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Museums Australia Victoria
A Review: The Art Game Symposium
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Art crime, theft, fraud and trafficking were themes of focus at a one-day symposium recently held at the University of Western Sydney.

The Art Game Symposium featured speakers from around Australia and the USA addressing critical matters in the protection of our cultural heritage and reviewing where we are at (as guardians of such) in developing the means of carefully assessing what's in our public collections and how to identify those who seek to market problematic works. Quite rightly the NGA gaff in purchasing the *Dancing Shiva* was front and centre in discussions of due diligence (where was the gallery's provenance checks?), as was a case study outlining the steps taken by the NSW Fraud and Cybercrime Squad in investigating and charging disgraced art dealer Ronald Coles.

If that wasn't enough excitement, the Program Manager from the *FBI Art Theft Program* in Washington D.C. – Dr Bonnie Magness-Gardiner – provided us with an exceptional outline of how the National Stolen Art File and Art Crime Team goes about their fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property. Her presentation gave all of us some real 'food for thought' as well as action strategies to bring the same models of identification of problematic works to the forefront.

It was pleasing to see the Australian Federal Police Force actively engaging in the symposium by sending several representatives along and we were most privileged to have an outstanding *Opening Address* by Nick Kaldas, Deputy Commissioner of Field Operations with the NSW Police Force who encapsulated the main thrust of this gathering so eloquently. Professor Chappell from the *Institute of Criminology* reminded us that the prosecution of art criminals remains a rare event today and Associate Professor Robyn Sloggett balanced his argument by outlining the approach to bringing an art fraud case forward and how to develop more effective art fraud prevention.

One thing we were all left contemplating at the end of the day is how we can best prepare ourselves to review lost, stolen or fraudulent works and a unanimous response was the establishment of a register, much like the international database – the *Art Loss Register*, which has more than 450,000 items listed. If we can develop a similar model here, we are well on our way to the first vital steps in identification and resolution.