, there is a feeling among people in Australian literary circles and cultural circles in the 1940s to try to establish an Australian modernism or an Australian modernist culture that somehow both connected to what happened in Europe and internationally and also distinctive and local.

I think people like Margaret Preston was calling for this in the 1920s, the idea of using Indigenous motifs and symbols, of course without permission, not the way you would approach these things today, but as part of this project of trying to create something distinctively modern and yet Australian as well.

This, I think, was part of both using the name Meanjin, and also the cover design, which in an early issue, an anthropologist by the name of AP Elkin wrote an article about how the footprints were meant to represent a spirit...

JONATHAN GREEN:

Sophie, this use of clearly Indigenous themes and motifs but in the hands of Europeans is a thing which today would be profoundly problematic. I wonder if we can put ourselves into the minds of the editor in the 40s and 50s. What was the intent?

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

I think these debates are ever-changing. At the time it was probably radical to acknowledge and embrace and be excited by Aboriginal ideas. So I absolutely understand that it's turned into appropriation and in retrospect you can see it as problematic. But I think the impulse was about trying to assert a non-European, trying to say that being Australian is not just being a European.

But I have, preparing for this panel, thought about covers I've been responsible for as a publisher in the 90s and the 2000s, it didn't come up when I was editor of Meanjin but I do think they are amazing covers and I now look at them with some concern, but I don't feel that claim Christison... Sometimes people talk about the historical context can feel like a copout, I wouldn't go that far.

The same debate comes up around the establishment of Melbourne and the treaty by the Mary Creek and you can say that Jon Batman behaved appallingly but he was one of the only people that acknowledged the Indigenous existence that he went through the theatre of asking for permission.

At least there is some recognition even if that recognition is poor and fails in many ways.

JONATHAN GREEN:

A designer's view on this, WH Chong? Agony striving with an association with modernism but seen in the Australian context with a link to the ancient, it's an interesting juxtaposition.

WH CHONG:

One of the things I looked at was a radio broad cast script by Clem Christison in 1942 and he explains the first cover and it connects to these later cover designs. He says you will have noticed the prints on the cover, they have a meaning. Originally there were four contributors but in addition they are the footprints of Aboriginal cult heroes leading onward from the Dream Time of long ago.

Further down the article... I think this kind of addresses the signifying style he wanted. He says later on, "it is surely obvious that if the majority of Australians possess a balanced love of things Australian, but not a narrow bigoted chauvinist sense there would be no longer a need for R movements as Meanjin." He is distinguishing Australian thought from European, I think.

All these kind of Aboriginal-inspired designs, which is what they are, is really in good faith. And I think it is very problematic to go back and have a retrospective kind of reconstructed view of these things

because you couldn't even say those things in 1949 like on one of the covers on the left, you can think things but you could not have said that then or maybe you couldn't even have thought them then, I don't know.

All we can say is do they look like somebody tried their best to do something which they thought was good and interesting or not? And I think that is about all you can make the judgement on. Christopher Marshall Mark --

CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL:

Can I say, looking at those recovers, what strikes me, yes, to a degree they are appropriations of you know, Aboriginal Australian ideas, but actually more broadly than that, you could say they are primitivist, I think they are going beyond, they are trying to go beyond the specific.

This actually speaks to Meanjin in terms of its aspirations more broadly as well, they are not trying to, yes they're trying to be Australian but they are trying to go beyond that, that great modernist thing of stripping something back to its essence and I guess in this instance, connecting the essential primitive with all the problematics that that has, with this idea of a new country, trying to again, with all the problematics that involves, trying to define itself in the middle of the 20th century.

For example, on the left, the 1949 issue, I totally fascinating artist, Russian immigrant who came to Australia in this really fantastically interesting artist if you haven't heard of him, I recommend you go and look at his work, he is a fantastic and interesting character.

I am not sure he is specifically referencing Australian Indigenous imagery that, I think it is much more likely to be kind of Pacific Rim may be puppet New Guinea, I am not sure. -- Papua New Guinea.

This is really interesting, I think temporary debates need to be applied to these images but they are really complex, dense lead things and there is a lot more going to them they just that. And I just wanted to really make that point.

W.H. CHONG:

I just want to add something, I think that is a really good and true and accurate remark. I still think it is, like Christopher says, more specific -- more pacific maybe, but there is a modernist within Meanjin, in this cover it is well manifested. So we see something like Joy Hester I in the Arrow forms, but the primitivist which is a funny word, but that really is what has invented our modern world in at least modern art if nothing else.

So if Picasso will was an Australian artist in 1949, you can only imagine what he would have done with all this possible inspirations. And this is clearly a relation to a distant descendant from all his work with

not only African kind of shapes and designs and icons but also all the South Pacific things they had in the Paris museums at the time.

It really is connected to that whole global, modernist thing.

JONATHAN GREEN:

By the time Picasso did the modernist, in 1958, more innocuous Illouz should he says. If we go to the next slide. -- Illustrative

Here we see Arthur Boyd, a piece that was commissioned for the journal. On Daniel, this shows us perhaps this is the real meeting of this local Modernist artistic presence with that of the literary, this is a meeting of worlds here.

DANIEL HUPPATZ:

I would agree with that and I think it is interesting then that Meanjin started off pretty much as a poetry journal but then by the 1950s, had a much broader agenda whereby you had people like Bernard Smith and Robin Boyd writing about Australian culture in a much more general sense.

I think it becomes a much broader context then within Australian visual culture. Certainly with someone like Mark Boyd being included -- Arthur Boyd being included within that. Sophie wanted to add something to that earlier.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

What I wanted to do was commend your article, some of your subjects -- commend your article on the subjects because about appropriation issue, he said it really sexing clay, at least to think of colonialism as something that was to Wallis challenge but in fact colonisation has different layers and different experiences.

So back in the 1940s we are proving that Australia is different to Europe, we are setting a particular identity and now there is an understanding that white Australians also enacted colonialism over First Nations people say it was much more tiered and complex.

So our understanding of colonisation has become much more sophisticated I think since the time of these covers and I thought your article was really interesting on these points, thank you.

JONATHAN GREEN:

An emerging understanding as well, I wonder if the image from 1949 as well, where there is a freedom for the European immigrants to deal with Indigenous culture in this country rather than treating it with the invisibility of the Anglo colonists.

W.H. CHONG:

Maybe it is more global than that by now in the artists thinking, I am wondering if Christopher will agree with me that the Arthur Boyd image we see here is not actually I think an appropriation or inspired by Aboriginal design but it is appropriate in Western classical culture.

This could easily be an image would see in one of Picasso's portfolios. This is derived very much from Picasso and I don't think it is Aboriginal at all. I think the artist probably thought we have free range now, let's just do whatever. Christopher Marshall Mac --

CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL:

I definitely love this image, it is one of my favourites, and a Strong said, it is speaking to the sense of poignancy and European almost old master culture, thinking of all the prints and roaring is departments -- print and drawings Department of museums which have been bombed during the war.

Boyd sees himself as a modernist but absolutely as a custodian of that great cultural condition -- tradition of Western draughtsmanship. This image to be is very, even further back and the Modernists, to me, it is reminiscent of Rembrandt or in terms of the actual subject, it is like, it reminds me of a sacrifice, the sacrifice of Abraham where he is asked in the old testament to sacrifice, treated by many great artists like Caravaggio, where he is asked to, the patriarch is asked to sacrifice his son which of course he does, he is ready to do and just as he is about to slip his poor son's throat, the angel comes down and says no, it is OK, God recognises that you will do anything for him and here is a Ram stuck in the bushes at you can sacrifice instead.

Boyd has taken that idea and turned it around and made it about the kind of, the beast within as it were, the best deal nature within that whole cultural tradition and he has made the RAM himself or itself is now trying to free this thing that has been, whatever it is that has been trucked in the thickets but at the same time there is, not for bidding but that the steel aspect of the RAM itself, towering and alluring -- looming over this creature.

So the vulnerability of the creature is juxtaposed with the RAM. And it has this whole sense of ambiguity" Nancy and kind of -- poignancy and loss of that culture coming from Europe as experienced in far off Australia in the early 1950s and I will stop now, but I really love the way the Meanjin, there is a whole fascinating discussion about how that changes over time and they love the way has been tilted on its side and so you have this beautiful juxtaposition of this kind of ancient craft of draughtsmanship juxtaposed with this modernist typography you know, design cover technique, it is a beautiful image.

JONATHAN GREEN:

The slipping of the masthead, it makes that cover.

W.H. CHONG:

The RAM is Australia and the Meanjin is the poor little bird waiting to be beaten up.

JONATHAN GREEN:

I think we can move to the next slide. Daniel, Chris, before you started, this is a superb moment in cultural cringe, but perhaps you can talk to us about this one.

DANIEL HUPPATZ:

I'd be inclined to agree, it does have the cringe nature that you might associate with some of the critics of the 1950s and again I would think of Robin Boyd who did have some association with Meanjin at this time. Who is writing about those issues you know, the inadequacy of Australian culture.

It seems to me to be this almost characters on a deserted island which I suppose on the one hand is the settler, Colonial ideal continuing but on the other hand it is this sense of distance from cold shower, perhaps. Or maybe the culture is coming with the coming of the Olympic Games in 1956.

The world is coming to us, finally. Something like that. Jonathan Green. Let's

JONATHAN GREEN:

Let's skip forward, and for viewers, the Q&A function, feel free to use it, and as Amanda has done, please ask, and weekend not hit Chong very well with the banging. Just passing that on. This, Chris, is quite remarkable pair, there is a confidence here of Meanjin suddenly showing that as we move into the 1960s. You are muted, Chris.

CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL:

What a fascinating artist, he came out again, with European immigrants who came from, studied in the fine arts in bustled off straight after the Second World War before coming to a strayed. -- Australia. His classmates included people like Guenther grass, and one of the great contemporary art laboratories of post-war art, jacquard richer joseph boys, significant figures.

Coming all the way up over here to Australia, grants him this incredible freedom to do these wild covers. He is a really amazing figure that should be much better appreciated. The one on the right is described as, I have actually downloaded, there is an article in the 1966 issue by Doctor Earl Hackett, an Adelaide pathologist who is really into this because he calls it electronic painting.

He says, I will quote the first paragraph to give you a sense of that sort of times we have moved into, "Electron quote -- electron beams moving onto a fluorescent screen can be deflected by variant

magnetic fields, they can traverse ice in television reception or they can trace out the familiar mathematical curves but (unknown term) figures as an Aust telescope goes on, it goes on".

He is really excited by the electronic paintings. What an innovative moment that we have got into. For some reason Meanjin, maybe the editors and designers could tell us more, but they got into a abstraction in a big way and seem to embrace it from this period onward.

JONATHAN GREEN:

Speak to that, Sophie, as a current editor my covers are far more obvious. But we are in a moment here where it is a really bold gesture.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

Seeing the second cover, the photographic one, reminded me of one of the things that excited me about being the editor of Meanjin, I love the history of the design that the magazine captured and the covers and occasionally ran articles about some of the artists, we had an article about Joseph Stanislaus Ostojka-Kotkowski.

I wanted it to be as much a conversation about the magazine's past as well as commenting on current events or even what was in the magazine in an obvious way, we wanted to some extent, given it is a E magazine, to be about them and the artist, not just about the actual moment, it's more about general asthmatics at play. I'm not quite sure what point I'm trying to make but the abstraction is important.

JONATHAN GREEN:

There is a magazine cover which is making anaesthetic proposition, it's not talking to you directly about content, but putting itself into an aesthetic frame. As a designer,

WH CHONG:

Are you speaking to me? It is a design philosophy. You have to decide what you are trying to do with your publication at any given moment and if you have a design principle, say a long lasting one like National Geographic With a Yellow Frame and an Image of the natural world drawn from an article inside you can live with that for a long time.

Meanjin, as we have seen already is a very movable feast, even within the reign of one editor.

JONATHAN GREEN:

And this is still the founding editor here, Clem Christesen.

WH CHONG:

Has anyone spoken to Clem Christesen in the past about this? He may have been saying, go for it, do

what you like because we have a platform.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

My understanding is that the earlier editions, were very much represented, he was very hands-on and moving into the '60s, he was more relaxed about other people, possibly designers or artists, bringing their own, being allowed a voice in the conversation he was trying to set.

WH CHONG:

The voice is modernist.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

Yes, his personality was apparent in the 60s and they may have freed up. I know Jim used to talk about that.

WH CHONG:

What period was Jim the editor?

JONATHAN GREEN:

He became the next editor after Clem Christesen Mac.

WH CHONG:

I bumped into the street with him one day and asked him about the issue, the relationship between the editor and the designer doing his time and he said it was a case where – he meant this in a loose way – I don't want to misrepresent him as he a fastidious person, he said I would think of an idea, by which I understood him to mean a general notion, very occasionally a theme, and he would say to the designer, which is what Jim was, let's do this.

In other words it was a pretty free hand. Jim seemed to be very un-fussed about not having control, other than a veto.

JONATHAN GREEN:

I think this one is hilarious. Daniel, the shock of the arrival of Captain Cook.

DANIEL HUPPATZ:

I think this represents the lastgasp of that original ideal of the appropriation of Aboriginal imagery. I suppose the last clasp of the editorship of Clem Christesen. It is significant that he has Douglas and and who has done many covers for Meanjin up to this point and who I believe Clem Christesen new in Brisbane right in the beginning in the 1940s.

We have this juxtaposition, the way that generation saw it, between the white settler, Captain Cook ideal, and trying to integrate Aboriginal art. But I think this is the last gasper of that sort of idea that you don't see again in Meanjin, thankfully, I guess.

WH CHONG:

I want to say in formal terms it is a really crummy cover.

JONATHAN GREEN:

Let's go to the next slide.

WH CHONG:

Jim, who is the editor in this period, we had an issue about women, he said. And I told the designer, come up with something about women and let's make it pink.

JONATHAN GREEN:

I think the objective has been fulfilled. Sophie?

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

I am back. There is a vagina on the screen, I disappeared and everything went crazy.

JONATHAN GREEN:

Perhaps an unsubtle attempt...

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

It certainly tells you that it is a magazine about women and the arts.

WH CHONG:

I would say the person responsible for this is Vivienne Binns and not Jim Davidson.

JONATHAN GREEN:

It is actually called 'girl on a stick, aged 16', it's getting worse.

CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL:

I think this is terrific. Say it loud, in your face, we don't care. I think it's terrific. Vivienne Binns did some poster-like community arts and this issue has an amazing one.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

As a woman I am not in any way offended by this, I think it's fantastic.

Note: The Vivienne Binns image discussed is not 'Girl on a stick' but an untitled image for the edition's cover

WH CHONG:

Very memorable.

CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL:

In the issue itself we have an interview with an important feminist critic at that stage conducted by and Stephen now at the University of Sydney, and an article by Janine Burke, important curator and art historian who did work on Joy Hester and artwork by not just Vivienne but Dawn Simon and Erica Gilchrist. It's a terrific issue.

But it shows that shift, doesn't it, from the '60s Meanjin which was a cultural product in itself, it didn't tell you what it was about, to now we've got our finger on the pulse of contemporary issues. The previous Meanjin wasn't so much marketing itself as that. The sort of rawness of that image reminds me of things like becoming of punk music, DIY, fanzines made by photocopiers. It's the idea of the issue of the present rather than the slightly stately Meanjin of the past that sort of stood above everything and represented culture. Getting down into culture itself.

JONATHAN GREEN:

Moving away from the Clem Christesen thing of the obsession with an Australian place and an international movement of modernism. Chris, you go through those contents, digging into purely Australian thought around things, very particular to this place. Davidson is making a statement about the intent of the magazine.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

In a way you have said what I was can say, to build on the point, this is not the cover that, it shows that he had a different approach as editor that he said someone to go for it.

JONATHAN GREEN:

Next slide. Chong, talk to us about the visual moment of the 80s, this suddenly feels a part of other themes in our country visually.

WH CHONG:

I think this is clearly a post-punk period. The one on the right, ha ha ha, is a joint editorship between Judy Brett and a well-known clever man of some kind.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

Was it Jon Pindar?

WH CHONG:

No. Someone who is involved in comedy and theatre, something like that. I think this is an expression

of the times.

JONATHAN GREEN:

Don Watson was the co-editor.

WH CHONG:

This is how it felt and it's pretty cool. Hot.

JONATHAN GREEN:

Daniel, we are jumping around so much in terms of design. Maybe the masthead represents it as much as anything else, that sort of indecisiveness around the nature of the publication. Is that rare or unusual? Chong has mentioned National Geographic as a benchmark of the static.

DANIEL HUPPATZ:

That was his point in a previous conversation and I feel like I am stealing it, the way the masthead moves around through the years is interesting. It doesn't seem to be stable. But following what others have said about the 1980s, I think there are a lot of interesting covers during this period and it's hard to put your finger on a particular style, which I think says a lot about the error of post-modernism, a lot of pastiche, bright poppy colours, references to popular culture, that seem to occur through the 1980s.

I think that is reflected in some ways here. The content of the journal also, certainly writers and artists involved are interested in things like popular culture that is happening all around them. We can see that in these images.

WH CHONG:

It is also evidence of this being a pre-branding era. They won't concerned with marketing. They just did whatever.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

I wanted to make the comment, looking at the byline, one of the things I love about the engine, -- Meanjin, if you look at the covers, you have certainly pretty significant history of Australian design in that kind of list of names and the range of work that it covers. And to repeat the earlier point I made, one of the things I thought was amazing about a so-called literary magazine being such a significant design, or artefact about design but also in itself such a significant kind of journal.

W.H. CHONG:

You are right, Keith is a real intellectual, these covers were not put together by any Joe blow.

JONATHAN GREEN:

Next slide. Again, I have feelings about the 1992, Chris, what is your sense of these, it is pretty compelling 1995 on the right.

CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL:

Amazing topics, but again, I am getting the feeling from these periods, also the 1980s as well, and actually, Sophie, she used the word itself, it feels like we are dealing with, and want to be a magazine rather than a stately journal. You know, the hot button topics, flying out at you here, with incredible diversity of... Look at the different ways they treat the masthead, what are we? What is Meanjin representing visually?

They are quiet, I don't know, again, Chong and others can tell us in more detail how they feel, but it seems radical from a design point of view to just mess around with Meanjin, the title...

JONATHAN GREEN:

Instantaneously at its -- as it changes its format, this is a paperback in physical shape, this is one from that 1992 era, that is something we are not seeing here, Chong, the actual shape of the thing is changing as well as the title of the cover.

W.H. CHONG:

We cannot tell from the screen of course. But I will note as well, the design on the left is another intellectual, the one on the right is by Mary Callahan, an extremely highly regarded designer. And they do have an amount of concentration and thinking beyond the surface now as to why Meanjin goes through this cycle of mastheads.

I just find it very amusing, and I love the way it is so casual and sort of unwarranted about branding things -- not worried

I guess partly because they are primarily a literary vehicle, they are not fast really, they are just saying you know who we are, we are just putting on a different dress today. They are doing hope will be dragged.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

I agree with Chong, and we will get to the one cover from my era, because I had something I wanted to say about that cover, I will hold on until then.

W.H. CHONG:

No, because it is 12:49 PM now.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

Sorry, Jonathan, I doubt the chair.

JONATHAN GREEN:

Let's go to the next slide.

CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL:

These two images are fantastic.

JONATHAN GREEN:

Tell us about your brief job...

W.H. CHONG:

I will accept the blame for this period of covers, and in a discussion with Iain Britain, the incoming editor, you also notice that maybe the magazine changes everytime, the way it looks everytime it comes on, was that we were coming out of a period not long after the one that has led away from the screen, coming out of a period of quiet anonymous graphics. Without any real focus figurative representation of anything in particular.

One of the things we talked about was let's just put real people on it, images of photographers or really good pictures, curator and, and let's say this is a magazine written by people and hear other people. Here are the people living around you right now, they are actually writing this stuff that you love to read.

We wanted to really make it, you know, I guess in a way, it is not that distanced from what Andy Warhol did with interview, he is saying here is celebrities, group with it. Not just a celebrity thing, but here are the real people who are the writers.

JONATHAN GREEN:

And on the Nick Cave edition, I love the (inaudible), the object (inaudible).

CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL:

It is a wonderful juxtaposition, the male Agro of Nick Cave with his T-shirt showing gun violence, aviator shades, versus the wonderful Annette, openly happy about who she is and sharing that with us. It is almost a random bringing together of these two images, but I think that is Australian, the eyes of Australian gender right there.

JONATHAN GREEN:

And the beginning of what we recognise as a conversation were filled out in our moment as well, we start to see it in the shape of modern conversations around place and who we are as people. But

maybe take the next slide.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

I have made several of the points I wanted to already, one I saw the magazine being about design, and it was a really, to some extent, through to Stewart and saying do what you will. And each covers a different illustration, approaches, there is a kind of branding and I just wanted to talk about the context in which I made the design, the decisions to run the covers the way we did during my time.

And that was that we were in the context of there being a lot of political discussion about the role of the magazine itself and to, was an independent enough, who owned it, did have its own voice? Whether or not I was affected in doing it, it was partly posturing saying, we continue to be autonomous doing our own thing.

I suppose reacting to a private internal conversation between management, which I know was something Iain certainly, you know, had struggled with the board, and I had those struggles and try to resolve them in different ways. So there is some kind of you know, backroom chat to some of the decisions made that I understand wouldn't be at all available and a strong read the comment, each -- as child made the comment, each person trying to make varying thing, and we talked about Clem Christesen and his decade as editor, and since then it has been rolling, I mean there has been constant change.

Suddenly you have a run of editors with krait different approaches working with -- why different approach is working with different designers in dealing with different particular moments.

JONATHAN GREEN:

There is a thing here in the early 2000 of having to make a case of the object itself. All the conversations going online.

W.H. CHONG:

But one of the things which is a secret essence here, is a lot of this stuff is affected by things like budget. And we can't see that happen. We can't see what is going on there. And for instance, during the time I was doing it, like eight years, I did it for nothing because I did it as friendship for Iain the editor.

They didn't have the budget for this and that and the other, they paid fees to the photographers and so on and we got what we could, but there was no money for any of this stuff and were trying to make something that was sleek and nicely done and this is like money's worth but you are doing it on nothing.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

That is a really important point, I think.

JONATHAN GREEN:

And now of course Meanjin continue struggle financially, but it is generally -- generously supported by the University, and it pays its writers. It is inconceivable that something that you then take out the market to sell would depend on the kindness of people of talent.

W.H. CHONG:

During the time I was there, there was a constant sense that Meanjin could fold at any minute. Money was not a little issue. Not even money, just the desire to maintain this thing. This heritage.

JONATHAN GREEN:

Next slide if we can. This is the one which completes the journey around Indigenous appropriation, has a background, this is one that I edited and Josh Durham who edited the covers since I began in 2015, we thought that is clever, we thought to ourselves, and we began, we have been publicised.

There was a media protest from various voices, First Nations voices online about here you are, magazine which is appropriated its title from Turrbal language and which is describing the movement which is as many argue appropriation of people of colour. And combining these things in one visual statement.

So, it was quite controversial. And to the delight of the Australian Right, we were being hounded by the Australian left which is a thing that they tremendously enjoy. It is not a particularly clever or brilliant cover, but it was certainly significant.

W.H. CHONG:

It is memorable. I am very, very tempted to step in because my field... I want to defend this a little bit. We have seen how much the Meanjin logo Koreans across -- careens across, and this is a play on the content, Time magazine is a very old thing that has often played with this. This logotype masthead depending on the issue people fool around with it, this takes it quite a bit further.

And I said about the earlier covers, it was done in good faith, not to offend anyone per se but to make a little graphic joke. I would not effectively set was a bad joke.

JONATHAN GREEN:

I would say this breach the good faith and was a little too uneven.

W.H. CHONG:

What it was (inaudible) in good faith we don't mean to do something.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

and also commission, you should ask permission, people might say it yes or no.

W.H. CHONG:

They did not ask for permission to use Meanjin in the first place.

JONATHAN GREEN:

That is something that needs to be addressed and we tend to address with Elders in Brisbane, that is an ongoing conversation. But the last slide, perhaps.

CHRISTOPHER MARSHALL:

I think this is a really beautiful cover. I had a fight the other night with my father about defacing or otherwise sculptures of Captain Cook. It is such a topical thing.

And this idea of the eternal ubiquity of Captain Cook versus the obvious contemporary nature of Captain James Cook by Jason Wing. And it's been overlaid over one of those early botanical works on the Endeavour by Sydney Parkinson. It is a wonderful complex and layered work.

It has its finger on the pulse of this contemporary debate about to what degree should we feel free to critically re-examine shibboleths of history and culture, even down to the issue of defacing or not defacing, or what do we do with sculptures.

All their encapsulated in one vivid image by this wonderful artist Jason Wing.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

Who chose the image?

JONATHAN GREEN:

This is discussed by the author Paul Daly in his piece, how these things flow. As Chris suggests, the inspired part from the point of view of the designer is using the original 1770 artwork as the background and bringing those two things together is a bit of a statement.

If we can leave screen share for our farewells. That is our one hour, more than up, I am afraid. We managed to get to the contemporary, so well done to you all, dear panellists. Thank you for joining us, those watching, thank you for sharing your lunch hour with us, WH Chong, Daniel Huppatz, Christopher Marshall and Sophie Cunningham, I am Jonathan Green.

We have another of these on March 24, it will be me chatting with Jim Davidson, the editor who followed Clem Christesen. Letters to the editor as its working title, I think it will look at some of the treasures from the archive held at Melbourne University but also paint a bit of a picture of that extraordinary man Clem Christesen who founded the magazine in 1940 and edited it until 1974.

WH CHONG:

Please ask Jim Davidson about the the vagina cover.

JONATHAN GREEN:

I shall take that as my solemn trust to do exactly that. Thank you all. If you search around on the University of Melbourne website for Meanjin 80, there is a wonderful site that has been put together with more detail about Meanjin covers and the people who put them together, at the Bodleian library ground floor display, celebrating this octogenarian magazine.

It means we will get our COVID jabs before a lot of other people, I suspect. Thank you, all.

SOPHIE CUNNINGHAM:

Thank you.