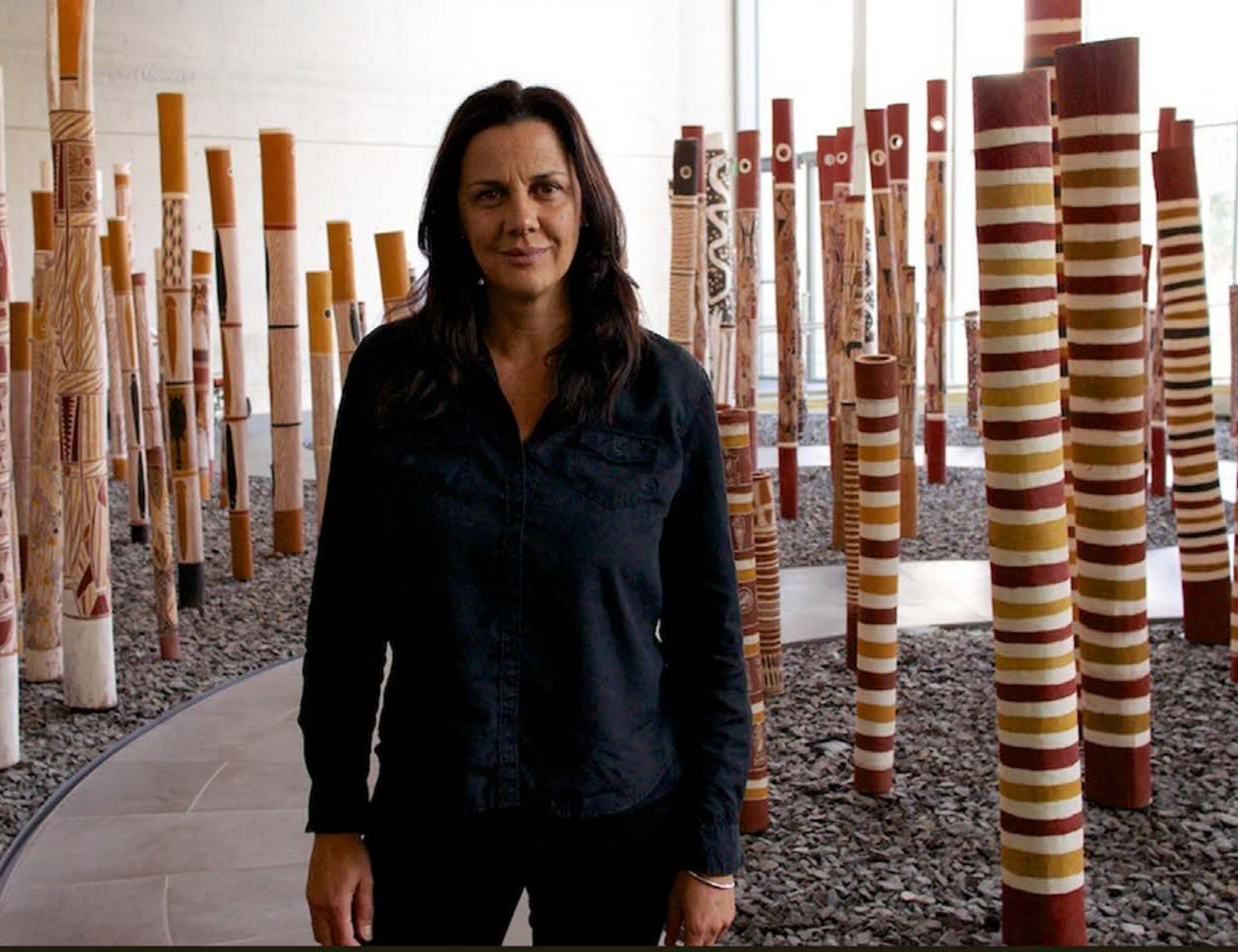

art+soul Series Two

A **STUDY GUIDE** BY PAULETTE GITTINS

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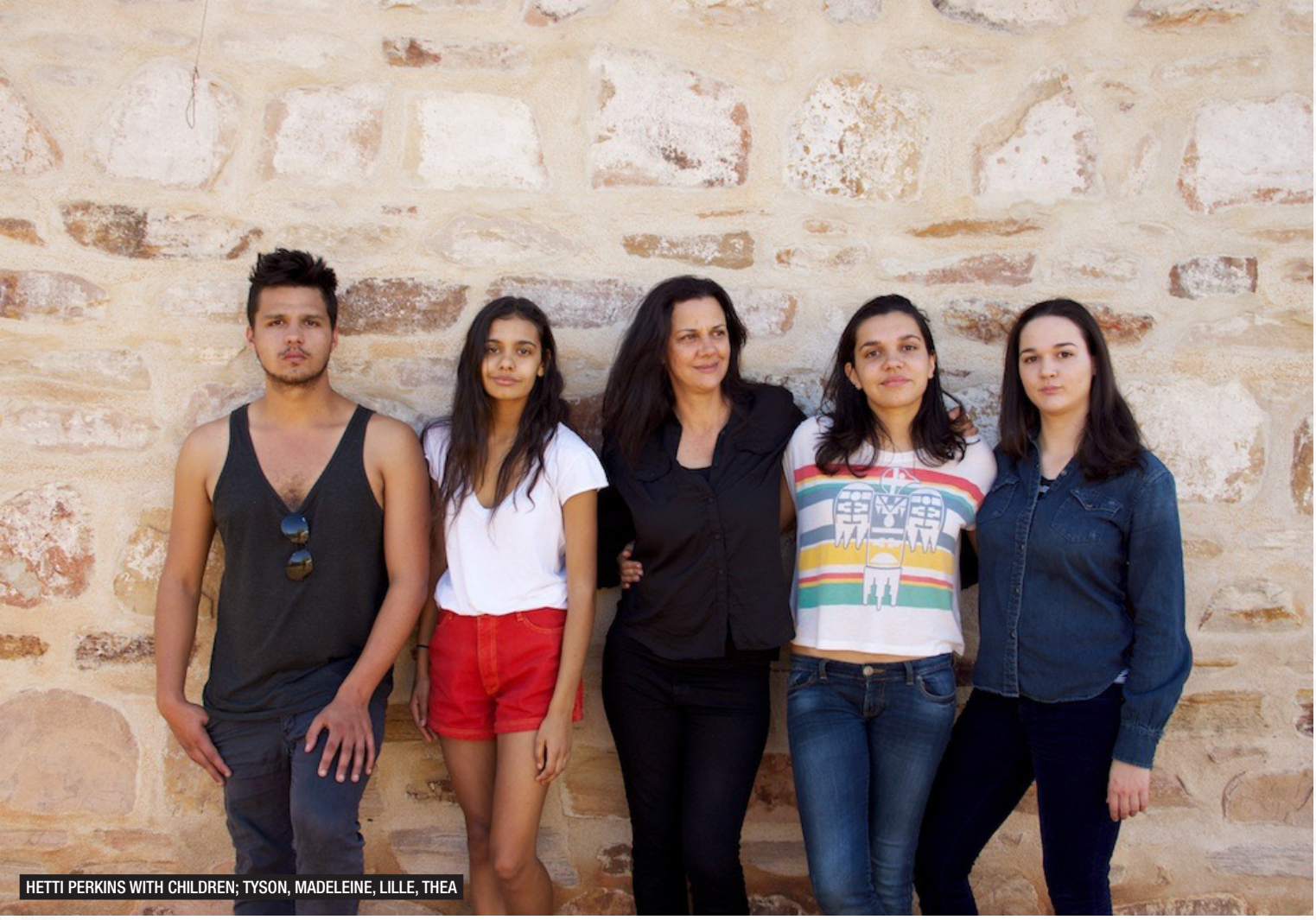

HETTI PERKINS WITH CHILDREN; TYSON, MADELEINE, LILLE, THEA

COMMEMORATION, CELEBRATION. 'WE'RE MAKING SURE WE'RE HEARD'. THE VOICE OF CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS ART IN *ART + SOUL.*

» INTRODUCTION

The Australian landscape. From the Torres Strait Islands to the forests of Tasmania.

Its colours, shapes, textures, its uniqueness of plants, animals, terrain. Its ancient yet continuous, thriving, vibrant culture.

Captured on film as the credits roll for *art + soul*, a documentary produced for ABC TV in 2014 and following the original series of 2009–2010, this vast, enigmatic world is the country of our Indigenous people and the bedrock of this series.

Country. A unique, intensely special word for the people of the oldest living culture on the planet. As the voiceover of narrator Hetti Perkins tells us:

This ancient land is our heartland. It is our flesh and blood. Our culture springs from and binds us to our country … Our art is a commemoration of our history, but is also a celebration of our survival, and it is the legacy which we will, in turn, pass on to our children.

This fascinating three-episode series is an epic and moving journey into Aboriginal and Torres Strait culture and heritage in all its diversity and complexity, its expression in many art media and a revelatory look at art practice.

Whether outback, rural or urban, contemporary Indigenous artists are communicating their culture, using a new 'language' that allows them to explore this culture within the context of society today, manifesting the richness of ancient traditions while still protecting their secrets. Their mediums aren't limited to acrylic or oil paints and ochre on canvas, of course – they're also using photography, video, graphic design, light, shells, installation and public art

A SCREEN AUSTRALIA and HIBISCUS FILMS PRODUCTION in association with THE ACT GOVERNMENT, SCREEN ACT, SCREEN TERRITORY and the NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA
Developed and produced in association with
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PRODUCED BY HIBISCUS FILMS <http://www.hibiscusfilms.com.au>

DIRECTOR STEVEN MCGREGOR, AND MURRAY LUI

mediums. And, as we will see, from filmmakers to sculptors, from painters to artisans, all artists tell a story – an Aboriginal story. A story of country.

Over the course of three episodes we will be looking at the works of a broad range of these artists, listen to them share the influences that have inspired them in their work and take particular note of the sociopolitical messages that inform so much of their art.

» INTERVENING THROUGH ART

Throughout *art + soul*, there are occasional references to the term 'intervention', a highly charged word synonymous with the 2007 Federal Government package of changes to welfare provision, law enforcement, land tenure and other measures, which 'intervened' in the sociocultural lives of the Northern Territory's Indigenous residents. A highly controversial political move, this was motivated by government reports of child sexual abuse and other serious issues in the Territory. Many of the artists featured in this series speak of their own personal 'intervention' in the lives of their people through their work, teaching, telling stories and cautionary tales, illustrating the long history of damage to their culture and social structures, and yet celebrating the beauty and potential of their people.

This series of *art + soul* goes further than the first, allowing more engagement with the themes and is much more political. In part, that's because it predominantly focuses on living artists, spends more time with fewer artists, and includes in the line-up many city-based practitioners embedded in modern society.

The old saying 'the personal is political' resonates in the works of many of these talented painters and artisans, printmakers, light sculptors, shell-workers, filmmakers and others, celebrating principally the survival of people and culture. Their art also acts as a window into the pain and pride of being at once part of the world's oldest continuous living culture and part of modern Australia.

And the first work of Indigenous art we are introduced to?

Situated in the heart of the nation, the NGA – the National Gallery of Australia, in Canberra – is home to the *Aboriginal Memorial*, a forest of two hundred hollow log coffins created by the artists of Ramingining. This imposing, powerful installation commemorates the bicentennial in 1988 in both artistic and political terms, it venerates 'all our people since 1788 who lost their lives defending our land. These silent sentinels are a profound tribute to our fallen.'

The new wing of the NGA is devoted to the art of Indigenous Australians – 'our community, our culture, our country,' says Hetti, '(celebrating) our status as the first people of this land on the national stage'.

» OUR PRESENTER & GUIDE

'Art is the voice of our people. This country is in our DNA. Its essence is something we carry with us always, no matter where our lives may lead.' – Hetti Perkins

Hetti Perkins, daughter of the famed Aboriginal spokesman and activist Charles Perkins, has been a curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art over many years. 'The whole approach (to this documentary) was artist-led,' declares Hetti when speaking of the impetus to *art + soul*, but it is clear to us as a viewing audience that her deep knowledge of the subject matter underpins every aspect of the series – from the choice of artists, to the questions she puts to them, to how she contexualises the art, always with that same perspective: how Indigenous art of the past identifies individual and particular communities, cultures and customs, and how modern Indigenous art both links to that past and reflects the modern world. After all, as light sculptor Jonathan Jones observes, 'you can't be the world's oldest living culture while standing still'. Traditional ideas, themes and motifs can and are being reinterpreted in contemporary art – and this keeps the culture alive.

To return to Hetti: her childhood in the nation's capital, Canberra, was the scene in the 1960s and 1970s of an ongoing political struggle for recognition as the first Australians. 'We were strangers in our own land,' she reflects; her father 'fought this battle on many fronts.' The famous gesture of 'the tent embassy' was a rallying point, set up on the very doorsteps of Parliament House. Throughout this series, Hetti will be occasionally referencing her own family history as a means of showing us all those commonalities shared by Indigenous people Australia-wide.

» ART AS POLITICS

'We know we cannot live in the past, but the past lives in us.' – Charles Perkins

Indigenous artists have been at the forefront of this struggle for recognition. As cultural activists, they have used their art to overcome prejudice and celebrate their pride in their culture. In *art + soul*, a diverse group of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists reveal how their art practice is driven by culture and heritage, political and personal preoccupations, dreams and imagination.

But the desire and demand for recognition as the first people of the Australian continent is not a modern phenomenon. Before our narrator introduces us to the artists in this series, we are introduced to an historical hero: Pemulwuy, one of the first 'fallen heroes' in the resistance to white settlement and a singular inspiration to contemporary Indigenous people.

Pemulwuy's name, we are told, meant 'earth'. A proud warrior of the Bidjigal clan, he was a brilliant strategist, a man even whose enemies acknowledged his courage, a man prepared to stand up for his people, his country, his culture. But this could not save him; paying the price for defending his land, ultimately he was captured and killed, and shockingly, his head sent to England as a trophy.

Pemulwuy's story is not seen as one of defeat, but rather of courage and inspiration. In the Sydney suburb of Redfern, Pemulwuy has been chosen by a local group of Indigenous artists as a symbol of pride in their identity as Aboriginal people. His spirit lives on, and recently, during the Royal Visit of Prince William, the community presented the prince with a petition to have Pemulwuy's remains returned to Australia.

So the past informs much of the contemporary perspective of Indigenous Australians, a theme we will come to recognise as pervasive in the array of artworks and artists in *art + soul*. With the National Gallery of Australia's extraordinary Indigenous collection as the springboard, wherever we travel with Hetti – from cities to desert communities, museums and artists' private spaces – the threads running through the art are coloured with connection to land and family, and stories of displacement.

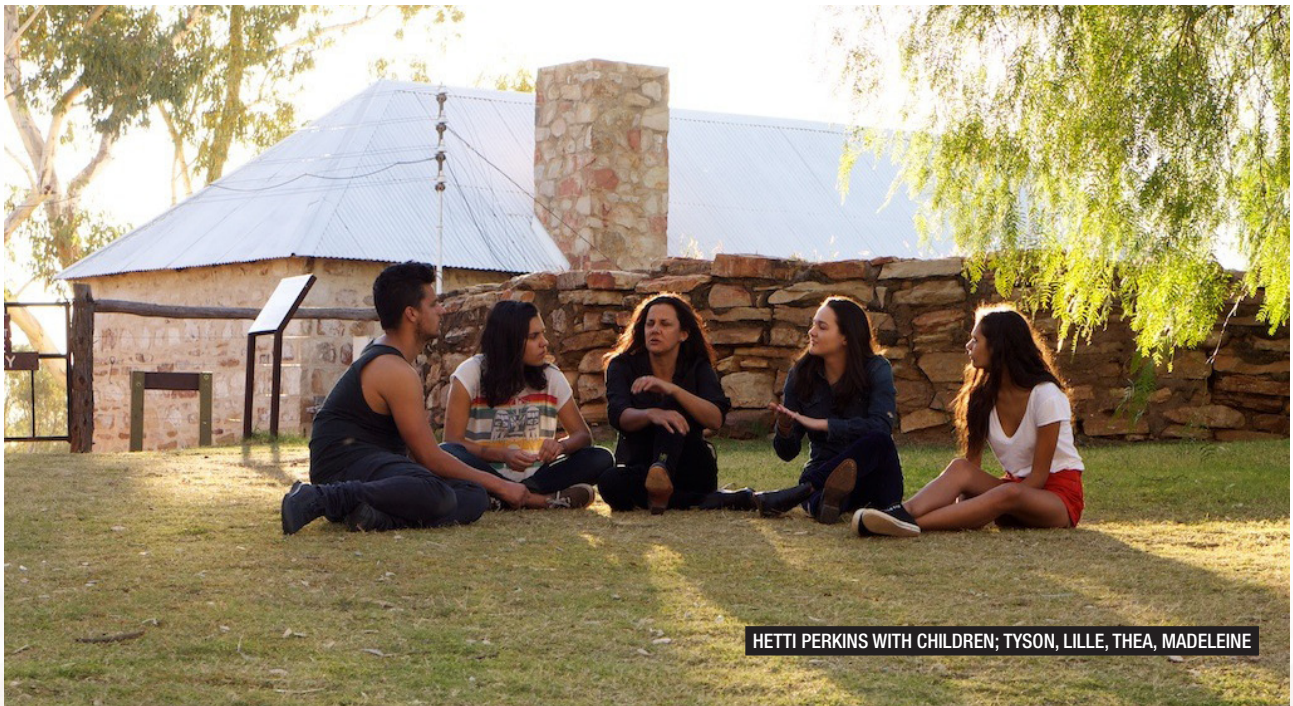
The aims of this study guide are, therefore:

- to introduce us to the world of Indigenous art and artists;
- to consider and comprehend Indigenous art as a means of political, social and cultural expression;
- to place Indigenous art into its historical perspective;
- to engage us in an understanding of the genesis of this art;
- to showcase *art + soul* as curriculum support in various subjects and subject levels;
- to link this text to the National Curriculum criteria;
- to provide a range of activities and tasks relevant to specific classroom use.

This series showcases the emergence of a new style of Indigenous artist – speaking a visual language of our day, keen to engage with the world and the society in which they live, while protecting the ancient traditions and knowledge that underpin their art. *art + soul* provides us with the thrilling diversity and beauty of this art through the prism of Hetti Perkins' insight, passion and knowledge.

» APPENDICES

Over the course of this series, a number of historical, social, political and artistic references are made that might require some clarification and explanation. This study guide will provide an appendix at the end of each episode's synopsis in order to provide a fuller understanding of all ideas and issues examined.



HETTI PERKINS WITH CHILDREN; TYSON, LILLE, THEA, MADELEINE

DANIEL BOYD

Episode One

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

This land is me,
Rock, water, animal, tree …
(Paul Kelly, 'One Night the Moon')

» DANIEL BOYD, PAINTER, VIDEO AND INSTALLATION ARTIST.

The first Aboriginal artist Hetti Perkins introduces us to is Daniel Boyd who, spurred on by the inspiration of Pemulwuy's defiance, challenges the accuracy of colonial history in his paintings and installations.

I find great strength in people like Pemulwuy … he gives me confidence and strength to challenge the way Aboriginal people have been treated in Australia … I chose art to put ideas out there for other people to engage with and hopefully change people's perspectives …

THE *UP IN SMOKE TOUR* INSTALLATION

When studying on a scholarship at the Natural History Museum in London, Daniel explored the massive collection of 30,000 individuals' skulls and skeletons stored in the basement, many of which are the remains of Indigenous peoples. As a response to this confronting experience, his artistic works 'rewrite' Australian history. Daniel's installation: *Up in Smoke Tour* brings to light the often gruesome colonial practice of 'collecting' other cultures and even people – these were 'trophies of empire.' He features a selection of the Museum's archival specimen boxes in this installation.

Up in Smoke Tour reflects on the loss of native cultures recorded in the First Fleet Collection, particularly on the British perception of Port Jackson in 1788 and of the Aboriginal people. It's the way these historic images obscure the original Indigenous identity that interests the artist.

The installation incorporates archival or personal photographs, portraits and museum collections, which he then overlays with the traditional 'dot painting' style as a 'veil' or 'prism' that masks some of the image, so as to throw back questions about the destructive past actions of institutions such as church missions or government policies. Daniel utilises a photograph of his great-great-grandfather, taken away as a slave from his homeland on Pentecost Island to Vanuatu. The connection to landscape, personal history and ancestry means that these images are, in Daniel's words, 'quite loaded'.

These works become a 'lens' through which the world is viewed and distorted, commenting on information known and unknown that, taken together, creates an entire view. Placing these images next to a set of archival boxes, their juxtaposition creates 'a cabinet of curiosities' and tells an Aboriginal story of memory and loss.

UNTITLED (LIFT UP THY PRAYER FOR THE REMNANT THAT IS LEFT)

This painting utilises this 'overlaid' style, incorporating a photograph of the Yarrabah Mission Church in far north Queensland, taken in 1904, and references the role church missions played in the loss of Indigenous cultural inheritance. This was one of the most difficult works Daniel has made 'due to the emotional connection to the arrogance of Christianity'. The picture references many generations of Daniel's family who grew up at Yarrabah Mission, and from what he has heard it was a brutal place. In an interview in the Sydney Daily Telegraph, Daniel reflects:

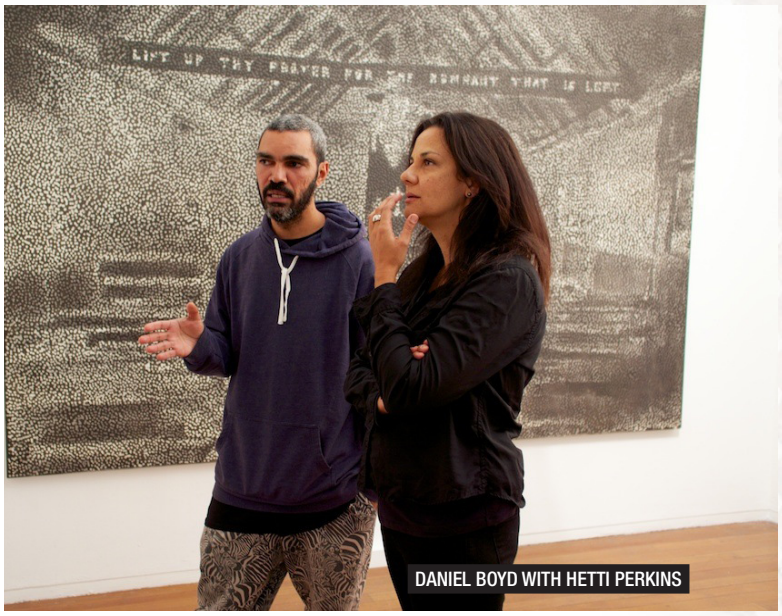
My nan told me if they were caught speaking (their Indigenous) language, their mouths were washed out with soap or they were made to dig out a stump of a tree with their bare hands … The only time the parents were allowed to see their children was on Sunday for a few hours …

NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA EXHIBITION 2007: *KING NO BEARD*

Daniel's exhibition at the NGA addresses the principle of the colonisation of Australia, with clear and obvious references drawn from the art of the colonial period. He and Hetti discuss the 'official' art of the infant colony of New South Wales and its portraits of distinguished citizens (*A Woman of NSW* by painter Maurice Felton, 1840; *A Family Group* by Marshall Claxton, 1853; *Edith, Mrs George Gatehouse* by Benjamin Dutterau, 1834). Interestingly, these portraits are placed among prints and sketches of the Indigenous people who also resided in the newly established colony, yet their representations are completely different. Hetti reflects that they are regarded by colonial artists almost as 'fauna'.

Among these colonial works, the iconic Webber *Portrait of Captain Cook* (1872) comes in for a strong satirisation. Tina Baum – Curator of Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander Art at the NGA – in her expert analysis of Daniel's 2007 exhibition there, tells us:

Daniel's perspective on Australia's colonial history and its impact on its Aboriginal people is not new, but his artistic portrayal of it is. His work is humorous and exciting. His paintings for this exhibition read like pages in a book. Each is part of a story which, chapter by chapter and page by page, chronicles the 'discovery' of Australia by Europeans and their subsequent colonisation of the continent. Boyd introduces themes of piracy to his painted replicas of eighteenth-century portraits of King George III, called King No Beard *(2007), and Governor Arthur Phillip, called* Governor No Beard *(2007), as well as the dramatic apotheosis of Captain James Cook called* Fall and Expulsion *(2006), in a 'spot the difference' kind of series. Key figures in Australia's discovery and growth into nationhood are altered with here an eye patch, there a macaw parrot, and now and then a*

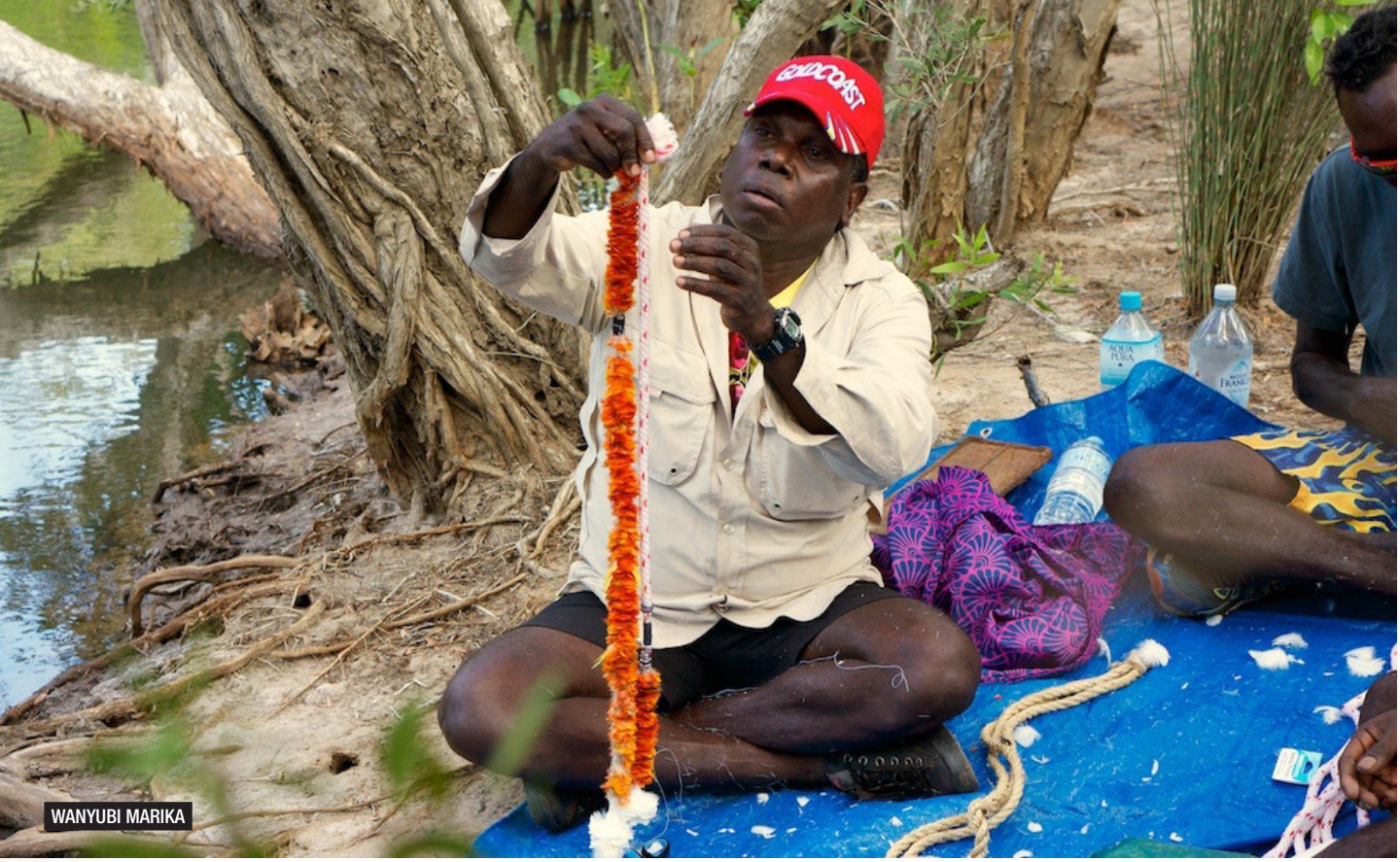


DANIEL BOYD WITH HETTI PERKINS

Jolly Jack emblem. The historical figures of King George III, Cook and Phillip have been extensively discussed and portrayed in terms of their impact on Indigenous peoples throughout the new worlds. Today, hundreds of years later and several continents apart, Boyd's work encourages the idea of parallel dialogues between different cultures through a kind of visual mimicry. The expression 'no beard' refers to an account of Cook's first landing in Australia, when, it is said, Aboriginal people thought he and his men were women, due to their lack of facial hair. While this is funny enough, as a name 'No Beard' is also a reference to the well-known pirate Blackbeard, with whom the clean-shaven King George III, Cook and Phillip have much in common, as in Boyd's terms they all performed acts of piracy.

Within these works are embedded clues to Daniel's political message: the chain of office made of tiny skulls, worn by King George; the portrait of the artist's head contained in a jar, referencing, of course, the tragic treatment of Pemulwuy; the flag, a hybrid of the Union Jack and the 'Jolly Roger' makes the point about 'piracy' clearly. The map of Australia titled *Treasure Island* placed beside these portraits is a replica of one drawn up in 1994 for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and for further information we can turn to Tina Baum once more:

The map shows the 300-plus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups in the country. Before European settlement these clans lived harmoniously with their environment, their culture a rich and intricate heritage grounded in profound knowledge. For an Indigenous person, this map represents sadness and loss as well as strength of culture. Daniel's intent is to remind us that history is not one-sided but multifaceted, and that Australia's Indigenous narratives are as real and as valid as those written in the accepted history books.



WANYUBI MARIKA

A DARKER SHADE OF DARK #1–4, VIDEO INSTALLATION, 2012

A Darker Shade of Dark #1–4, 2012, is a four-channel HD video projection using colour and sound. Daniel's intriguing still-dots paintings are complemented by a moving-dots floor-to-ceiling video installation, which explores the subject of dark matter and takes viewers on a mesmerising cosmic journey which contemplates 'the birth of the universe.'

THE LINK TO ALBERT NAMATJIRA AND *COUNTRY*

Daniel's discussion with Hetti draws on the impact of the famed Indigenous artist Albert Namatjira (1902–1959), who used Western-style materials and painted in a European manner, depicting the landscape of his country. Archival newsreel footage shows us the artist at work and we are informed of the shameful treatment he received at the hands of white government, his denial of the right to build a house for his family with the proceeds of his art, the refusal of permission to buy land for cattle grazing and condemning him to a diminished life despite his international fame. He was bewildered by a society that accepted him as an artist yet would not allow him to live as they did. Daniel recalls his art education as a young student and a telling, powerful linocut made in 1959 by Noel Counihan. In this work, Namatjira is portrayed as nailed to a cross. Counihan reflects:

What non-Aboriginal people didn't understand, or chose not to understand, was that he was painting his country, the land of the Arrernte people. He was demonstrating to the rest of the world the living title held by his people to the lands they had been on for thousands of years.

A pioneer of printmaking in Australia, Noel Counihan was of the Social Realist school of art, and his linocut of Namatjira depicts the grief and sacrifice borne by the artist, presented as Christ in the work. The work is described as 'monumental in its power and unforgettable in its implications.'

Namatjira's reverence for his country depicted in his painting of sacred sites, while unnoticed by white society and art collectors, is nevertheless clearly apparent to Indigenous artists today. In this way, his art is quite subversive, and a 'Trojan horse.'

Albert Namatjira's life and work is the subject of its own detailed focus in the first series of *art + soul*.

The ever-present connection to country in our Indigenous artists is a 'gaze' we are now beginning to interpret in all its cultural meaning.

» WANYUBI MARIKA

'The earth is our flesh. The rivers are our blood and the inside core (of my painting) is our bones.' – Wanyubi Marika

The Yolngu people of north-east Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory have been at the forefront of the land and sea rights movement, and for their artists painting is a political act. Wanyubi's father represented his people in the Supreme Court in Darwin in an ongoing land rights case, and after an early career in teacher training – teaching traditional dance and environmental rehabilitation – and work as a homelands councillor, Wanyubi came to art, trained and inspired by his father.

Wanyubi's art proudly tells stories of law and land. He is a descendant of the Djang'kawu Sisters, who travelled to Arnhem Land, arriving at Yalangbara and continuing west,

giving birth to the clans, creating and naming country and laying down the law that he and his people follow today in initiation ceremonies, meetings of clan leaders, and decisions over rules and governance. These mythic women are revered and represented in bark paintings and striking sculptures made of bark, with ceremonial armbands made of brilliant feathers, symbolising both the feminine and the land. These tall and imposing works are painted with a variety of symbols to show the arrival of streams of people, their meeting and the importance of that meeting.

The integration of different coloured feathers is a feature of Wanyubi's work, representing sand, water, casuarina trees.

MOIETY

The Djang'kawu Sisters set down specific family connections which delineated both sides of the family so that each individual can identify both the maternal and paternal sides of their family. Wanyubi compares these individuations – which are called Yirritja and Dhuwa – to 'yin and yang'. In a culture that is passed down in art and an oral tradition, this history of *moiety* is the most significant and tangible means of connection to one's clan and country, binding all Yolngu people and every object on land and in the sea.

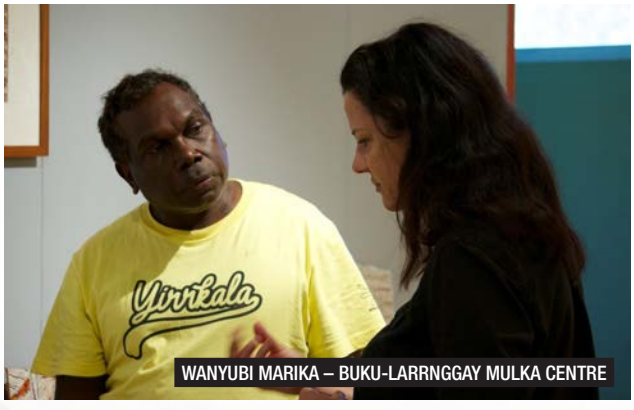
COLOURS OF COUNTRY

As Wanyubi sits down to paint, he acquaints us with the symbolism behind the choice of colours of artists in his region:

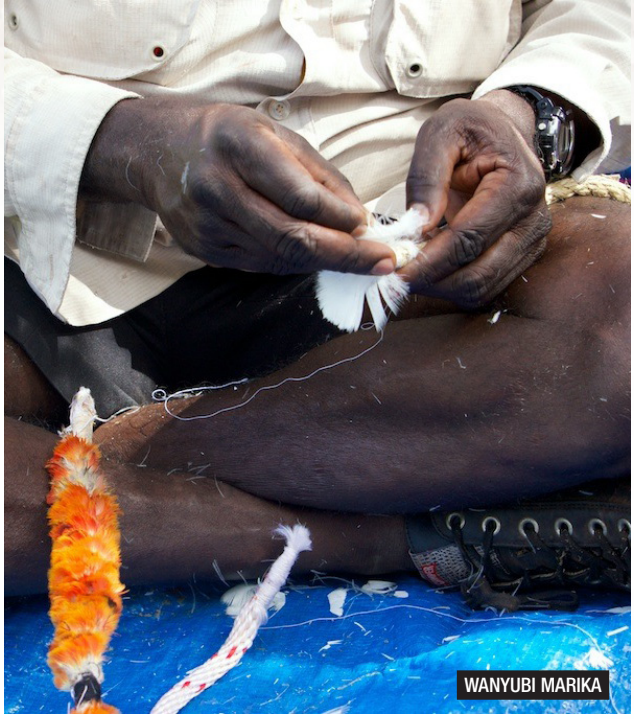
- The main black, red and yellow ochre paints tell the actual story;
- The yellow is a special colour, representing one side of his moiety, and red representing the other;
- White represents the sand of the rivers in the Yalangbara district, and is often used in body painting for ceremonial 'protection'.

PAINTINGS ON BARK

Painting on bark is Wanyubi's medium, and each pattern holds a special meaning. In a public forum held at the University of Melbourne he outlines its spiritual, legal and cultural significance:



WANYUBI MARIKA – BUKU-LARRNGGAY MULKA CENTRE


WANYUBI MARIKA

Bark painting is a message of education, a message that Yolngu have been here before Europeans landed in Australia.

Madayin minytji is a pattern that holds inside our soul, that links to the land, and that identifies every clan and tribe that belongs to their country. Without this minytji, we're nobody. We'd be changing colour, we'd be talking English, but lucky we have all these minytji that is still existing strongly inside us and it can be conveyed by showing you the patterns of the design of the tribe.

The main message that comes from the paintings is about respect and manners, a tribe-to-tribe respecting of each other; they have to come in by a good manner and ask whatever they want to take from the land, they ask for permission.

The imagery shows respect for Yolngu law – to good governance, peace and harmony in that area. We have to do that in respect for the clan, what clan we're entering into and to their law. It's like going into a parliament, to Federal Parliament or Northern Territory Government, whatever government we have, but in a Yolngu way to understand how you want to bring people into your unity, one mind, one heart.

During the cleansing ceremony, the pattern is put on our body. It means respecting good governance and the law of Yolngu, to have a good manner, respecting each other like that …

THE BARK PETITION

Archival film now takes up the story of the Yolngu people and the encroachment of mining interests on their land, compulsorily excised by the Commonwealth Government in 1963. In resistance, the community, including Wanyubi's forefathers, united to proclaim their sovereignty over the Gove Peninsula. They were incensed by decisions taken without them and against them and disturbed that the mining would disturb and restrict access to sacred sites.

This stand resulted in the historic 'Bark Petition' – a document that combines bark painting with text typed on paper. This, Hetti tells us, was 'a brilliant political masterstroke', as it was recognised under Commonwealth law and therefore represents the first formal acknowledgement of Indigenous people in Australian law. (The 1963 petition was the first in a series of bark petitions that have been presented to Australian prime ministers and the Commonwealth parliament over the years: in 1968, 1988, 1998, and 2008.) The 1963 bark petitions – the only ones to have been formally recognised – are exhibited in Parliament House in a ceremonial hall that also houses the Magna Carta and the Australian Constitution. Framing the text in the English language and translation are the Dhuwa and Yirritja clan designs that prove title to country under Yolngu law.

These bark petitions are considered 'founding documents' of our democracy and were a catalyst for a long process of legislative and constitutional reform to recognise the rights of Indigenous Australians. For more information about these important political statements, see 'Bark petitions: Indigenous art and reform for the rights of Indigenous Australians' at the Australian Government website: <http://australia.gov.au/about-australia/australian-story/bark-petitions-indigenous-art>.

The Yolngu clans were fighting against odds that were too great. The mine went ahead. But bloodlines and songlines run deep in this country are these are ties that cannot be broken. Wanyubi's art embodies his past, present and future. It is *his* constitution.

» JONATHAN JONES

'You can't erase the memory of the past; it keeps jutting up.'
– Jonathan Jones

Jonathan belongs to the Kamilaroi/Wiradjuri people of NSW, but he is a city-dwelling Aboriginal man, a Sydney artist – which means, he says, that he is forced to look at the surrounding environment, not his country. He works in varied media, including printmaking, drawing, installation and film. Nevertheless, while engaging with life in Sydney and local knowledge bases, he is still focused on connecting the past to the present. In his major installations, Jonathan explores notions of community from a contemporary, urban, Indigenous perspective. His work reveals a sophisticated understanding of Indigenous arts practice today.

BONDI HEADLAND CARVINGS 'JUT OUT' OF THE PAST

In the coastal Sydney suburb of Bondi, Hetti and Jonathan examine the ancient petroglyph carvings on the cliffs. These are signs of a past people's country, permanently inscribed in the landscape. They make the observation that in Europe, for instance, such a historically significant site would be protected.


JONATHAN JONES

Jonathan observes that everything in Europeanised Australia is, in fact, based on Aboriginal history; thus the past Indigenous world informs the contemporary one. 'The major roads cutting through cities, they're all based on traditional tracks and walkways and paths, so they are just a layering …'. In Jonathan's work, the natural and cultural worlds converge. The traffic of shells and fish on the tides and currents reflects the passage of history and the people borne in its wake.

THE STAR INSTALLATION: *UNTITLED – (EORA SEASONS).*

The work explores the complexities and dualities of physical and metaphysical ideas – open and closed, secular and sacred, seen and unseen, masculine and feminine. The Star is the location for this important example of contemporary Australian new media art – a forty-metre-long, highly innovative LED installation called the *Water Wall*, created by Jonathan with designer Jamie Perrow. This work celebrates traditional Aboriginal knowledge and heritage by conceptualising the seasonal calendar of the surrounding Sydney Harbour environment, translating each season into animated patterns and imagery.

This artwork pays homage to the traditional Aboriginal people of Sydney Harbour, the Eora, and their strong and vibrant seafaring culture, while directly acknowledging the traditional custodians of the site, the Wongal people. (The designs in this installation were inspired by cuttlefish; the movement of the lights mimics their quick, darting movements.)

The work has been created with the collaboration and contribution of local Aboriginal communities, marine biologists, archaeologists, historians and underwater filmmakers. The result is a considered, site-specific artwork that recalls the beauty, marvel and power of Sydney Harbour and its traditional owners.

JONATHAN JONES WITH HETTI PERKINS

Interestingly, Jonathan observes that when working with Ray Barker, a traditional weapon-maker, the craftsman compared Jonathan's light-works to traditional designs incised in ochre on traditional objects (such as boomerangs and shields). Thus ancient information is passed on 'like light that travels and connects us.' And here we can see once more the reinterpretation of ancient cultural artefacts in contemporary art. This, Jonathan remarks, 'keeps the culture alive. Our people have always had to change and work around new conditions and come up with new ideas constantly.' Indigenous culture is, therefore, an 'elastic culture'.

UNTITLED: HEADS OR TAILS: LIGHT SCULPTURE

Carved trees (dendroglyphs) are another source of creative inspiration for Jonathan. These were trees from which Indigenous ancestors would cut away the bark and proceed to carve into the 'skin' of the tree. They were used as burial and ceremonial markers and they form part of the traditional cultural practice of the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi nations of central western New South Wales and lower central Queensland – Jonathan's country. Many of these old trees have disappeared due to fire, early anthropological interference and wilful destruction. Some remain in country, however, locations are usually kept secret from the broader community. This material is highly valuable as a cultural asset. Some alternate forms of the practice have seen resurgence through cultural reappraisal both in carving with modern tools and painting. Jonathan uses a chevron design sculpturally with fluorescent tubing and his installation reflects on this ancient practice of tree carvings (and its subsequent desecration) through the medium of light.

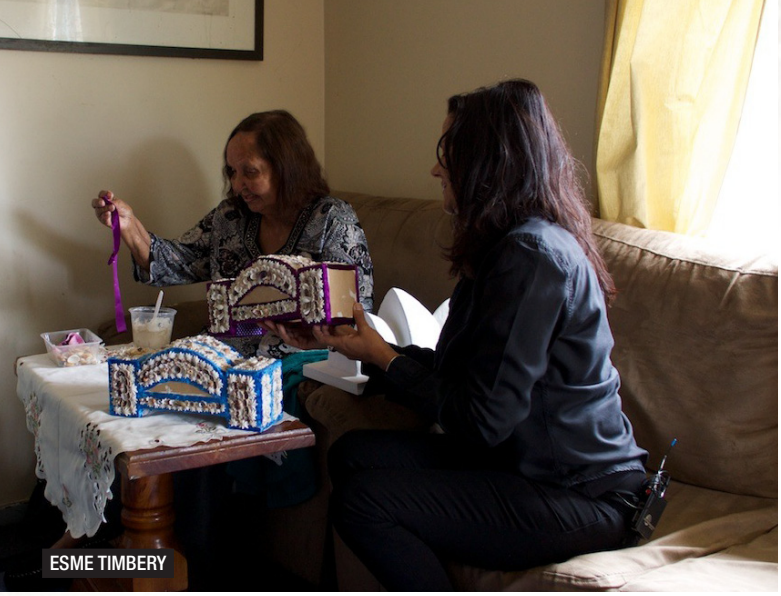
Sydney, says Hetti, is alive with 'spirit culture'. The buildings and roads will never erase the culture of this place. And while some things change, some remain the same. The first people of the nation have witnessed the arrivals and departures from the tall ships to jumbo jets and their artists have documented it all, from the coming of the strangers and the unfolding story of modern Australia.

» MICKEY OF ULLADULLA – 'POSTCARDS FROM THE PAST'

Mickey of Ulladulla (c.1820–1891), Aboriginal artist, was born on the south coast of New South Wales, a member of the Dhurga people. The first written record of him was a note on some of his drawings in the collection of the Mitchell Library, Sydney:

Drawn by 'Mickie'
An old crippled blackfellow
of Nelligen, Clyde River NSW
1875

Later drawings, dating from the 1880s, were annotated with inscriptions describing the artist's location as Ulladulla. Micky or Mickey, also called Mickey Flynn, used pencil and watercolour paints to create lively scenes crowded with Aboriginal people and their daily life, animals, plants, fish, boats and ships, in a naïve European style. Mickey found fame after his death when five of his works were exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago, USA, in 1893. When he died in 1891, Mickey had been living for many years on the Aboriginal reservation at Ulladulla and was said to be nearly seventy years of age. Until recently his work was relatively unknown in Australia. He takes centre-stage in his firsthand observations of the late



ESME TIMBERY

nineteenth century. His works such as *Corroboree, Yuin/Dhurga peoples* and *Peterbrough Steamer* (c.1888) record the ceremonial gatherings of coastal communities side-by-side with the events of a changing world.

» ESME TIMBERY AND MARILYN RUSSELL: SHELLWORK AT LA PEROUSE

La Perouse peninsula is the suburb on the northern headland of Botany Bay. In the twentieth century, 'Laper', as it is affectionately known, saw a thriving tourist and day-tripper trade with the local Indigenous community who entertained visitors with culture such as exhibitions of boomerang and axe-throwing, and handicrafts made of local shells.

'Queen Emma Timbery' was the first in a lengthy family line to utilise and craft the abundant supply of shells from the local sandhills. For almost eighty years, Esme Timbery has been part of this living history, from collecting and sorting shells at the age of five to making her own brooches, jewellery boxes and ornamental baby booties, 'shelling' architectural icons that have found a place in our state and national galleries. Esme's recollections of the popularity of these ornamental works reaches back into the past when she tells how this work first found its way to England in the 1930's and 'people were fighting over it'.

Esme's daughter, Marilyn Russell, also carries on the family tradition of shellwork with her own individual choices, styling and placement of shells on models of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, and even model boomerangs, decorated with intricate and colourful patterns of tiny shells, attesting to the hours of skilled work in the making of these popular ornaments. There is a great deal of 'story' in these works for these women, recollecting their happy memories of collecting shells as children and sitting in a tranquil family group, whiling away the days at this gentle craft.

» SPIRIT OF PLACE

Indigenous peoples' place in modern Australian culture is one shaped by prejudice. But like the delicately beautiful shells – starries, buttonies, conks and periwinkles – Aboriginal culture, as we can see through the works of unique and brilliant artists, is resilient. And in the tides of change, it becomes a declaration of pride no less profound than Pemulwuy's heroic declaration of sovereignty.

Appendix

- **Charles Perkins** (1936–2000) was born in Alice Springs at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station Aboriginal Reserve, but was removed when he was ten and educated at St Francis House, a school established in Adelaide to educate Aboriginal boys. He trained initially as a fitter and turner but, being a gifted soccer player, he played professionally for the English club Everton, then on his return to Australia with the Adelaide Croatian and Sydney Pan-Hellenic Clubs.
  Perkins first attended the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement annual conference in Brisbane in 1961. He spoke with passion about his visit to Mungana reserve where he saw a double standard in action: attractive homes for the white staff and tin shanties for the Aboriginal residents.
  In 1965 Perkins, one of two Aboriginal students at the University of Sydney (the other was Gary Williams), was keen to find a way to publicise the Aboriginal cause. This led to the formation of Student Action for Aborigines (SAFA) and the decision to organise a bus tour of western New South Wales towns. About thirty students, led by Perkins, travelled to Walgett, Moree, Kempsey and other towns, exposing discrimination in the use of halls, swimming pools, picture theatres and hotels. In a number of towns, Aboriginal returned servicemen were only permitted entry to the Returned Service League clubs on Anzac Day. This trip became known as the Freedom Ride and assumed iconic status as the students ensured that they had press coverage for the conflicts that occurred in these towns. Their effective use of television brought the issue of racial discrimination in country towns to national attention. Perkins' role in this action propelled him to a position as a national Aboriginal leader and spokesman, a position he held until his death. In 1965 he became the manager of the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs in Sydney, and in 1969 he moved to Canberra to begin work in the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, which was set up by Prime Minister Harold Holt. By 1984 Perkins was Secretary of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, the first Aboriginal Australian to attain such a position in the bureaucracy. Charlie Perkins was an independent spirit who gave much to the cause of his people, and also to Australian soccer. His independence of mind meant that he was no stranger to controversy. He was given a state funeral in recognition of his dedicated work for Indigenous Australians.

- **The 'Tent Embassy':** In the 1970s, inspired by the Black Power movement in the US, Aboriginal people were politically very active, resulting in demands for land rights for the areas that they lived on over millennia. Land rights were considered the key to economic independence, and land the base to generate resources and employment.
  To many it came as a shock when in April 1971 the Northern Territory Supreme Court decided against Aboriginal people and in favour of a mining company to have access to Aboriginal land. Australian common law, the justice concluded, did not recognise Aboriginal land rights. Aboriginal people travelled to Canberra to ask the Prime Minister of the time, William McMahon, to give them title to their land. Nine months later, the government effectively ruled that Aboriginal people had no entitlement to land, forest or mineral rights. Aboriginal people erected the Tent Embassy in 1972 in Canberra to protest against these decisions, surrounded by placards in front of Parliament House proclaiming the tent an 'Aboriginal Embassy'. Because they had no rights in their own land, the Aboriginal protesters argued that they were 'aliens in [their] own land' and as such they would need an embassy of their own. The government hastily drew up a law banning camping on Commonwealth property and, on 20 July, police moved in violently and forcibly removed tents and arrested Aboriginal people. Within days the Aboriginal embassy population swelled to several hundred protesters who re-erected tents only to clash with police again. Many struggles and battles later, the Embassy has become a heritage-listed landmark for Aboriginal protest.
- **Ramingining** is an Indigenous community in the Northern Territory, Australia, 560 kilometres east of Darwin. It is on the edge of the Arafura Swamp in Arnhem Land. The population is approximately 800 people. The community was established in the early 1970s and became recognised as Aboriginal land with the passage of the Aboriginal Land Rights Act of 1976. For more information on this community, go to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ramingining,_Northern_Territory>.
- **The Aboriginal Memorial** is a work of contemporary Indigenous Australian art from the late 1980s and comprises 200 decorated hollow log coffins. It was conceived by Djon (John) Mundine in 1987–88 and realised by forty-three artists from Ramingining and neighbouring communities of Central Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory. Artists who participated in its creation include David Malangi and George Milpurrurru.
  The work was created to coincide with the Australian Bicentenary and commemorates those Indigenous Australians who died as a result of European settlement. It was acquired by the National Gallery of Australia, where it is on permanent display. Its first exhibition was at the Sydney Biennale in 1988, and it was the centrepiece of an exhibition of Indigenous art at Russia's Hermitage Museum in 2000. As of 2014 it stands at the entry to the National Gallery of Australia's new wing, which opened in September 2010. For more information on the Aboriginal Memorial, go to <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aboriginal_Memorial>.
- **'Songlines':** Within the animist belief system of Indigenous Australians, a songline – also called dreaming track – is one of the paths across the land (or sometimes the sky) which mark the route followed by localised 'creator-beings' during the Dreaming. The paths of the songlines are recorded in traditional songs, stories, dance and painting.
  A knowledgeable person is able to navigate across the land by repeating the words of the song, which describe the location of landmarks, waterholes, and other natural phenomena. In some cases, the paths of the creator-beings are said to be evident from their marks, or petrosomatoglyphs, on the land, such as large depressions in the land which are said to be their footprints.
  By singing the songs in the appropriate sequence, Indigenous people could navigate vast distances, often travelling through the deserts of Australia's interior. The continent of Australia contains an extensive system of songlines, some of which are of a few kilometres, whilst others traverse hundreds of kilometres through lands of many different Indigenous peoples – peoples who may speak markedly different languages and have different cultural traditions.
  Since a songline can span the lands of several different language groups, different parts of the song are said to be in those different languages. Languages are not a barrier because the melodic contour of the song describes the nature of the land over which the song passes. The rhythm is what is crucial to understanding the song. Listening to the song of the land is the same as walking on this songline and observing the land.
  In some cases, a songline has a particular direction, and walking the wrong way along a songline may be a sacrilegious act (e.g. climbing up Uluru where the correct direction is down). Traditional Aboriginal people regard all land as sacred, and the songs must be continually sung to keep the land 'alive'.
- **Bloodlines:** Within Aboriginal reality a person is connected to land by way of bloodline. A person's descendants down the generations from the first humans is a key element of the 'dreaming', as are the future generations. The land on which thousands of generations of ancestors were born and into which they were buried is the real vessel or container of human existence in material terms. Such a connection to land, and all the ecosystems in it, by way of bloodline is a different concept altogether from the genetic determinism of the Aboriginal protection laws.
- **Aboriginal missions** were set up in the nineteenth century, usually by clergy, to house, protect, and 'Christianise' local Aboriginal people. Using Christian texts to guide and justify their actions, missionaries encouraged Aboriginal people to move into mission settlements and join small European Christian communities.
  Many Aboriginal people disliked the mission system and started to demand their own land. The colonial government responded by setting up Aboriginal reserves or stations. Often these had previously been mission settlements. The reserves had their own machinery, and farmed their own crops and livestock.

The three best-known nineteenth-century missions in NSW were Cumeragunja, Warangesda and Brewarrina. In 1893 these places were taken over by the government and run as stations or reserves. In 1911, at the height of the government's program of reserve lands, there were 115 reserves. Of these, seventy-five had been created because of Aboriginal demands for land.
The stories of missions and reserves tell of a time when Aboriginal nations had been devastated by disease, pastoral expansion and conflict. Aboriginal people were heavily restricted in their access to land and freedom of movement. Missions and reserves remain important today because of their ongoing use by Aboriginal people, and because of the deep and personal attachments many people still have to missions and reserves.

- **La Perouse:** For a detailed, comprehensive history of La Perouse from both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives, see Julia Kensey's article 'La Perouse' at <http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/la_perouse>. In brief, La Perouse is a suburb in south-east Sydney. The La Perouse peninsula is the northern headland of Botany Bay. It is notable for its old military outpost at Bare Island and the Botany Bay National Park. La Perouse is one of few Sydney suburbs with a French name, others being Sans Souci, Engadine and Vaucluse. Kurnell is located opposite, on the southern headland of Botany Bay. La Perouse was named after the French navigator Jean-François de Galaup, Comte de Lapérouse (1741–88), who landed on the northern shore of Botany Bay west of Bare Island on 26 January 1788. Captain Arthur Phillip and the first fleet of convicts had arrived in Botany Bay a few days earlier. Louis XVI of France had commissioned Lapérouse to explore the Pacific. In April 1770, James Cook's expedition had sailed onto the east coast of Australia whilst exploring the south Pacific searching for Terra Australis or 'Land of the South'. Upon King Louis XVI's orders, Lapérouse departed France on a scientific voyage of the Pacific Inspired by the voyages of Cook. La Perouse in Sydney's south is named after the leader of this French expedition. Visitors can learn about the Indigenous significance of the area from the Aboriginal people of the area, with boomerang-throwing demonstrations often held on weekends and Aboriginal guided tours operating from Yarra Bay House during the week. Aboriginal artefacts are produced and sold by locals. An outdoor reptile show is also a well-known tourist attraction in the pit, at The Loop, on Sunday afternoons. The reptile shows were begun by George Cann in the early 1920s and the tradition has been continued by members of the Cann family ever since, until 2010.
- **La Perouse shellwork:** For a detailed examination of this particular art, including illustrations, see 'An Economy of Shells: A brief history of La Perouse Aboriginal women's shell-work and its markets, 1880–2010' by Maria Nugent at <http://press.anu.edu.au//wp-content/uploads/2012/06/ch12.pdf>. In brief, some of the most popular shellwork forms are heart-shaped, lidded trinket boxes and ornamental baby shoes, as well as the now highly collectible small-scale Sydney Harbour Bridges.
- **Redfern** is an inner-city suburb of Sydney located three kilometres south of the Sydney central business district. In the immediate vicinity of Redfern station, surrounded by Eveleigh, Caroline, Louis and Vine Streets, the Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) was set up as the first urban Aboriginal community housing provider, using grant money to purchase the houses. As a result, the area is important to the Aboriginal community.

Eveleigh Street, which is part of 'The Block', is well known for its community. In 2004 much of the housing here was demolished with plans for redevelopment, but it is still an area around which many people congregate. The AHC's plans for redevelopment are known as the Pemulwuy Project. The local police boys club (PCYC) has artwork painted on the outside walls of the building which was completed in the early 1990s. The picture has local sports stars such as Richard Bell, Bruce Swanson, Rossie Symmans, Nicholas Murray, Nathan Denzil and Jamie Sharpe. The mural was painted by probably the most notable Redfern artist of the 1990s: Sir Joseph Phillips.

Redfern has many fine examples of Victorian terraced housing similar to other inner suburbs, such as Surry Hills and Paddington. Also, like some other inner-city suburbs, some parts of Redfern have been gentrified, whilst other areas still project an image of 'mean streets', with some public housing.

- **Pemulwuy** (1750–1802), an Aboriginal warrior, was born near what was later named Botany Bay, New South Wales. His name (also spelt as Pemulwhy, Pemulwoy or other variations) was derived from the Darug (Dharug) word *pemul*, meaning earth. From 1792 Pemulwuy led raids on settlers, who considered him 'a most active enemy to the settlers, plundering them of their property, and endangering their personal safety'. Raids were made for food, particularly corn, or as 'payback' for atrocities – local settler David Collins suggested that most of the attacks were the result of the settlers' 'own misconduct', including the kidnapping of Aboriginal children. To check at once 'these dangerous depredators', military force was used against Pemulwuy and his people. In March 1797 Pemulwuy led a raid on the government farm at Toongabbie. Settlers formed a punitive party and tracked him to the outskirts of Parramatta. He was wounded, receiving seven pieces of buckshot in his head and body. Extremely ill, he was taken to the hospital. Yet late in April that year, when the governor met several parties of natives near Botany Bay, Pemulwuy was among them. Having 'perfectly recovered from his wounds', he had 'escaped from the hospital with an iron about his leg'. Pemulwuy's close escapes resulted in the Darug believing that firearms could not kill him. Pemulwuy was shot dead about 1 June. The subsequent events were noted as: 'his head was cut off, which was, I believe, sent to England'. The NSW Governor said that although he regarded Pemulwuy as 'a terrible pest to the colony, he was a brave and independent character'. The head has not been found in an English repository to date. For more information, see JL Cohen's essay in The Australian Dictionary of Biography at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/pemulwuy-13147>.
- **Albert (Elea) Namatjira** (1902–1959), artist, was born on 28 July 1902 at Hermannsburg (Ntaria), Northern Territory. He is of the Arrernte people. In his boyhood,

Albert sketched 'scenes and incidents around him … the cattle yard, the stockmen with their horses, and the hunters after game'. He later made artefacts such as boomerangs and woomeras. Encouraged by the mission authorities, he began to produce mulga-wood plaques with poker-worked designs. Meanwhile, he worked as a blacksmith, carpenter, stockman and cameleer – at the mission for rations and on neighbouring stations for wages. The spectacular scenery of Central Australia, then entering the national consciousness as a symbol of Australian identity, attracted artists to Hermannsburg, among them Rex Battarbee and John Gardner. During their second visit in 1934 they held an exhibition for an Aboriginal audience. The Arrernte were familiar with illustrations of biblical scenes, but none had seen landscapes depicting their own surroundings. Motivated by a deep attachment to his country and the possibility of a vocation that offered financial return, Namatjira expressed an interest in learning to paint. Superficially, his paintings give the appearance of conventional European landscapes, but Namatjira painted with 'country in mind' and continually returned to sites imbued with ancestral associations. The repetition, detailed patterning and high horizons so characteristic of his work blended Aboriginal and European modes of depiction. Namatjira's initiatives won national and international acclaim, but with fame came controversy; his brilliant career highlighted the gap between the rhetoric and reality of assimilation policies. He encountered an ambiguous response from the art world and also encountered racial discrimination. He was refused a grazing licence in 1949–50 and prevented in 1951 from building a house on land he bought at Alice Springs. Seeking further means of support for his family, he discovered copper deposits at Areyonga Reserve, but they proved commercially unviable. He died of hypertensive heart failure in 1951 and was buried with Lutheran ceremony in the local cemetery. His wife, five sons and one of his daughters survived him.

For a time, Namatjira's name drifted into obscurity, his achievements largely eclipsed by the 'dot painting' style developed in the 1970s. Recent re-evaluations recognise his influence on Aboriginal artists in Central Australia and elsewhere.

- **The Bicentenary:** The official bicentenary year of the founding of Australia, the founding of the city of Sydney and the colony of New South Wales was designated as 1988. This marks the two-hundredth year after Captain Arthur Phillip's arrival with the eleven ships of the First Fleet in Sydney Harbour in 1788. The Australian Bicentenary was marked by huge pomp and ceremony that emphasised the nation's cultural heritage. The result was a national program of events and celebrations to commemorate the Bicentenary.
- **Carved trees:** Tree carving was a practice specific to the Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi tribes of New South Wales used to mark sites of special ceremonial significance. Young men were given their own design as part of their initiation into manhood. That design was then carved into the tree by artists using stone tools. Many tree carvings were also used as grave markers – signposts for the burial sites of important tribal members. Ornate and expressive, carved trees have been used by Aboriginal people in New South Wales as a form of visual communication for thousands of years. These elaborate cultural expressions – carved into the sapwood and heartwood of trees once a section of external bark was removed – were meant to last. Sadly, after European colonisation, the practice was abandoned and the original meanings lost.

LIST OF ARTWORKS EPISODE 1

1. **Raminging Artists**: The Aboriginal Memorial, NGA, Canberra, ACT, 1987-88: (installation of 200 hollow log bone coffins) Ramingining, Central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, Australia. Medium: natural earth pigments on wood
2. **Daniel Boyd:**
   - *Up in Smoke Tour* installation, 2011, in the Images of Nature Gallery, Natural History Museum, London, UK. Medium: Water colours and 24 Museum archival boxes.
   - *Untitled (Lift up thy prayer for the remnant that is left)*, 2013
   - *King No Beard*, 2007. Medium: oil on canvas.
   - *A Darker Shade of Dark #1–4*, 2012, a four-channel HD video projection using colour and sound.
3. **John Webber:** *Portrait of Captain James Cook, RN,* 1782. Medium: oil on canvas. This is one of three surviving portraits of Cook by John Webber, who spent three years at sea with him as the artist on the Resolution.
4. **Maurice Felton:** *A Woman of NSW,* 1840, Marshall Claxton, *Family Group* 1853.
5. **Benjamin Dutterau:** *Edith, Mrs George Gatehouse,* 1834. NGA Collection.
6. **Wanyubi Marika**: paintings on bark.
7. **Jonathan Jones & Jamie Perrow:**
   - *Water wall – Untitled (Eora seasons)*, 2011. Medium: 40-metre-long LED installation.
   - *Untitled: Heads or tails*, 2009: light sculpture.
8. **Mickey of Ulladulla:**
   - *Not titled, Corroboree,* c.1888. Medium: pencil, coloured pencil, black ink and brush;
   - *Yuin/Dhurga peoples,* 1888:
   - *Peterbrough Steamer* c.1888. Medium: Pen, ink, crayon and pastel on surveyors paper, c. 1888.
9. **Esme Timbery:** *shell-work,* eg, *slippers, models of the Sydney Harbour Bridge, Sydney Centrepoint Tower.* Medium: wood, glue, cardboard, fabric, glitter and shells gathered from the beaches of the NSW south coast.

WARWICK THORNTON

Episode Two

BEAUTY AND CRUELTY

» WARWICK THORNTON OF ALICE SPRINGS (MBANTWE) – FILMMAKER AND ARTIST

As the series progresses, we will be consistently shown the magnificent landscape of Australia – its mountains, vast deserts, rivers, its towering trees and its glorious sunsets. It is, of course, some of the harshest country in the world and yet, for Hetti Perkins, some of the most beautiful. It is an environment in which Indigenous peoples have survived for millennia. And it is the beauty and cruelty of this land that lies at the heart of the legend of 'the outback'. In recent years, new challenges have been thrown up for Aboriginal Australians, possibly even harsher than those thrown up by nature. This episode examines those challenges and the response of the Indigenous artists – always innovative, always 'elastic' in their practice.

Hetti's own family history alludes to the resilience and adaptability of Indigenous people – taking as an example and a role model her grandmother, after whom she is named. Born around 1895, Nanna was a pioneering woman of Altunga in the Central Australian desert, who experienced the 'frontier' firsthand and raised her many children single-handedly in a place which, for the modern nation, seemed like the 'Wild West'. Nana's stories are part of this country and part of the Perkins family's story. They form part of the time-honoured tradition of the passing on of oral history.

'By creating questions, you start a conversation, which is really important … As an Aboriginal artist, every breath you take is a political statement …' – Warwick Thornton

In many ways, Alice Springs is still a frontier town. A kind of romanticised 'cowboy culture' remains in the clothes, music and way of life favoured by Hetti's 'mob', as she affectionately refers to her family. A sense of nostalgia and love for wide open spaces, big skies and an outsider camaraderie. This is the town where acclaimed film director and artist Warwick Thornton was born and raised and he tells his stories through his art, continuing the oral tradition through the lens of a camera – from the inside looking out. Warwick had been waiting patiently for about twenty years to make a feature film since he first started hanging out at CAAMA Radio in Alice Springs in his teens. Warwick was a teenage DJ at CAAMA; he used to watch the video unit vehicle drive off to exotic places and was forced to hear all the stories when they came back. When a media traineeship came up, he jumped at the chance and hasn't looked back. He learnt his trade of cinematography on the job and then went to AFTRS film school in Sydney for three years.

After graduating, he got bored with sitting around waiting for the phone to ring with work offers, so he decided to write some of his own ideas. His body of work includes

short films *Payback*, *Mimi*, *Green Bush* and *Nana*. He has also directed and shot loads of documentaries.

He lives in Alice Springs and is obsessed with collecting Gibson guitars and riding dirt bikes.

SAMSON AND DELILAH (2010) – A WORK OF CINEMATIC ART.

The dichotomy of beauty and cruelty of the landscape is starkly expressed in his hit film *Samson and Delilah* (2009). 'Tragedy happens in paradise,' he tells Hetti. *Samson and Delilah* was Warwick's debut feature film and it earned him the Camera d'Or Award at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival. This is no grand biblical narrative; it's a heartbreaking love story set in a town camp on the outskirts of Alice Springs. Described as a 'survival love story' by the director, the film depicts two fourteen-year-olds living in a remote Aboriginal community who steal a car and escape their difficult lives by going to Alice Springs. The ordinary everyday injustices dealt Indigenous people in this community is the back-ground to this melancholy yet ultimately hopeful tale.

Reviews of *Samson and Delilah* have consistently been glowing. Here is an excerpt from the ABC program *At The Movies*:

Despite its title, it bears no resemblance to the biblical story. It's about two kids, young teenagers in a community in the central desert. Samson (Rowan McNamara) is a petrol-sniffing layabout who would play music if only his brother would let him.

He fancies Delilah (Marissa Gibson), who looks after her grandmother – played by her real-life grandmother, (Mitjili Gibson) – and helps her with her artworks.

Delilah is a very self-contained young woman. When her grandmother dies and the community blames Delilah, quite ferociously, she and Samson take off for Alice Springs where they live on the fringe, unable to get life together.

This is … one of the most wonderful films this country has ever produced. It is exquisitely made, it's full of discipline. There's not a spare moment in it.

The two young performers are mind-blowingly good. You enter into their world and you're riveted there for the fairly short duration of the film.

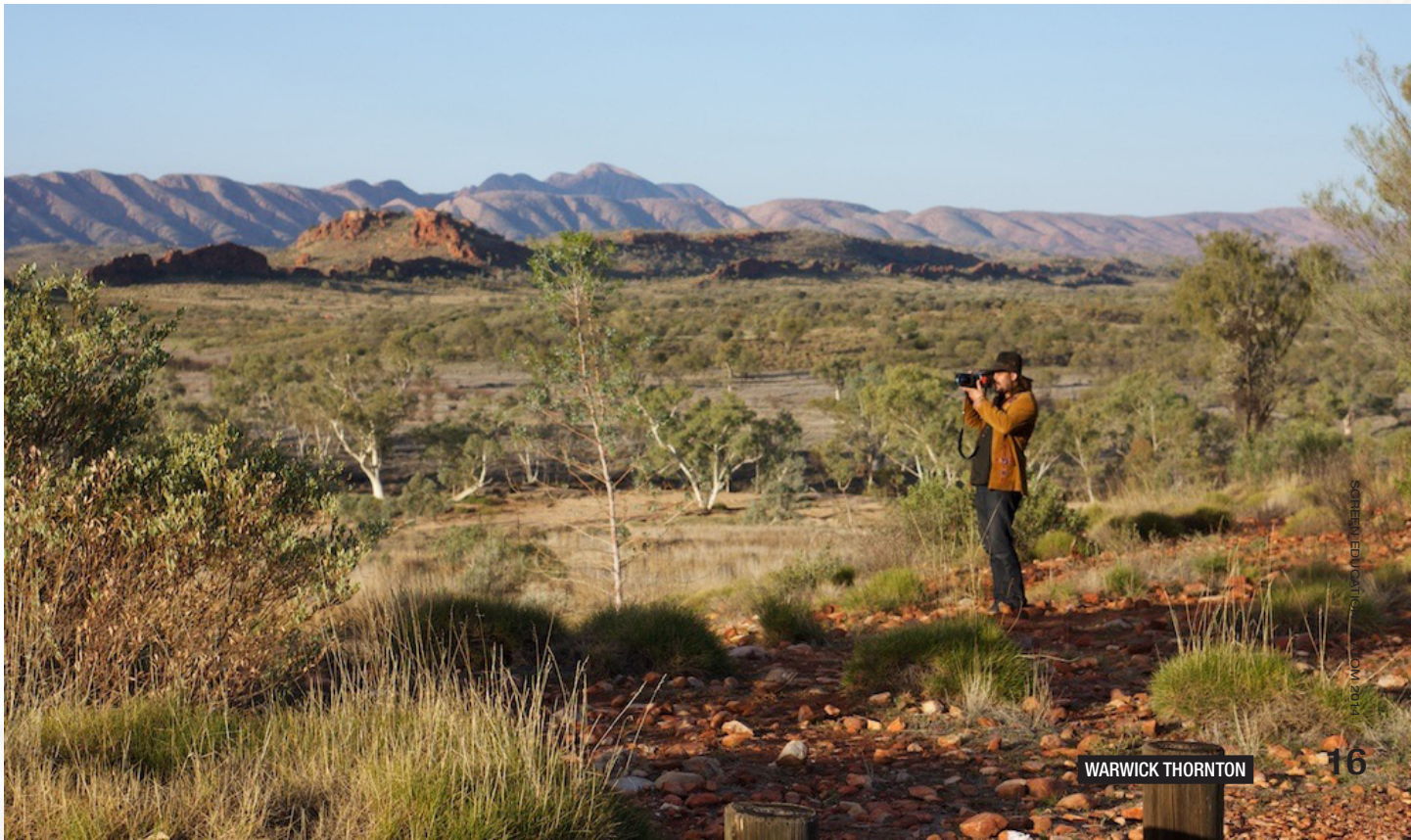
There is a European sensibility to it. There's very little dialogue and there are long sequences, but with Thornton himself behind the camera – handheld in trying conditions – it looks fabulous.

The emotional punch that Samson and Delilah *delivers is one of those rare things in cinema which doesn't come along very often. And when it does you feel like falling down on your knees in gratitude.*

And it's not because Thornton has gone for sentimentality. It's the reverse. He's made a tough little film about love and it's a knockout.

CINEMATIC INFLUENCES

Warwick has love for 'cowboy' cinema – the epic films of Sergio Leone and John Ford were his earliest inspiration – and since so many of these early 'Westerns' involved bloody conflicts with the Native Americans, the stories also



WARWICK THORNTON

resonated with him as an Indigenous individual himself. The sense of kinship with the horrific treatment of tribes shown on the big screen was clear to him and his Aboriginal friends even when young. In particular, *Soldier Blue* (Ralph Nelson, 1970), an American 'Revisionist Western' movie inspired by events of the 1864 Sand Creek massacre in the Colorado Territory, tells a tale of murder of innocent women and children, despite the males of the tribe wishing to live in peace. For an in-depth analysis of this film, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soldier_Blue>.

Sadly, Indigenous Australia has had its own history of massacres, and the emotional and historical connection is not lost on Indigenous people and their artists. The Coniston Massacre of 1928 in central Australia illustrates the kind of cultural misunderstandings that characterised early colonial contact.

Warwick reflects that his work may not contain answers, but it asks important questions, empowering those who suffer in his stories. Art, then, can be 'a healing ceremony'.

MOTHER COURAGE FROM AN INDIGENOUS VIEWPOINT

'I wanted to create stuff where I could go off and do it myself, where I don't need 100 crew and $3 million,' says Warwick of his attraction for the art of installation. In 2012, Warwick exhibited *Mother Courage* at the prestigious exhibition Documenta in Kassel, Germany. Based on Bertolt Brecht's play *Mother Courage and Her Children*, the immersive film and sound installation provides insight into contemporary Aboriginal life in small regional towns and explores the tensions between urban and traditional Indigenous lifestyles.

The first thing we see upon entering the darkened gallery space is a battered van, softly spot-lit in the middle of the room. Red dust coats the bumper and tyres, bespeaking long drives across Australia's centre, while paintings hang from the van's sides. A newspaper wedged against the dirty windscreen features a headline about troubled Top End Aboriginal communities, while a red handprint on the van's front speaks of Indigenous ownership. Then, suddenly, we perceive movement in the back of the van and realise there is an elderly woman inside, painting.

Closer inspection reveals the action is playing out on a life-sized video screen inside the van, but the clarity of the footage conveys a disconcerting impression of real presence. This is only reinforced when we walk around the back of the van to find the image's reverse playing inside the open rear door. From here the elderly painter faces us, as she carefully applies brushstrokes to her work, while a young boy (Elijah Button) sits beside her playing air guitar to the sounds of the Green Bush country music show blaring from a radio.

Reading the original play, Warwick saw strong parallels between Mother Courage's travails as an itinerant trader during Europe's Thirty Years' War and the plight of Indigenous communities in the Western Desert:

There are some amazing correlations between this lady and what's happening in the desert at the moment with Indigenous people, having to move off their country to follow certain elements to be able to survive … I'm using Brecht's backstory in a sense, so anybody with any knowledge of what happened to his Mother Courage can align it with this character.

The artist has left his character's situation and actions open to multiple readings:

In a lot of the stuff I make, I try to not dictate a right or wrong, a yes or no. Some people will walk in there and feel really passionate and sad about this woman – she's confined in this van, and doesn't really do anything but paint. And the kid seems really bored. Another person will be really empowered by the idea that this woman has created a form of self-determination and gotten out of this vicious cycle of some communities – this sister's doing it for herself, you know, and she's gone straight to the source of what she knows, which is art.

DEBIL DEBIL EXHIBITION, PHOTOGRAPHIC SERIES (UNTITLED, 2013)

Australian public intellectual and activist Professor Marcia Langton AM curated an exhibition and program of cinema entitled *Debil Debil: Australian Ghosts* presented at the Anna Schwartz Gallery, Sydney, from 20 April until 8 June 2013. The subjects of many of the works of this group of artists are recognisable characters from the dark past of frontier of Australian anthropology and history; sometimes human, sometimes ancestral, but always carrying multiple meanings. The inherent power of the works is that, while appearing to reference a very modern present, they glance back, creating a tension, anxiety or a lack of resolution, and all the while alluding to what is and might have been. The work delves into the past to resurrect not just history or ghosts but reinterpretations of the self, place and present.

Traditionally, a 'debil' is part of an Aboriginal story to warn children to behave according to set rules and guidelines, or the 'debil' will come and take them away. In a series of strikingly gothic works in blood red pigment prints, three looming figures – a policeman, a priest and a stockman (indiscernibly black or white) – hover above the landscape as if at any moment they might either ascend to the heavens or bring down their wrath. Warwick places himself in these prints, in the context of the post-colonial diaspora of Aboriginal communities as 'the bad guy': the pastoralist, the policeman, and the priest. These are the 'devils', or 'debils', who inflicted so much damage on Aboriginal lifestyle and communities

Historically, these colonial authority figures portrayed themselves as 'semi-saviours', protecting and providing for Indigenous people. Then, suddenly, they began taking

children away as the mythic 'debils' do. This fascinating link is paralleled and aligned with western cultural practices of the past and of course, references 'The Stolen Generations'. For further information on this exhibition, see 'Debil Debil: Australian Ghosts at Anna Schwartz Gallery' at <http://www.liveguide.com.au/Events/831649/Brook_Andrew_Daniel_Boyd_Destiny_Deacon_Ricardo_Idagi_Danie_Melllor_Tracy_Moffatt_Darren_Siwes/Debil_Debil_Australian_Ghosts>.

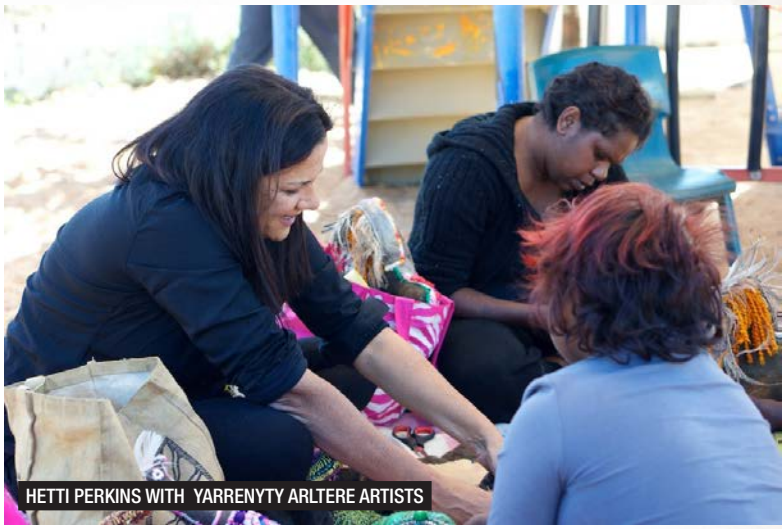
STRANDED – 3D INSTALLATION

Warwick, as we have seen, uses himself as the subject of many of his works, and in his 3D installation and accompanying stills, set in Palm Valley – Albert Namatjira's country – he places himself on a revolving crucifix constructed as a glowing light box. His first venture at creating art for a gallery space, it sees the artist cast as a Christ figure. This pointed, confronting work explores yet again the impact of Christianity and the mission era. *Stranded* grew out of Warwick's memories of restrictive life as a student at a Christian boarding school, where 'if you didn't fit in, you didn't survive'.

'When I grow up I want to be just like Jesus,' young Warwick is recalled by his older self to have said, and *Stranded* is the grown-up take on that. A Kaytej man whose lands lie to the north of Alice Springs, the Australian desert has a strong presence in Thornton's work and it is here that he situates this version of Golgotha. Crucifixes with skulls and bones near a watering hole, *Stranded* shows images of the figure from different angles and at different times of day. There are still prints and a 3D film that adds sound and depth to the immensity of the plight depicted and the space in which it takes place.

Warwick's art explores universal themes – faith, love, hope – within the frame of the frontier, revealing the beauty and the cruelty, the epic and the everyday, and all with a tenderness that reveals his part in this ongoing story of daily life in Aboriginal communities. His work is testimony to the enduring strength of Indigenous culture. Western icons of cowboys and crucifixes, angels and demons, all become part of the uniquely Aboriginal world view, celebrating country.

MARLENE RUBUNTJA – YARRENYTY ARLTERE ARTIST



HETTI PERKINS WITH YARRENYTY ARLTERE ARTISTS

» MARLENE RUBUNTJA, DULCIE AND RHONDA SHARPE AND THE YARRENTY ARLTERE ART CENTRE ARTISTS

At a claypan on the outskirts of Alice Springs, a magical process begins. Like alchemists, the Yarrenty Arltere Art Centre artists bring to life new forms of cultural expression and storytelling through 'soft sculpture'. This Art Centre is a very special place for artists of this region to learn the crafts and textile work from the older generation.

AN ARTISTIC 'INTERVENTION'

In the Larapinta Valley town camp, our artists collect different varieties of leaves and flowers from the surrounding bush. These are used to dye old, recycled blankets, which are the outer 'skin' of the soft sculptures. Mixing everyday objects – recycled blankets, cast-off machinery, flowers, tea, bark – these are all bound together and steeped in boiling water to allow the colours and textures of the landscape the artists live in and work in to infuse a unique 'flavour' in each of their wonderful and whimsical sculptures.

These soft sculptures, while apparently made for children, have a particularly serious purpose: they will be used to tell an important story based on the social issues of the area – that is, that too many teenagers are going into the local town and finding themselves in trouble with the police. These sculptures imitate local life and seek to act as a teaching tool, a series of cautionary tales.

In the town camps around Alice Springs – communities that have generally suffered from the stigma of being

MARLENE RUBUNTJA WITH HETTI PERKINS

'fringe-dwellers' – art plays a particularly vital role in the process of self-determination and empowerment. At Yarrenty Arltere, these deceptive sculptures surpass the traditional art exhibition context. They give a voice to people who have long been part of the economy but not the wider community.

LITTLE DINGI – ANIMATION

The completed sewn, decorated sculptures are the characters in a short animated film about a teenager, Little Dingi, who has lost his sense of direction, and is always in town and always in trouble. His grandmother tries everything to keep him in his community where it's safe; ultimately, the story is successful when Dingi's parents also lend a hand in his upbringing. To view this short film, go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ea8WJuRwPLc>.

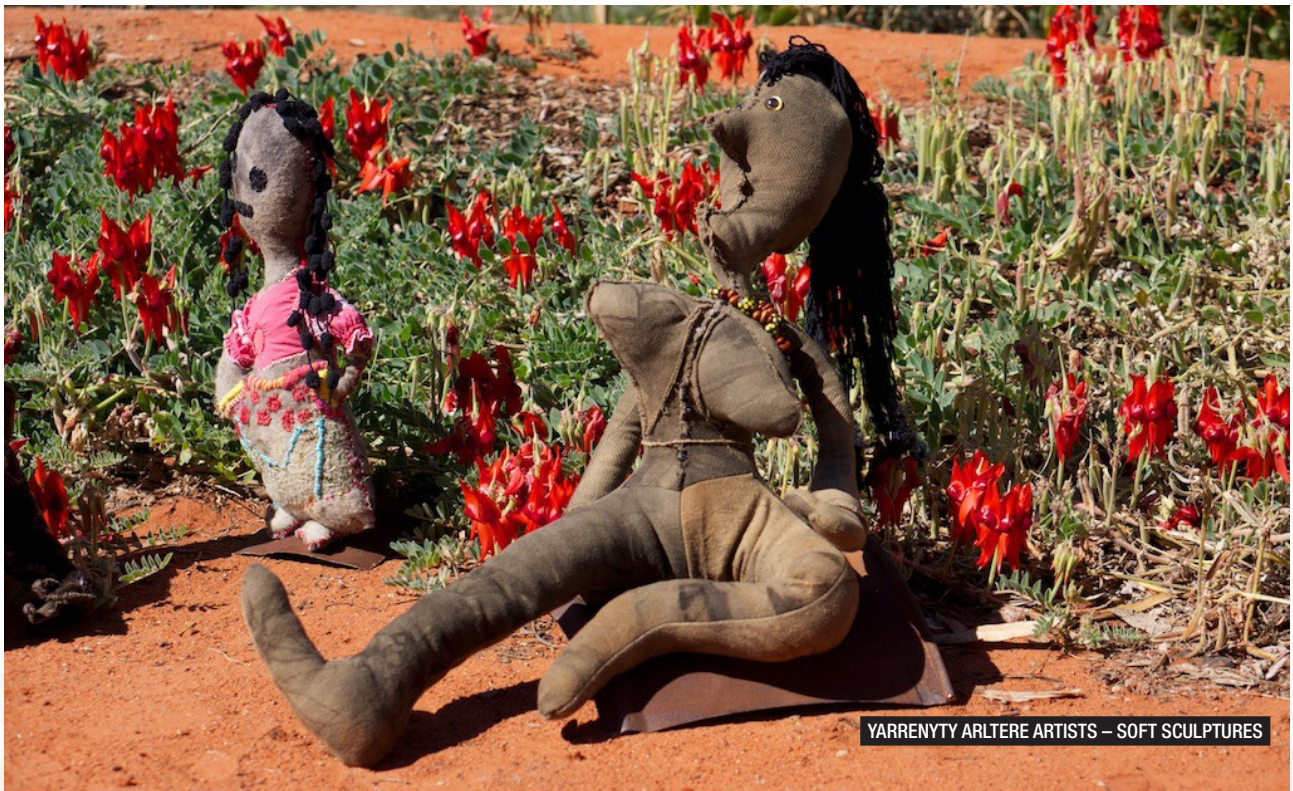
This art is not a relic from a long distant past; it is about the here and now, about the daily lives, the cares and concerns we all share and about making a difference.

» JULIE GOUGH – 'SCULPTOR OF STORIES'

Hetti next travels to Tasmania to meet Julie Gough and her sometime collaborator, her brother David, who are descendants of the Trawlwoolway people – the Indigenous people of far north-east Tasmania. Julie has the 'official' history of Tasmania in the crosshairs of her art. She observes:

I'm very interested in tracking my own history, which is Tasmanian Aboriginal history on my mother's side and Scottish and Jewish and other stories on my father's side. So I come to Australia with this sense of knowledge that's limited about myself and this country … and try to figure out my place in this type of 'detective' way …

For Julie, the process of making art is almost forensic, gathering evidence from the past to decipher a white story and, in the process, repatriate a black history. Working predominantly in sculpture and installation art, her research practice involves uncovering and representing historical stories as part of an ongoing project that questions and re-evaluates the impact of the past on present lives. Much of the work refers to her own and her family's experiences as Tasmanian Aboriginal people and is concerned with developing a visual language to express and engage with often conflicting and subsumed histories. A central intention of Julie's art is to invite a viewer to a closer understanding of our continuing roles in, and proximity to, unresolved national stories.



YARRENYTY ARLTERE ARTISTS – SOFT SCULPTURES

A BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE AND A SAVAGE HISTORY

Within this verdant landscape, a brutal strategy known as the Black Line was staged in 1830. Governor George Arthur called on all colonists, convict or free, to form a human 'chain' and round up and purge the land of the first Tasmanians. While this military campaign was a failure, it resulted in the impounding of Julie's people on Flinders Island. (For more detailed information on this history, see the Appendix.) Julie sees the Aboriginal history of Tasmania as the victim of a 'deliberate perpetration to try and erase Aboriginal people from the island'.

THE CONSEQUENCE OF CHANCE: INSTALLATION (2011)

This installation occupies a permanent place in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart. Using archival objects such as a reprint of the 1830 Governor's Proclamation, colonial furniture and natural materials, Julie's tent-shaped installation involves the observer walking round the work to see the many sides of the historical conflict between white and black Tasmania – the 'Anglo version' of this history and the Indigenous perspective.

Art critic Constantino de Tejero, in his online essay 'In the realm of ancestral shadows', comments on this installation:

The Consequence of Chance *is a wondrous mélange of fragile and illusionary objects, sound work and shadow projection, hangings on walls and suspensions in midair, bits of paper and dry leaves scattered on the floor. It is an exemplar of … chance and indeterminacy in aesthetic organization... The artist says she is questioning here the workings of chance that brought at least twelve of her ancestors to Australia …*

SHE WAS SOLD FOR ONE GUINEA: FOUND OBJECTS (2007)

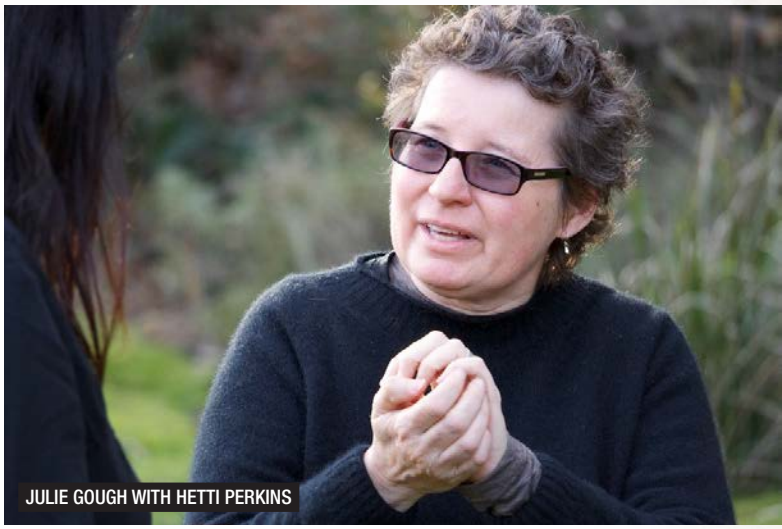
Using what she calls 'found objects', Julie fashions a story of abduction and prejudice from the historic Indigenous past – in this case an old book, a piece of beaded jewellery and strategically placed words.

SOME TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL CHILDREN LIVING WITH NON ABORIGINAL PEOPLE BEFORE 1840: INSTALLATION.

With a 'found' chair and burnt tree sticks, this elegantly powerful work says all that is needed in its title: the litany of names scorched into ti-tree saplings brings the history of the first peoples of Tasmania close to home.

THE CHASE – INSTALLATION

Julie's 'intervention' into this piece of 'repatriated furniture' – a piece of so-called 'settler colonial history' – is anything but comfortable; it is literally a 'pin-cushion' containing a prickly history. Julie describes her intentions in this work as follows:



JULIE GOUGH WITH HETTI PERKINS

This work is a well-worn chaise impressed with a text made from tens of thousands of pins … [and] burnt tea tree stick spear legs … turning this familiar furniture item into a fugitive object that threatens potential mobility, even flight …

Impressed into the old leather is an excerpt from *The Hobart Town Courier*, Saturday 27 November 1830:

Two of the aborigines who have been living so long at Mr Robinson's … absconded this morning, after divesting themselves entirely of the clothing given to them … They were encountered in the bush by two broom makers, one a cripple, who succeeded in taking them. The blacks made every effort to escape. Several persons at work in the bush fled at the sight of them. Nothing can tame them …

The chaise … (says Julie) *usually represents, for me, the ambit comfort of the upper classes in 'settling' into a supposedly colonised Van Diemen's Land. Furniture … represent[s] … contact with the past of the colonisers, to read how they occupied their newly invented properties. The pins represent … change and … a tool of a seamstress who make[s] the clothes that the Aborigines in this story so quickly divest themselves of …*

The palpable surfacing of Hobart Town's fear is evident in the text: 'Nothing can tame them.' It reveals publicly how well received will be the intention of the Government to officially remove all Tasmanian Aboriginal people the following year in the 'Black Line campaign' of 1831.

This contemporary viewer/reader's precognition of what will happen to Tasmanian Aboriginal people in the subsequent century – post-1830s Bass Strait banishment – rests uneasily with the abject humour in the text openly contradicting itself, admitting that a cripple managed to capture the two 'untameable' Aborigines.

TRAVELLER: VIDEO PROJECTION (2013), *LOST WORLD* COLLECTION

Julie's recently developed *Lost World* video collection includes *The Lost World* (*part 1*) (2013), *Oblivion* (2013),


JULIE GOUGH

*Traveller (*2013) and *Haunted* (2013). These were created from, or in response to, the controversial diary of George Augustus Robinson, *Friendly Mission*, which has become something of a textbook of Tasmania's colonial history – but as Gough puts it, '*Friendly Mission* doesn't allow for a future, just despair'.

In *Traveller,* Gough takes up the persona of the traveller, equipped with animal hide and cultural toolkit including screw-together wooden spears. She is depicted trying to hitchhike her way to locations with poignant Tasmanian associations such as The Nut and Highfield House. She is shown ritualistically screwing together her spears (which Gough is renowned for in her sculptural practice) and preying on cattle at Highfield House – a somewhat humorous attempt at hunting.

LOCUS – INSTALLATION

Locus is Julie's largest work to date, as a continuation of her 'long-held interests: What is life; what is self; how do we locate ourselves, especially in the city?' The title refers to an exploration of life, of self, of the location of ourselves – a work depicting a merging of elements impacting on the creation and present state of her life and a representation of her history.

The artwork depicts a tea-tree forest speared with pages from a novel. Central to the forest is a branch-constructed rollercoaster frame supporting a cuttlefish-bone canoe. Each element of this artwork, as dictated by the accompanying artist's statement, is intended to represent aspects that helped shape memories of her past and influences of her future. She represents herself as a canoe, that is both positive and sad. 'But', says the artist, 'it can float, can carry things, but it talks about the loss of culture and what can be rebuilt from something that's been fractured and damaged, from so many pieces'.

The tea-tree branches penetrate into the timber platform base, spearing through a sporadic array of pages from a novel, this representing the telling of her story through the use of native tea-tree branches. Constructed in the midst of the tea-tree forest is a rollercoaster representing the journey of her life and memories of her childhood spent living near St Kilda's Luna Park. Taking us through her journey is a cuttlefish-bone canoe, describing her family ancestry along the coastal region of north-eastern Tasmania. The use of these particular materials and forms in this artwork is in response to an intention to create a convergence between her childhood memories, her Tasmanian Aboriginal culture and identity.

Julie's art is about the place of memory, forgetting, loss, denial and the potency of the past.

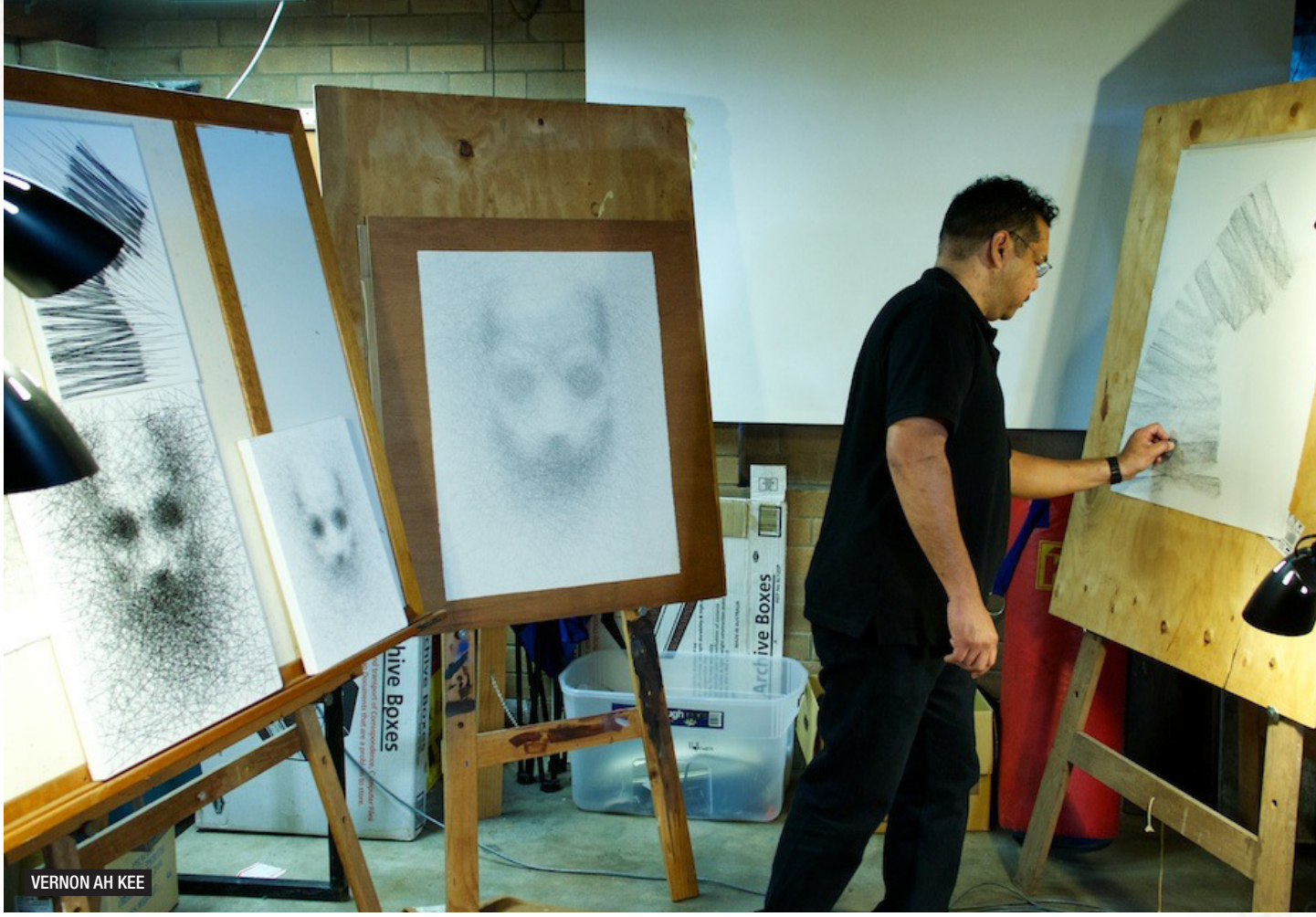
For a detailed and comprehensive insight into this artist's work, see 'Living in the past: An Aboriginal artist's experience of being Tasmanian', AIATSIS Conference, Canberra, 29 September 2009: http://www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/conf2009/docs/Gough.pdf

» VERNON AH KEE

Hetti's journey now takes us to far north Queensland, to Palm Island, also called by the Aboriginal name 'Bwgcolman', an Aboriginal community located on Great Palm Island in the Great Barrier Reef region. The settlement is also known by a variety of other names including 'the Mission', Palm Island Settlement or Palm Community.

Palm Island is often termed a classic 'tropical paradise' given its natural endowments, but it has had a troubled history since the European settlement of Australia. For much of the twentieth century it was used by the Queensland Government as a settlement for Aboriginals considered guilty of such infractions as being 'disruptive', being pregnant to a white man or being born with 'mixed blood'. The community created by this history has been beset by many problems and has often been the discussion point of political and social commentators. Of significant sociological concern is a lack of jobs and housing. Since its creation as an Aboriginal reserve, Palm Island has been considered synonymous with Indigenous disadvantage and violence. At the same time, it has been at the forefront of political activism which has sought to improve the conditions and treatment of Australia's Indigenous peoples as well as redress injustices visited on them broadly as a race and on Palm Island specifically.

This idyllic tropical setting therefore, is in stark contrast to the conditions and history of the Indigenous people of this area, people who chose not to conform to the notoriously repressive Protection Act legislation that controlled every aspect of people's lives and who therefore suffered a variety of maltreatment. For a background to the series of legislative interventions into the lives of Indigenous Australians, see 'Indigenous Australia Timeline – 1901 to 1969 : A timeline of events relating to Indigenous Australians from the time of Federation in 1901 until 1969' at <http://australianmuseum.net.au/Indigenous-Australia-Timeline-1901-to-1969>.



VERNON AH KEE

In 2004, racial tension on Palm Island boiled over following the first coronial inquest into the death while in custody of Mulrunji Doomadgee, a local man. The subsequent riot by the locals was the result of a verdict that struck them as inaccurate and unjust. Mulrunji's death was repeatedly branded 'cold-blooded murder'. The local courthouse, police station and police barracks were burned down and eighteen local police and their families were forced to withdraw and barricade themselves in the hospital. Later the same day, approximately eighty police from Townsville and Cairns were flown to Palm Island to restore order.

TALL MAN – INSTALLATION (2010)

This terrifying experience is the subject of local artist Vernon Ah Kee's video installation *Tall Man*, in which activist and town councillor Lex Wotton is portrayed as a hero for his role in the riot. Although the work's title is closely related to journalist Chloe Hooper's award-winning book *The Tall Man*, based on the circumstances surrounding Mulrunji's death, the artist's *Tall Man* is an idea of Wotton as the *Tall Man*, the man that rose up in protest and anger.

Tall Man captures the terror, the hysteria, the rage – those powerful emotions that are behind the headlines. (For more information about both Palm Island and Lex Wotton, see the Appendix.)

Vernon Ah Kee was born in 1967 in Innisfail, Queensland, and is a member of the Kuku Yalandji, Waanji, Yidinji and Gugu Yimithirr peoples. One of Australia's most influential contemporary artists, the diversity of his practice reflects the complexity of the contemporary Indigenous experience.

Vernon is best known for his conceptual text pieces, videos, photographs and drawings that critique Australian popular culture from the perspective of the Aboriginal experience of contemporary life. His monumentally scaled pencil portraits of Aboriginal family members gaze defiantly at the viewer.

Typically his work questions the optimistic rhetoric of 'multiculturalism' in post-colonial Australia, and in *Tall Man* he continues his investigations into the constructed nature of history, revealing the ongoing struggle for truth as 'history is always written by the victors'. He reflects:

Tall Man asks questions, questions that compel. What of Lex Wotton? And why don't we talk about Palm Island? When we say 'Palm Island', there are connotations that fix us, that give us pause, and send our emotions racing toward tipping points. Like when we say 'Cronulla'.

This powerful four-channel work is of crucial importance to Australia. *Tall Man* tells the story of the 2004 Palm Island riots that occurred in response to the death in custody of Cameron Doomadgee, the 147th Aboriginal person to die in custody since 1990. The events of the day of the riot are told through combining footage from mobile phones and video cameras, much of it filmed by members of the Palm Island police force, which he then edits together with archival news footage. *Tall Man* employs footage that was initially used during the trial of Lex Wotton, the 'tall man' of the title, and which contributed to his conviction and imprisonment on charges of inciting a riot.

'We are an oppressed people!' – Lex Wotton's mother

VERNON AH KEE WITH HETTI PERKINS

Vernon redeploys this imagery to tell a different story. Through editing together numerous perspectives of the public announcement of the coroner's report, the outraged reactions of the crowd, Wotton's mother's impassioned pleas, and the confrontation between locals and police, the artist builds a narrative of a community taking a stand against injustice.

CANTCHANT, INSTALLATION (2009)

An invitation to audiences to perceive the black man's world differently is developed dramatically in the installation *cantchant*. Created for Brisbane's Institute of Modern Art in 2007, the work was also selected for the 2009 Venice Biennale. *cantchant* confronts white Australian beach culture in the wake of the 2005 Cronulla Riots. The title is a sardonic reference to the chanting of (mostly white) rioters: 'we grew here, you flew here', which Vernon regards as an insincere excuse for racial violence. *cantchant* can be seen as challenging white Australian beach ideology by making visible the invisibility of Aboriginal sovereignty.

The work has three components: an installation of custom-made surfboards bearing North Queensland Indigenous rainforest shield designs, a body of surrounding text works and a 'surf' video that contains three scenes. The boards, hung vertically with the traditional designs facing the audience as they enter the gallery space, are arranged in a formation that temporarily transforms them into warriors painted and prepared for battle; the viewers potentially are the enemy. Once past the warring configuration, the audience are confronted by something of a human presence protected behind and within the underside of the boards. What is present, however, are severely cropped large-scale portraits, most rendering a large single eye as the dominant feature, staring intensely, casting an 'evil-eye' on those who have intruded.

On the walls surrounding this installation is an assortment of text works, which engage the issues at hand in the ways made familiar in Ah Kee's earlier works: they are overtly political as a whole, while politicising the everyday. *hang ten* for instance, an institutional reference to popular surf culture and surf fashion, starts to hint at more sinister undercurrents when read in conjunction with other texts such as *yourdutyistoaccommodateme/mydutyistotolerateyou*.

While *we/grew/here* is a direct reference to the chanting of the Cronulla rioters, Vernon appropriates it, as a correction to some fundamental misconception. The sound of gunfire in the neighbouring room, followed shortly by the thumping rhythm of the Warumpi Band's 1990s Aboriginal Rock classic *Stompin Ground*, coalesce to generate a sense of apprehension.

The video work is integral to how the larger installation is read. It consists of three separate but interrelated scenes: the bush scene, the beach scene and the surfing flick. As a looped sequence, there is no clear beginning and end. The bush scene starts with a picturesque but largely unremarkable bush landscape – not desert interior and not coastal fringe, but possibly a hinterland. Nothing much appears to be happening – it just is. In a flash we are up-close to a surfboard, entangled in rusted, barbed wire, suspended in the air. Next, another surfboard also bound with barbed wire to a large burnt-out tree stump. Suddenly, the explosion of a gun, then the impact on the surfboard: a gaping hole blown into its pale, fragile body. The board recoils in the air, unable to fly loose of its tether. The other board is also fired upon, its nose blown away. It also recoils against the shot but is pulled up fast against its binding. We see the ominous sight of the barrel – long, slender, and black, but we see no hand and no obvious clue as to who the perpetrator might be. Finally the violence is over and we are privy to the disposal of the victim; a bound and

shattered board is tossed into a creek to let nature take its course and wash away the remains.

This scene can be interpreted as a metaphor for colonial violence against Aboriginal people – a lynching, a massacre site in Australian history, perhaps representing Australia's repressed memory. While the metaphor appears appropriate, what our artist has achieved is far more challenging. At first glance the whiteness of the surfboard is unremarkable, until it is seen in contrast to the blackness of the tree limb from which it hangs. Suddenly the board is more than the stock-standard, off-the-shelf variety; it is a white board and by extension a white body. Correspondingly, the sleek black shaft of the rifle can be read as being attached to a black body.

The tables are turned in a way which unsettles the comfort of even the most sympathetic audience. The idea of black violence against white Australia is not a concept readily toyed with.

TRANSFORMING TINDALE, PHOTOGRAPHIC EXHIBITION (2012)

Vernon argues through his art that white people can only see Aboriginal people as fully human if the context is Western. He has stripped away any romantic notions of 'the noble savage' in his series of large-scale portraits of family members, drawn as a response to the anthropologist Norman Tindale's genealogy expeditions in the 1930s. This installation of thirteen sensitively drawn charcoal portraits of family, relatives and ancestors from Palm Island, Queensland, were inspired by the photographs of Norman Tindale, who documented Aboriginal people from all over Australia from the 1920s to the 1960s. While a valuable record, particularly of the connection of Aboriginal peoples to specific lands, the photographs also infer a degree of underlying racism present in Australian society, a subject regularly addressed in Vernon's drawings and text works.

Tindale's detached, formal portraits (which include images of the artist's own great-grandfather and grandfather), identified by number rather than name, were often cropped so that the heads appeared as 'mugshots' rather than dignified studies. This is reflected in the off-centre composition of Vernon's drawings. The artist's cool, precise drawing style is also suggestive of the ways that art (and especially photography) is able to aestheticise or manipulate the truth of situations, although the piercing gazes of the subjects provide a subtle yet deliberate measure of directness and emotional intensity.

The facial resemblances in these compelling portraits suggest an ongoing familial connection, reaffirming the artist's place within the group and anchoring his position in the world. This genealogical study of the men in Vernon's family is a visual record of the solidarity, continuity and endurance of a single family and, by extension, of Aboriginal culture. He first saw these photographs, in miniature, in his grandmother's purse. Like his drawings, they capture what Vernon describes as 'the gaze' – a steely look of emotion, persistence, endurance and protest. Unheard stories are given a voice in this powerful exhibition.

Transforming Tindale is a thought-provoking journey into what it means to Aboriginal people and its place in Queensland's history.

Hetti has the appropriate closing observation of this powerful and confronting episode:

Aboriginal people are producing great works of exceptional beauty and meaning, often from stories of great cruelty. Through the imagination of our Aboriginal artists, a better future can be imagined for the whole country.

Appendix

- **The Coniston Massacre:** 1928 marked the end of a long, bloody and shameful history of killings and massacres of Aboriginal people that had occurred throughout the country since the start of British colonisation in 1788.
  In 1928 Central Australia experienced a severe drought that reduced the ground water. The original owners of the land did what they had done for thousands of years and gravitated to their ancient water sources, mainly in the form of soaks. For the pastoralists, the lack of water came at a crucial time as they were carving out vast tracts of land to run cattle.
  Conflicts between Aboriginal people and white settlers resulted. The Aboriginal people were angry as they watched their waterholes being destroyed by cattle, fences being erected and white men taking their women as wives or servants. Their law, customs and traditions were being violated.
  The new pastoralists became increasingly agitated by the 'cheeky' Aborigines. In these parts, not only had they had become a nuisance, but they were competing with their cattle for the precious water.
  On Coniston Station, just north of what is today Yuendumu, dingo trapper Fred Brooks made camp at a soak he shared with around twenty Warlpiri people. After taking liberties with one of the women, he was murdered by her husband, the now notorious Bullfrog. Led by Mounted Constable William Murray, a series of reprisal killings resulted in the slaughter of around 100 Aboriginal people. The devastating impact of these killings forced the owners of the land to move away, too terrified and grief-stricken to move back.
  The pastoralists appeared to have won, but concerned missionaries generated huge media interest and a federal enquiry was set up. This inquiry heard that thirty-one people were shot, although this is heavily disputed, but the most disturbing element of the findings was 'killing of all blacks to be justified'. The Indigenous people from the area were excluded from the inquiry. The events of that three-month period are still fresh in the minds of the Warlpiri, Anmatjere, Kaytete and Allyawar people today.

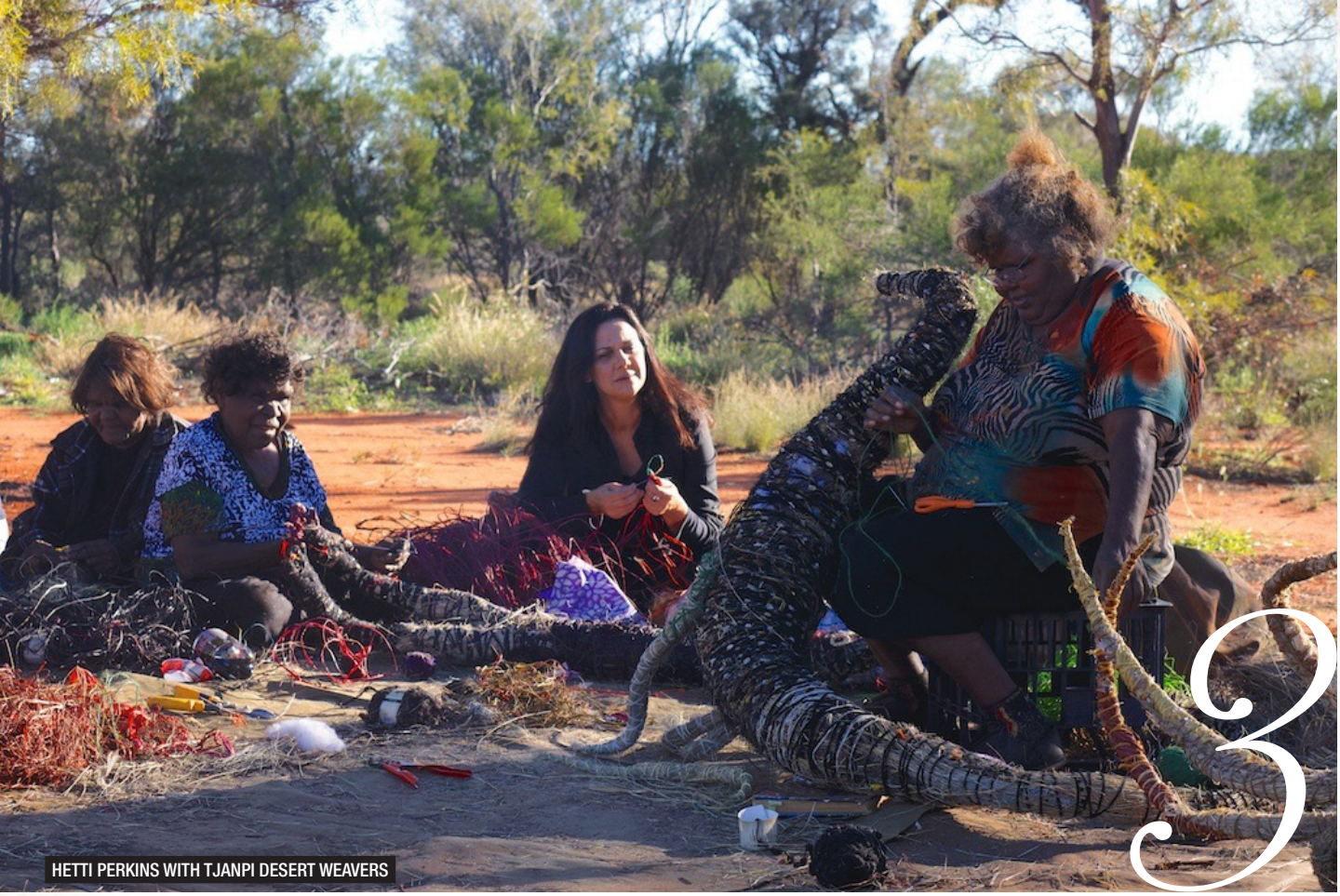
- **Diaspora:** A diaspora (from Greek 'scattering, dispersion') is a scattered population with a common origin in a smaller geographic area. Diaspora can also refer to the movement of the population from its original homeland. Diaspora has come to refer particularly to historical mass dispersions of an involuntary nature, such as the expulsion of Jews from Europe, the African Transatlantic slave trade, the Meskhetian Turks in 1945, the southern Chinese during the Coolie slave trade or the century-long exile of the Messenians under Spartan rule. Recently, scholars have distinguished between different kinds of diaspora based on their causes, such as imperialism, trade or labor migrations, or by the kind of social coherence within the diaspora community and its ties to the ancestral lands. Some diaspora communities maintain strong political ties with their homeland. Other qualities that may be typical of many diasporas are thoughts of return, relationships with other communities in the diaspora, and lack of full assimilation into the host country.
- **The Northern Territory Intervention:** The Northern Territory National Emergency Response (also referred to as 'the intervention') was a package of changes to welfare provision, law enforcement, land tenure and other measures. On 21 June 2007, the Australian Government announced a 'national emergency response to protect Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory' from sexual abuse and family violence. This has become known as the 'NT intervention' or the 'Emergency Response'. The catalyst for the measures was the release of Report of the Northern Territory Board of Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse, titled 'Little Children are Sacred'. In the following months the emergency announcements were developed and formalised into a package of Commonwealth legislation which was passed by the federal Parliament and received Royal Assent on the 17 August 2007.
  The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission welcomed the Australian Government's announcements to act to protect the rights of Indigenous women and children in the Northern Territory. In doing so, the Commission urged the government and Parliament to adopt an approach that is consistent with Australia's international human rights obligations and particularly with the Racial Discrimination Act 1975.
- **The 1830 Tasmanian Governor's Proclamation:** In 1830, small 'proclamation boards' containing pictograms began appearing on trees in Van Diemen's Land. They were designed to show that Aboriginal people and Europeans were equal before the law. Based on drawings by the Surveyor General George Frankland (1800–1838), they underscored the proclamations of 1828 by Lieutenant Governor George Arthur (1784–1854), in which he declared martial law and banned Aboriginal people from entering settled areas. Described by nineteenthth-century historian James Bonwick as 'the expedition against the Aborigines on the principle of the Fine Arts', the boards could be likened to a comic strip in appearance. Arthur's proclamation came amidst increasing violence between settlers and Aboriginal people.
  The four panels were intended to show that Aboriginal people and Europeans were equal before the law. The top two panels show them mixing in harmony; the lower two panels show their receiving the same punishment, the death penalty, for murder. In fact, although many Aboriginal people were executed in Tasmania, no white person was ever charged, let alone convicted and hanged.
- **The Black Line:** During the 1820s, white settlers poured into what was then known as Van Diemen's Land, bringing vast numbers of sheep and rapidly taking up the land. Aboriginal resistance hardened. The colony fell into a state of panic as attacks and murders became more and more frequent.
  In 1828, Governor Arthur proclaimed martial law – in effect, a declaration of war. Soldiers had the right to arrest or shoot on site any Aboriginal found in the settled district (the central and south-east areas of the island). The Indigenous Tasmanians adopted guerrilla tactics, striking with fire and spear when least expected and vanishing into the forests, terrorising the small, scattered and vulnerable European populations. Vigilante gangs of soldiers and settlers avenged Aboriginal attacks by killing men, women and children.
  In 1830 a military operation known as the 'Black Line' was launched against the Aboriginal people remaining in the settled districts. Every able-bodied male colonist convict or free, was to form a human chain across the settled districts, moving for three weeks south and east in a pincer movement until the people were cornered on the Tasman Peninsula. The Black Line captured only an old man and a boy but succeeded in clearing the remaining Aboriginal people out of the area.
  Between 1829 and 1834, George Augustus Robinson – the 'Conciliator' – travelled through Tasmania, gathering the Aboriginal people who were still alive. He did this with the approval of the colonial government. Robinson thought he was saving the people – he wanted them to become Christians and to abandon their culture. 135 survivors from the mainland were sent to Wybalenna, a bleak settlement on Flinders Island in Bass Strait.
- **Flinders Island:** On Flinders Island the people were to be 'civilised' and 'Christianised'. However, they were unused to living in overcrowded European houses, were forbidden to practise their old ways and were homesick for their lost country. Many died of respiratory disease, poor food and despair. Robinson left for Victoria before he could see the terrible consequences of his policy.
  In 1847, the forty-seven survivors of Wybalenna were transferred to Oyster Cove near Hobart. They were the only known group of 'tribal' people remaining. The deaths continued, however. A few managed to survive by leaving the reserve. Truganini, the last of this group and for many years regarded as the 'last Tasmanian', died in 1876. By this time, however, a vigorous Aboriginal community had established itself in the Bass Strait islands. They were descended from people who had slipped through the government net.
- **Lex Wotton** was a two-time councillor on the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council when Cameron

Doomadgee died in custody. Wotton led approximately 1000 people in the Palm Island Riots. Wotton was arrested, but on his release he was hailed as a hero by many residents of Palm Island. He continued to act as a leader and even ran for mayor of the North Queensland Aboriginal community. Approximately four years after the riot, Wotton was found guilty of inciting a riot and sentenced to seven years in prison.
On Friday 19 November 2004, 36-year-old Palm Island resident Cameron Doomadgee was arrested for public drunkenness and died in police custody an hour later. The coroner's report was released on Friday 26 November, and read to a community meeting. After hearing that Doomadgee had died from a ruptured liver in the scuffle at the island's watch-house, a succession of angry young Aboriginal men spoke to the crowd and encouraged immediate action be taken against the police. Doomadgee's death was repeatedly branded 'cold-blooded murder'. Wotton joined 1000 other people in a riot on Palm Island that resulted in the police station, the courthouse and the home of the officer-in-charge being burned down. In an interview with *The Courier-Mail*, Wotton justified the riot, saying that the residents did not believe the death was an accident and the residents had set fire to the police station because they had been 'crying out for help' and no-one had listened. Additionally, Wotton sought an investigation by the Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) and wanted the government to agree to move all police from the island. Before his *Courier-Mail* newspaper interview was delivered to the public and in response to Wotton's actions during the riot, police entered Wotton's home at 4.45am Saturday and used a stun gun on the back of his leg to arrest him, all the time pointing a rifle at his fifteen-year-old daughter's head as she sat on a bedroom floor. At the time, Wotton became one of seventeen defendants, all males, charged in the Palm Island riots and was alleged to be the riot ringleader. At the Townsville Magistrate Court on 29 November, Lex Patrick Wotton was charged with 'arson (two counts), serious assault on police (three counts), wilful damage and riot causing damage'. For further information, see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trial_of_Lex_Wotton>.

- **Norman Barnett Tindale** (1900–1993) was an Australian anthropologist, archaeologist, entomologist and ethnologist. Tindale is best remembered for his work mapping the various tribal groupings of Indigenous Australians. This interest began with a research trip to Groote Eylandt, where an Anindilyakwa man gave Tindale very detailed descriptions as to which land was his and which land was not. This led Tindale to question the official orthodoxy of the time, which was that Aboriginal people were purely nomadic and had no connection to any specific region. While Tindale's methodology and his notion of the dialectal tribe have been superseded, this basic premise has been proved correct. At the University of Adelaide he had a fifty-year collaboration with Joseph Birdsell of Harvard University and performed anthropological surveys in 1938–39 and 1952–54 on Aboriginal missions across Australia. Quite a number of important films were recorded by Tindale.

LIST OF ARTWORKS EPISODE 2

1. **Warwick Thornton:**
   - *Samson and Delilah*, 2009. Medium: film.
   - *Mother Courage* installation, 2012
   - *Debil-Debil*, 2013 photographic series.
   - *Stranded* installation. Medium: 3D digital video: colour, sound
2. **Marlene Rubuntja, Loretta Banks:** *Little Dingi*, 2012. Medium: animated film.
3. **John Glover:** *Mills Plains, Ben Lomond and Ben Nevis in the distance*, 1836. Medium: oil painting.
4. **Unknown artist:** *Governor Arthur's Proclamation to the Aboriginal People*, c.1830. Medium: oil on Huon pine board; 35.5 x 22.6cm
5. **Julie Gough:**
   - *The Consequence of Chance*, installation, 2011. Medium: calico, pine, cardboard, lights.
   - *She was sold for one guinea*, 2007. Medium: book, wooden shelf, beads, cloth.
   - *Some Tasmanian Aboriginal children living with non-Aboriginal people before 1840*, 2008, installation. Medium: found chair, burnt tree sticks.
   - *The Chase*, 2008. Medium: chaise lounge, burnt tee spear legs, pins.
   - Lost World collection: *The Traveller*, 2013. Medium: HDMI video projection, colour, sound.
   - *Locus*, 2006, installation. Medium: tea-tree sticks, cuttlefish, written pages.
6. **Vernon Ah Kee:**
   - *Tall Man*, 2010, four-channel video installation.
   - *cantchant*, 2006 installation.
   - *Annie Ah Sam (A&B)*, 2008, included in the Transforming Tindale exhibition, 2012. Medium: pastel, charcoal and synthetic polymer paint on canvas.
   - neither pride nor courage, 2006, included in the Transforming Tindale exhibition, 2012. Medium: pastel, charcoal and synthetic polymer paint on canvas.



HETTI PERKINS WITH TJANPI DESERT WEAVERS

3

Episode Three

LOVE AND LONGING

‘This country is in our DNA. Its essence is something we carry with us always, no matter where our lives may lead. Art … is a way of finding our way home.’ – Hetti Perkins

As in episodes one and two, Hetti Perkins acquaints us with a little more of her family history and, in this episode, the connection between art and family is particularly strong: we are now located in the township of Alice Springs, or Mbantwe, where Hetti’s father Charlie Perkins was born at the old Telegraph Station on the outskirts of ‘Alice’, as it is often affectionately named. Charlie’s birthplace was the site of a ‘half-caste’ children’s home – a degrading and yet commonplace term for children of mixed-race ancestry – established in 1915 and finally closed in 1960. It is known to many of the descendants of those children as ‘The Bungalow’.

Hetti’s father said that he was ‘born into a divided atmosphere’ and, for most of the twentieth century, Alice Springs was a divided town by law. Not only blacks and whites were kept separate, but many Aboriginal families were torn apart under the guise of ‘assimilation’. (See Appendix.)

» REMOTE ART CENTRES – THE WESTERN DESERT ART AND CULTURE – *TJUKURRPA*

Located across the country, representing and nurturing artists, art centres play a vital role in rebuilding culture and community. In his essay ‘Art history in remote Aboriginal areas’, Darren Jorgenson, Professor of Art History at the University of Western Australia, observes:

Remote art centres offer dynamic opportunities for doing twenty-first century art history. Founded in an era of political self-determination for remote Aboriginal people, these centres aspire to create an opportunity for the expression of a cultural difference whose origins precede the invasion and colonisation of Australia. Art centres and their archives present an opportunity to work through the legacies of colonialism in the art history of remote Australian Aboriginal artists.

In other words, these communities, recording their stories, replicated often over thousands of kilometres, speak to us all of an ancient bond with country, which is now also taking its place in the international art world. Art is thus a way of understanding the historical events that have shaped the lives today of Indigenous Australians, and for many artists – and for our presenter, Hetti – art is a way of celebrating, and even ‘finding our way home’. Ensuring a new sense of independence, these centres are like the branches of

WARAKURNA ARTISTS

an ancient tree, recording and preserving a culture firmly rooted in country, with its tendrils coursing throughout the land and across the sea.

» WARAKURNA AND WANARN ARTISTS

At the first artists' centres we visit – the remote communities of Warakurna and Wanarn – painting, for the elderly of these areas, is the most cherished activity.

Warakurna is situated on the Great Central Road in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands of Western Australia, approximately 330 kilometres from Uluru near the border with the Northern Territory. The township of approximately 180 people is nestled amongst the spectacular Rawlinson Ranges in the Gibson Desert, close to the Giles Meteorological Weather Station.

Warakurna has a long history of artistic expression. In March 2005, the Art Centre studio was opened amid much enthusiasm and excitement. The Art Centre is fully owned and governed by Aboriginal people and provides services to artists living in and visiting Warakurna and the nearby community of Wanarn.

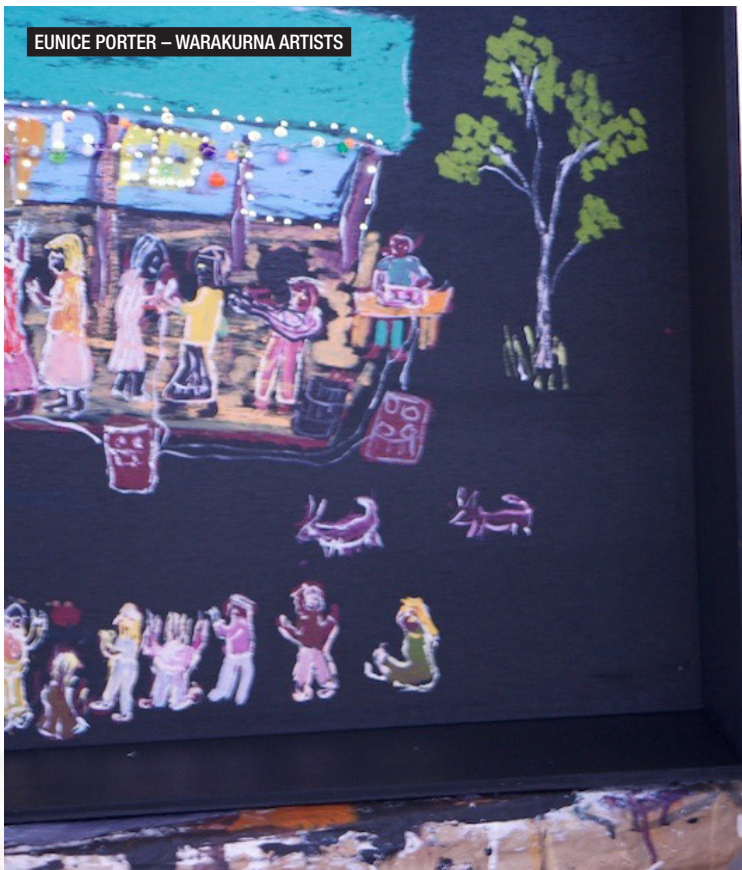
Warakurna Artists is an energetic, creative and happy place where men and women, young and old, paint and share *Tjukurrpa* (traditional law, culture and ancestral tales) and contemporary stories. Passing on these important stories to young people is a critical means of keeping culture vital and strong. The Art Centre plays an important role in the community, providing cultural and social benefits in addition to economic returns.

For the old people of the local aged care facility in nearby Wanarn, art is a way of returning home to the place of their birth, expressing their love and longing for a time and a place that lives on in their hearts. This art portrays the landscape before the boundary riders tore through the heart of their country. (See Appendix.)

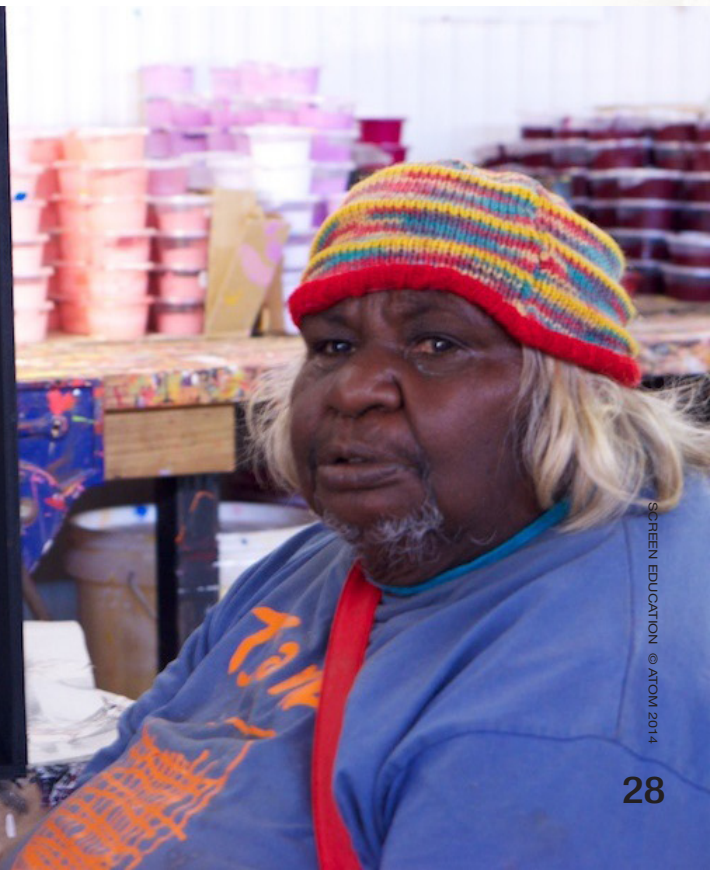
MYRA COOK – PAINTER

Myra Cook was born at Kartjinguku Creek, near Warakurna in the Gibson Desert, Western Australia. She began to paint with Warakurna Artists in mid 2005 and has rapidly become one its senior emerging artists. Myra Cook paints important Ngaanyatjarra stories from her mother's and father's country using synthetic polymer paint on canvas.

Warakurna's premier artists also include Tommy Mitchell, Tjapartji Bates, Carol Maayatja Golding, Peter Tjarluri Lewis, Tjunka Lewis and Rachel Yukultja Jennings. Most began painting in 2005, with a few exceptions.



EUNICE PORTER – WARAKURNA ARTISTS



NUCLEAR TESTING AND DISPOSSESSION – MARALINGA – TRIUMPH OUT OF TRAGEDY

In the 1960s, a series of British nuclear tests were carried out with the authorisation and involvement of the Australian government at the place known as Maralinga, an event which saw the forced expulsion from their lands of the Anangu–Pitjantjatjara people. Those who weren't left behind became refugees in their own country. But the love of the Anangu people for their country and their culture endured, and today their art centres play a vital role in maintaining the cultural lifelines that flow through central Australia.

» TJALA ARTS, AMATA: *OUR ART, OUR BUSINESS*

At the western end of the Musgrave Ranges of South Australia lies the Aboriginal community of Amata. Tjala Artists is its beating heart, into which the storylines and songlines from the surrounding lands flow and emerge in myriad paintings of *Tjukurrpa*. The principle 'Our Art, Our Business' is at the kernel of the Arts Centre model that has emerged in the Central Desert Region. In Hetti's interview with the Art Centre chairman, Mr Frank Young, he explains the mission statement of this artists' community:

The stories of long ago are being brought to life for future generations. When they (the artists) *put them on canvas and tell stories that they've learnt from their ancestors, they are … painting for the future. Children come into the Centre to paint and the old people show them how … When old people pass on, the younger generation take up the stories. This keeps the culture strong and the story alive for them …*

THE *PUNU* MOTIF AND 'SECRET BUSINESS'

The philosophy of *Our Art, Our Business* is embodied in the tree or *punu* motif, and we are seeing in these works a new way of communicating in contemporary art. Once again, Frank Young explains the significance of this motif:

The whitefella family tree is the exact opposite of how Anangu people think of the family tree. I have seen the whitefella family tree drawing with the ancestors at the top where the leaves are. Our way – Anangu way – the ancestors are the roots. Great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers are the roots. Us middle ones – the men and women who made these paintings – we are the trunk of the tree. The young fellas and young women, the future of our families are the leaves on the trees, and the leaves that are yet to be seen.

However some stories, Mr Young informs us, are not for revelation to the world. The art community at Amata is strongly conservative about spiritual knowledge, which in Western Desert cultures is meant to be kept secret. Mr Young uses the metaphor of the tree, with its trunk and leaves showing yet its roots hidden underground, to illustrate that there is an 'outside' (or public) story that can

HECTOR BURTON – TJALA ARTS

be shared in the artworks, yet always an 'inside' (or private) story that must be retained by the community for their use only. In this way, only the basics of traditional beliefs are described in these works, so as to preserve culture. As Hetti tells us, 'this art is so much more than just a pretty picture to go with the sofa!'.

KUNMANARA RILEY AND KATANARI TJILYA, AMATA ARTISTS AT TJALA ARTS

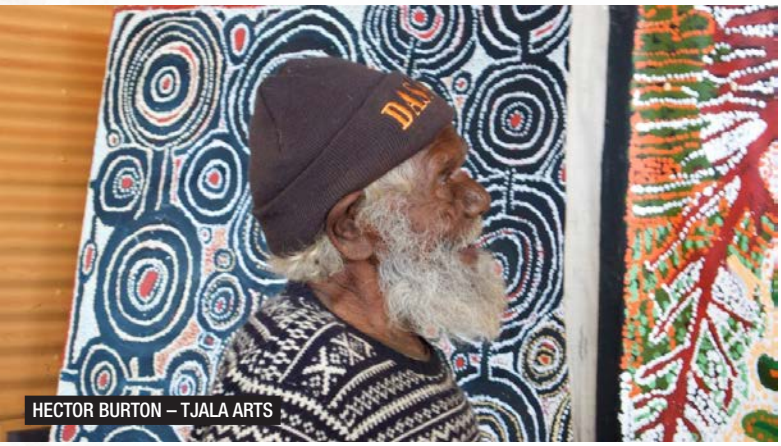
Kunmanara and Katanari are from Amata and are skilled painters and weavers. Their vibrantly beautiful *Punu* (2011), featured in this episode, is acrylic on canvas.

HECTOR TJUPURU BURTON AT TJALA ARTS – AND THE 'SECRET BUSINESS'

Hector Burton is another leading Amata artist. His work has been shown in exhibitions since 2003 in several cities in Australia and overseas. His first solo exhibition was held in Melbourne in 2004. Examples of his paintings are held in the National Gallery of Victoria, the Art Gallery of South Australia, the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and Flinders University.

Hector Burton started painting in 2002. Painting among Pitjantjatjara was originally done by women only. Men did not join the women until several years later, because they were afraid of revealing too much spiritual knowledge. Hector Burton was one of the first men at Amata to begin painting; the company changed its name to Tjala Arts in 2004, after several other men joined him.

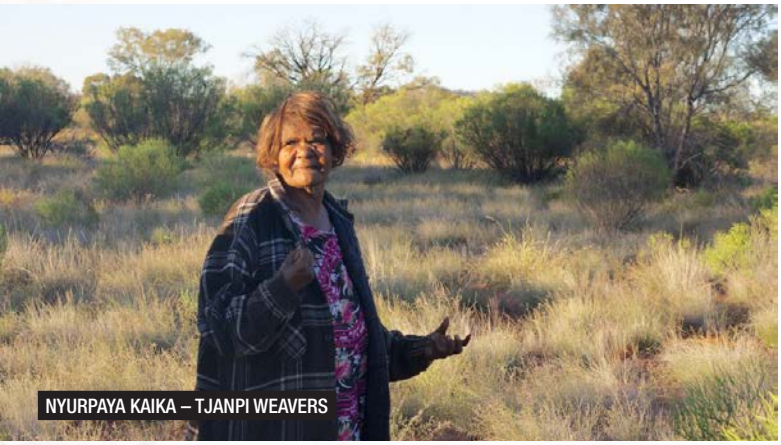
To keep the meanings of his paintings hidden, Hector Burton uses dotting and other techniques to disguise


HECTOR BURTON – TJALA ARTS

sacred figures and ancient symbols. He is a strong supporter of maintaining strict forms of secrecy when it comes to art produced in his community. He is now a board member of Tjala Arts and often coordinates projects and exhibitions with the other artists.

His early paintings represent legends from his family's Dreaming. They also show strong Christian influences; he was taught by Presbyterian missionaries when he was growing up at Ernabella and he mixed these beliefs with his family's Dreaming. When he was older he was ordained as a minister and is now a senior member of the Church on the Anangu–Pitjantjatjara–Yankunytjatjara lands.

Since the latter part of 2011, he and several other men from Amata have led a project to change the subject of their artists' work. Instead of depicting sacred Dreaming knowledge, he and the other board members of Tjala Arts have encouraged their artists to paint about other things (such as the landscape or wildlife). He and the other leaders decided that the popularity of Western Desert art had resulted in people asking too many questions about their traditional designs and too much secret knowledge being revealed. The centre's first exhibition under this project was held in March 2012 in Alice Springs. The exhibition was called *Punu-Nguru* (*From the Trees*) and its paintings depicted traditional designs of trees from the artists' home countries.


NYURPAYA KAIKA – TJANPI WEAVERS

To access the catalogue and see these exquisite examples of the work of Western Desert artists, see <http://tjalaarts.com.au/download/Tjala-raft-2012.pdf> and <http://www.pinterest.com/gregcastillo/punu-ngura-project-amata-community-tjala-arts/>.

» THE TJANPI DESERT WEAVERS

'Art is a beautiful way to teach our children.' – Tjanpi artist

In more than twenty small desert communities covering an area of 350,000 square kilometres where the borders of Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory converge, hundreds of women are harvesting and weaving local grasses to make sculptural works that are recognised nationally and internationally. While the contemporary painting movement offers a way of reinventing cultural traditions, for the Tjanpi (meaning *grass*) Desert Weavers, creating woven sculptural forms with native grasses is a new form of expressing *Tjukurrpa* and the events of everyday life.


NYURPAYA KAIKA – TJANPI DESERT WEAVERS

Since 1995, the Tjanpi Desert Weavers have been making woven forms ranging from classic baskets to quirky and colourful objects such as giant lizards, dogs, birds, teapots and even life-sized people, which are often decorated with emu feathers and painted seed pods. But the Tjanpi group is probably best known for its giant replica of a Toyota 4WD, which in 2005 won first prize in the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award.

The judges of the prestigious Indigenous art award that year, Doug Hall, director of the Queensland Art Gallery, and visual artist Destiny Deacon, summed up the common consensus to the win when they said:

Tjanpi Grass Toyota *is a wonderfully witty, well-crafted and relevant work. In one sense it takes us to the heart of community life and its tradition of weaving from grass that belongs to the women's country. On the other hand, this work not only recognises but also celebrates the four-wheel drive as central to desert living for Aboriginal people.*

The Toyota certainly dominates the room in Darwin's Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. The curator of Aboriginal Art and Material Culture, Christiane Keller, says it is one of the gallery's most popular pieces. 'Visitors don't need an explanation for this work of Aboriginal art,' she says. 'Visitors all smile or laugh and are amazed about the size, the technique and the presence of it.'

This 'mobile arts centre' services over 400 artists in over twenty remote desert communities and was devised to follow the pattern of community life – travelling, gathering, singing and dancing, of being 'out bush' in country.

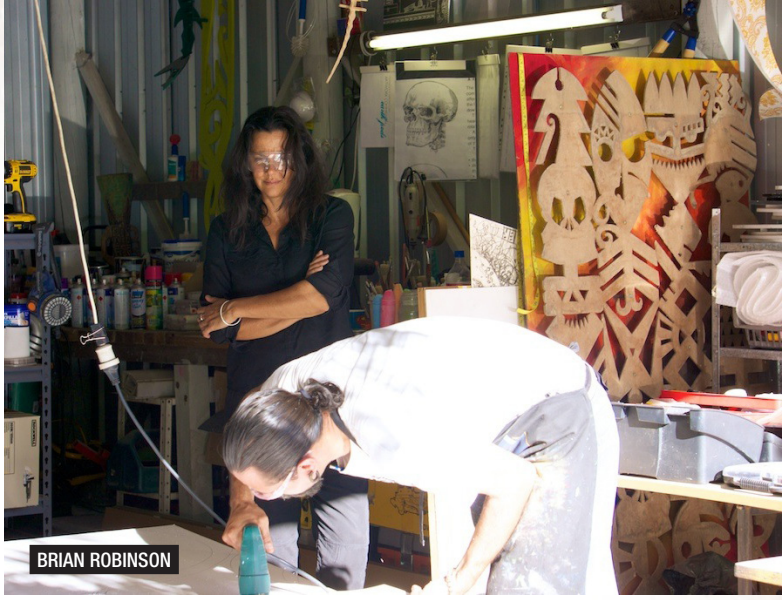
At its core, Tjanpi is about family and community. Not only do women earn money from selling their fibre work but while out collecting grass they take time to hunt, gather food, visit sacred sites and teach their children about country. Tjanpi work is work that does more than accommodates social and cultural obligations – it encourages them. The Tjanpi family is a wide-reaching network of mothers, daughters, aunties, sisters and grandmothers whose shared stories, skills and experiences are the bloodline of the desert weaving phenomenon.

Tjanpi's philosophy is to keep culture strong, maintain links with country, and provide meaningful employment to the keepers and teachers of desert weaving. Some of the artists working at Tjala Arts are also skilled weavers.

When Hetti visits the Tjanpi women, they are engaged in creating an installation of The Seven Sisters Dreaming story, a myth that is shared by communities over thousands of kilometers. It is, in essence, a love story, but the eternal pursuit of the sisters by Awati, a man, who is embodied as a tree or a rock-hole, is re-enacted every morning before day-break when the constellation known as The Pleiades rise as a constant reminder of this ancient story of longing written in the heavens. (For a fuller account of this story, see the Appendix.)

For a detailed series of photographs of the Tjanpi Desert Weavers' works, see <http://alcastongallery.com.au/index.php/exhibitions/category/previous/1132>.


BRIAN ROBINSON


BRIAN ROBINSON

» THE TORRES STRAIT ISLANDS: HOME TO A UNIQUE AND DYNAMIC CULTURAL TRADITION

The Torres Strait Islands – our next stop – spread from the northernmost tip of Queensland to Papua New Guinea: a narrow passageway of water and treacherous reef. These islands are home to a unique culture and dynamic cultural tradition. Long before the white man came, the Islanders were the Vikings of the Torres Strait. A seafaring Indigenous people, they were proud and dignified, deriving their spirituality from ancestral ties to the land, the sea and the sky.

BRIAN ROBINSON – ARTIST OF TECHNICAL AND CREATIVE VIRTUOSITY

Brian Robinson grew up on Thursday Island and now lives in Cairns; he has carved a distinctive presence in the remarkably talented generation of contemporary Torres Strait Islander artists. His graphic prints and contemporary sculptures read as episodes in an intriguing narrative, revealing a strong tradition of storytelling within this community. He has deep roots in this country with its strong multicultural heritage. 'My family itself has a number of bloods, woven of everyone from English to Torres Strait Islander to mainland Aboriginal to Malay,' he tells us.

A PLETHORA OF ARTISTIC INSPIRATIONS

In his conversations with Hetti, Brian reflects on the myriad of influences that have inspired his work. Attending mass every Sunday in the local Roman Catholic church drew his attention to the stained glass, statuary and ceremonial practices that surrounded him and that he references in his linocuts. Building upon this, his love of Western art history and the great works of Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci sees images portrayed in the great tradition of the Renaissance frescoes that have been recast with traditional characters from the Torres Strait Islands. All are unexpectedly juxtaposed with superheroes and cartoon figures recognised across the globe. Heroic mythological and god-like figures are present – in particular, a recurring male

wearing a turtle-shell mask. This is a cultural reference to the traditions of Thursday Island ceremonial practices, in which sorcerers wore these elaborate masks to conceal their identity.

STRAIT PROTEAN SERIES: AS THE RAINS FELL AND THE SEAS ROSE, 2011: LINOCUT

This work is part of a larger series of intricate graphic prints. Set within compelling visual puzzles intertwined with organic patterns, the encounters between those contesting cultural traditions are told in this work. Like an arcane manuscript, *Strait Protean* charts a course imbued with the customs and mythology of the Torres Strait Island people, also referencing classical art and pop-culture icons, where forms and characters are co-opted into the spirit world of the Islander's imagination.

UP IN THE HEAVENS THE GODS CONTEMPLATE THEIR NEXT MOVE (SECRET CHARMS ARE GIVEN TO MAN), 2012: LINOCUT

In *Up in the heavens the gods contemplate their next move (secret charms are given to man)*, 2012, aspects of the stories of Ulysses are brought to life in a frenzied ocean, which features a boat caught in an octopus' tentacles. In addition, da Vinci's flying machines are embodied in the paper planes that attempt to escape from their two-dimensional counterparts on the surface. His mighty ancestral beings bear masks through which lighting comes as the conduit between men and gods, and there are multiple symbols of good and evil.

Local customs also make their presence felt in Brian's work. The weaving of palm leaves, for example, is a tradition that dates back centuries in the Torres Strait. In island communities where coconut palms grow, small decorative objects are plaited from fresh leaf. They are usually created for amusement or as children's playthings. However, on festive occasions they appear in great diversity, suspended from buildings and trees by leaf mid-ribs, as well as decorating food tables. This form of plaited decoration is commonly made throughout Oceania, and was introduced into Torres Strait by South Sea Islanders. Invariably, they are inspired by the natural environment – and Brian is inspired by them.

THE WOVEN FISH: INSTALLATION, 2003

Brian's work has contributed significantly to the environs of Cairns, his home for two decades, through a number of major public art installations including the signature five stainless steel woven fish sculptures and fountain installed on the Cairns Esplanade in 2003. *The Woven Fish* is one of the most memorable pieces of public art in Australia, referencing and celebrating local cultural traditions. One of Brian's popular drypoint prints, also titled *Woven Fish* (2010) is a gentle tribute to this local decorative art.

AUGUST 23 1898 – TODAY I COLLECTED WITH MUCH ZEAL, THROUGH THE BARTER AND EXCHANGE OF GIFTS, ANCIENT ARTEFACTS BELONGING TO A RACE OF INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS KNOWN AS TORRES STRAIT ISLANDERS. WOODEN MASKS, PEARL SHELL PENDANTS, SMOKING PIPES, DANCE OBJECTS, AND A STRANGE DEVICE CALLED A USB FLASH DRIVE, WERE AMONG THE ITEMS OBTAINED. A.C. HADDON, 2012: ETCHING IN THREE COLOURS

This three-colour etching on cream coloured paper depicts a collection of artefacts, some with labels attached. The artefacts include wooden masks, pearl shell pendants, smoking pipes, a feathered dance object, a technical drawing instrument, pencils, and a USB flash drive. Handwritten annotations pencilled below the etching name the lengthy title of this piece. This work references two anthropological expeditions that travelled through the Torres Strait in 1898. A.C. Haddon gathered more than 600 artefacts during his first visit in 1888–89, and on his more comprehensively equipped expedition of 1898 acquired a further 1250 objects, arguably the best documented collection from this period. Haddon was convinced that the hundreds of art objects collected had to be saved from almost certain destruction by the zealous Christian missionaries intent on obliterating the religious traditions and ceremonies of the islanders. His findings were published in his 1901 book *Head-hunters; Black, White and Brown*. Hetti observes that the 'memory stick' (the flash drive) inserted into the picture references the artist's own heritage, which was 'collected and catalogued' so intensively in the nineteenth century.

… AND MEANWHILE BACK ON EARTH THE BLOOMS CONTINUE TO FLOURISH, 2013: SCULPTURAL INSTALLATION

In 2013, Brian won the Western Australian Indigenous Art Award with this work, in which he extends his references to multiple planes and dimensions; objects, faces and symbols appear and disappear depending on the viewer's position. What is clearly apparent, though, is a mighty ancestral being – upon his face the mask through which lighting comes as the conduit between men and gods – who creates Triffid-like blooms that spread over the earth. As colourful and celebratory as this artist's work might first appear, there is an element of menace at the heart of this work. Adding to this feeling is a clockwork, mechanical quality to the flowers, which gives the work a strange hyper-real aspect. Indeed, the fecundity of the blooms is almost overwhelming; it's as though it might not be possible to stop them from dividing and repeating. The eye is pulled into the centre of many of these blooms by small details such as a minuscule Spiderman. Such elements (along with his highly polished spray technique) underpin the technical virtuosity of this artist.

Brian's work is crafted with a care that reflects his love and respect for island culture and also captures his childhood: a sense of discovery and wonderment at the marvels and mysteries of the many worlds we live in.

LOLA GREENO (R) WITH DAUGHTER VANESSA GREENO AND HETTI PERKINS

For more information on this multi-talented artist, see <http://au.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/948731/brian-robinson-wins-50000-western-australian-indigenous-art#sthash.aSbf85Wf.dpuf>.

» LOLA GREENO AND ABORIGINAL ELDER AUNTIE DULCIE GREENO: ICONS OF TASMANIA'S HERITAGE WITH AN UNBROKEN TRADITION

Hetti's journey takes us to Tasmania once again, and to the Greeno family, of whom Lola Greeno is the representative for us in this episode. Born on Cape Barren Island, Lola now lives in Launceston. She is one of a handful of Tasmanian artists who make shell necklaces and has transformed this traditional craft into a contemporary artform. The gathering, preparation and stringing of these shells, these 'diamonds in the rough' is a family activity handed down over generations.

Lola Greeno has been making shell necklaces for twenty years, taking up the tradition from her family and extended family – from her eminent mother-in-law, 'Auntie' Dulcie Greeno, for example, who raised ten children and earned an income from selling these beautiful works.

Born in 1946, Lola acknowledges her mother, the late Val MacSween, as teaching her the closely guarded secret methods and relevant cultural knowledge of the Tasmanian Indigenous people associated with making these exquisite necklaces and bracelets. While gathering shells on the beach, Lola reflects on the history and traditions of the shellmakers, contemplating the elders and the earlier women who worked in this art. A labour-intensive process, this involved painstaking gathering, placing the small collected shells inside a larger abalone shell, placing them in a fire built up with 'green smoke', which in turn transformed into an acid that helped to clean the shell, which shone after much cleaning. The very names of these shells – the raw materials of Lola's art – are immensely seductive and suggestive of an underwater-like world of voluptuous otherness: stripey buttons, cats' teeth, toothies, rice shells and maireeners – little bluish-green pearl-like shells that are of great cultural significance for Aboriginal Tasmanians. In all, Lola makes use of eleven types of shell in her work. She says, '… the labour is all in the preparation'.

There are strict rules associated with this pre-contact Tasmanian artistic practice and Lola is observant of these, while at the same time showing a willingness to innovate within the parameters permitted:

Families usually design the shell necklaces and one must closely follow these [designs]. In my case, I recreate my mother's patterns. Today I am developing new designs to tell a story … for instance I have just finished a shell necklace that relates to the Cape Barren Goose, an original bird from my birth island. The water carriers have been a revival that I learned from a cultural workshop on the East Coast of Tasmania with a large group of women.

Today, Lola Greeno actively mentors the younger generation to ensure the continuation of this demanding artistic practice, where preparation of materials and fastidious

attention to detail is paramount. With characteristic altruism and humility, she sees herself as predominantly …

… a Tasmanian Aboriginal woman interested in developing contemporary Aboriginal arts in Tasmania and providing opportunities for emerging artists to advance their skills and talent, to assist them to another level or to be recognised nationally so they can become involved with Indigenous brothers and sisters across the land … I am also highly focused on my cultural relaying of stories of importance to my daughter and grandchildren so that my heritage is recorded.

Necklace-making is an opportunity for women of all ages to get together and share stories, pass knowledge to younger generations and continue to affirm their culture.

The quiet persistence of this tradition is at odds with the brutal history of race relations in Tasmania and production of these necklaces mirrors the events of this legacy: few necklaces were made in the 1800s, a traumatic period for the Indigenous Tasmanians who suffered attempted genocide, relocation to Flinders Island, violence and introduced diseases.


LOLA GREENO STRINGING SHELLS

Auntie Dulcie Greeno, an elder of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community, was born in 1923 on Cape Barren Island, one of the Furneaux Islands group. She lived for many years on nearby Flinders Island, where she and her family continued the Aboriginal traditions of mutton-birding and cray-fishing, and now lives in Launceston.

Auntie Dulcie has been making necklaces for more than forty years, but first began practising as a child. 'My grandmother used to do shell necklaces and a couple of my aunties', she said in an interview for *Australian Museums and Galleries Online*. 'We'd go round with them on the beach and collect shells with them.' Now her sister (Corrie Fullard), daughter (Betty Grace), daughter-in-law (Lola Greeno) and niece (Jeanette James) – all celebrated artists in their own right – make necklaces. Indeed, six of the eight necklaces currently in the National Museum's collections were made by Auntie Dulcie and members of her family.

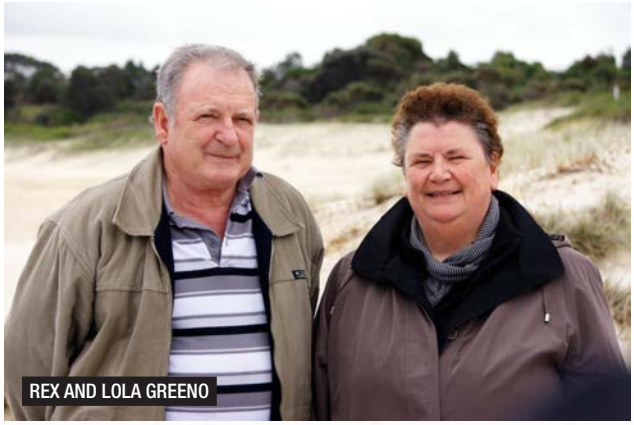

LOLA GREENO STRINGING SHELLS

For more information on this traditional art and its history, see <http://www.nma.gov.au/collections/highlights/tasmanian-aboriginal-shell-necklaces> and *Jewellery and cultural identity: a Tasmanian perspective,* by Ray Norman, Monash University, 1995, Master of Arts, Volume 1: <http://www.zinghouseunlimited.com/pallawaNECKLACEpaper-09AF.pdf>

There is a broad range of Tasmanian Indigenous art encompassing painting, printmaking, basket and mat weaving, quilting, installation work, ceramics and canoe-making. All artists utilise local resources and traditional methods. Grasses, kelp, shells, 'found objects' of historical significance, attest to the vitality and inspiration of this resilient culture. For a detailed introduction to the art and artists of this region, see <http://rralamantamanta.wordpress.com/artists/>.

GEORGE AUGUSTUS ROBINSON

George Augustus Robinson, 'conciliator of Aborigines', emigrated to Hobart in 1824 and became actively involved in religious and philanthropic work. Although tribal life had been utterly disrupted in the decades since European invasion, his missions reveal valuable evidence of Aboriginal languages, customs, life and sanguinary encounters with the settlers. Those he persuaded into captivity – an option they had very little choice but to take at the time – were sent to live unmolested at a permanent settlement at Wybalenna on Flinders Island, over which Robinson took


REX AND LOLA GREENO

personal control in 1835. However, his attempt to replace Aboriginal culture with a nineteenth-century peasant lifestyle was a dismal failure and mortality was severe.

BENJAMIN DUTTERAU: *THE CONCILIATION*, 1840: PAINTING IN OILS

This 1840 painting idealised the work of Robinson and was considered the first historical epic painting in the Australian colonies; it now marks the long path towards legal acknowledgment of Tasmanians of Indigenous descent.

'THE POISONED CHALICE'

In 1835, Robinson was presented with a silver 'loving cup' for his work in 'conciliation', following the failure of the infamous 'Black Line' – that military campaign intended to herd Aboriginal people into a segregated enclave far from white settlers. This gift of thanks from the people of Bothwell in central Tasmania represented a wider sense of appreciation of this man for the task that he had achieved at the behest of the colony. Photographs taken of these exiles on Flinders Island are a melancholy and heart-rending chronicling of a slowly declining community; their faces haunt us with a foreshadowing of their demise through hunger, exposure and disease.

A DARK HISTORY IN A CONTEMPORARY SETTING: *THE ROBINSON CUP*, INSTALLATION

This was not the end of the original Tasmanians or their story, of course. In 2011, Lola Greeno was invited by Damien Quilliam, Curator of Contemporary Australian Art in the newly redeveloped Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG), to respond as an artist to this 'poisoned chalice' in a group installation symbolising the 'colonial blindfold' of Tasmania's history. 'You couldn't respond to that silver cup in words', she reflects, 'without expletives!' Her artistic response, therefore, was:

… to turn my back on that name and that cup, and give my people something to eat and something to wear … like shellfish … possum skins, a piece made with mutton-bird feathers …

Lola was one of a series of Tasmanian Indigenous artists who collaborated in their response to 'The Robinson Cup' and the stories surrounding it; the exhibition at the QVMAG is a clear example of the ongoing traditions of the Tasmanian Aboriginal people. The Tasmanian Aboriginal artists represented spent over a year considering and developing their responses to this object, its original owner, and the dark and bloody history associated with it. The works represent not only their individual responses, but also how this object, and the story it represents, has shaped their lives and community.

One of the elements we are shown in this installation is the *nine water carriers*, which acknowledges and pays homage to the nine Tasmanian Aboriginal nations, and references the interconnected relationship that Aboriginal people (past and present) have with the natural world. The water carriers rest on pelts of wallaby and kangaroo which references the 'Old People's' use of kangaroo skins for creating pillows for sleeping on and cloaks that gave protection to the wearer from the elements.

Lola contributed 'nine cultural gifts', many of which we are shown on-screen: echidna quills strung into an ornament, a piece made of mutton-bird feathers, others made of mussels and gumnuts, painted she-oak and gumnut chains. Each piece is dedicated to a different region, depicting a food source and cultural practice used for body adornment.

Shells, feathers and fur: these are all talismans of Lola's childhood, of time spent on Cape Barren Island. For a closer look at these works, see 'The Devil We Know', a paper by Gregory Lehman at <http://www.academia.edu 4801593/The_Devil_We_Know>.

Fellow Tasmanian Julie Gough, an admirer of Lola's work, writes: '… Lola's shell necklaces are intricate responses to place. They reflect where, when and with whom shells are collected.'

TRUGANINI: THE 'LAST TASMANIAN'

Truganini (c.1812–1876) was a woman widely considered to be the last full-blood Aboriginal Tasmanian. Truganini is probably the best known Tasmanian Aboriginal women of the colonial era. Born on Bruny Island in about 1812, just nine years after British settlement was established further north on the mainland, by the time she had learned to collect food and make shell necklaces the colonial presence became not only intrusive but dangerous. She had experienced and witnessed violence, rape and brutalities inflicted on her people. By the time she was seventeen she had lost her mother, sister, uncle and would-be partner to violent incidents involving sailors, sealers, soldiers and woodcutters. At this time, in 1829, the Black War was under way and Truganini was detained at the Missionary Bay station on Bruny Island. Placed in the custody of Augustus Robinson, a government-backed conciliator who set out to capture all independently living Tasmanian Aborigines, she remained for the rest of her life under the supervision of colonial officers. Except for a short interlude, accompanying Robinson in his travels to Port Phillip (now part of Melbourne), she spent twenty years imprisoned, with other Aboriginal Tasmanians, on Flinders Island, and another seventeen years in the Oyster Cove camp, south of Hobart.

Details of her biography are sketchy, predominantly drawn from the journals and papers of Robinson, with whom she was associated for ten turbulent years until her long detention on Flinders Island. She was bright, intelligent and energetic, known as one of the few Aboriginal Tasmanians rooted in pre-contact language and culture, who survived beyond the middle of the nineteenth century. She was frequently depicted in paintings and photographs.

From the position of her Aboriginal beliefs and spirituality, Truganini feared that, when she died, her body would be cut into pieces for scientific or pseudo-scientific purposes, as it had already happened to another Aboriginal Tasmanian, William Lenne, in 1869. She also feared that her remains would be displayed in a museum for public viewing. Truganini pleaded to colonial authorities for a respectful burial. Despite her pleas, her body was taken to the Hobart Museum and put on display until 1947 when, after public and Indigenous protests, it was locked in the Museum stores. Archival film footage informs us the humiliating fate of thousands of skulls and skeletons of the Tasmanian Aborigines – the Royal College of Surgeons in London amassed the largest collection in the world, which were studied and measured. Here was the final resting place for many of the 'tribes and bands' of Tasmania.

Finally, a hundred years after her death, the Palawa people – modern Aboriginal Tasmanians – succeeded in reclaiming Truganini's remains. On 30 April 1976, her remains were cremated at the Cornelian Bay crematorium, where Rosalind Langford, former Secretary of the Aboriginal Information Service in Tasmania, delivered the oration. The following morning, just seven days short of the centenary of her death, Truganini's ashes were scattered in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, close to her birthplace and homeland.

See more at <http://australianmuseum.net.au/Truganini-1812-1876#sthash.KUCFB751.dpuf>.

AND THE CONNECTION TO TRUGANINI AND SHELL WORK?

This is explained by Lola. On a little beach on Cape Barren Island, tiny 'black crow' shells are found in abundance at certain tides. One day, when Lola and a group of women were gathering shells, she remarked on the uniqueness of these shells, to be told that they were called 'Truganini's tears'.

http://www.nma.gov.au/museum_magazine/issue_three/an_ingenious_construction


REX GREENO


REX GREENO

REX GREENO AND THE ART OF MAKING ELEGANT BARK CANOES

Reviving and maintaining cultural traditions runs in the Greeno family and Rex, Lola's husband and son of Auntie Dulcie Greeno, is playing his part in this history. In this case, it's more like resuscitating a craft that has lain dormant for 160 years – canoe-making.

Rex Greeno was born on Flinders Island. From an early age he became involved in a number of cultural practices, including mutton birding, making snares to trap kangaroos, and learning all the elements to catching crayfish and scale fish with his grandfather Silas. After Rex left school, he became a deckhand for his father. At the same time he continued working closely with his brother Bruce, which lead him to work as commercial fisherman for almost forty years.

Growing up on Flinders Island gave Rex and his family ideal opportunity to spend a great deal of time travelling around the Furneaux Islands by sea and, after his retirement, he has turned his love and fascination for his country – the rivers, the lakes, the lagoons and the sea – towards this traditional, brilliant, paperbark craft.

Rex recounts to Hetti a little of Captain Cook's awe at the Indigenous people's skill and speed in these swift, light craft; apparently they could out-pace four of his men in far sturdier, bigger, dinghies. French explorers visiting Tasmania in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and other early European settlers to the island made frequent references to bark canoes that were paddled around southern Tasmania and its offshore islands. The canoes were said to be strong enough to carry up to six men across stormy seas, and often included a hearth at one end, which carried fire from one place to another. As well as allowing travel across water, they were used in the search for swan and duck eggs and for hunting seals. George Augustus Robinson speaks admiringly of these vessels:

These catamarans are ingeniously constructed of the bark of the tea-tree shrub, and when properly made are perfectly safe and are able to brave a rough sea. They cannot sink

CHRISTIAN THOMPSON PREPARING TO PHOTOGRAPH HIMSELF

from the buoyancy of the material and the way in which they are constructed prevents them from upsetting. The catamaran is made of short pieces of the bark … which when collected in a mass are tied together with long grass.

Models of the canoes were made for Europeans by Aboriginal people at the time, and rare examples survive in museum collections including the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart, the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford and the British Museum in London.

Today, one of Rex's large, elegant canoes is held in the NGA collection. It is the confluence of form and function that elevates his canoes beyond the utilitarian. 'They are vessels,' says Hetti, 'for navigating a complex history'.

For a detailed essay on Rex Greeno's work, see 'An Ingenious Construction' by Carol Cooper, Senior Curator, Collections Development at the NGA, Canberra, at <http://www.nma.gov.au/museum_magazine/issue_three/an_ingenious_construction>.

CHRISTIAN THOMPSON, PERIPATETIC AND INTRIGUING BIDJARA MAN

Armed with the welcome baggage of his cultural inheritance – Bidjara, from central western Queensland – Christian Thompson has launched himself into the international art world. His magpie-like fascination in drawing a galaxy of cultural references to his work is achieved while retaining, at its kernel, his Bidjara culture. He creates art expressive of a continuing relationship to his people, country and culture. Subtle and sometimes more explicit references to the land and heritage of his community, the Bidjara people of the Kunja Nation from south-west Queensland, present themselves in the artist's multidisciplinary practice. Christian shuns traditional art practices and instead continually refashions his body as his performing device. He tells Hetti of the essence of his art:

What I experience in the real world goes into the subconscious realm and that's where things mix and reconfigure themselves: they will emerge as complete works or I will construct them … (my work) encompasses many times and many places.

For most of his childhood, Christian lead an itinerant life as the son of a military man. This, he reflects, impacted upon his ability to be 'malleable, being able to adapt quickly'. This facility is now part of his identity, of 'shape-shifting'. The Thompson family, despite its itinerant existence, never lost its connection to country and traditional Bidjara language, kept alive by the older generations in the extended family.

COUNTRY AND LANGUAGE

'Speaking in language' is the Indigenous Australian way of describing the native tongue of a particular country or locality; Christian grew up speaking Bidjura, the Indigenous language of the area around Barcaldine, central western Queensland. The continuing ability to speak language was impressed upon him and his family by the elders, and for Christian, who lives for the most part in Europe, language is 'a direct porthole back into home and country'.

TREE OF KNOWLEDGE, 2012: PERFORMANCE ART

In *Tree of Knowledge*, a forty-minute performance piece, Christian sings in language, dances and employs evocative dialogue, entering the room clad in multiple layers of fleecy hoodies which he removes one by one. As he does so, a recorded harsh mechanical voice delivers a series of phrases with the repetitive 'Aboriginal' preceding them all. The intention is to be amusing, to make the audience feel uncomfortable and confronted by the complexity of what it means to put the word 'Aboriginal' in front of another word, any other word – 'Aboriginal dog, Aboriginal comb …'. The work finishes with our artist dancing aggressively while singing hauntingly in Bidjara language.

THE SIXTH MILE AND *DESERT SLIPPERS*, 2006: VIDEOS

Bidjara country is Christian's 'cultural pulse', says Hetti, and he honours his inheritance by naming his work after sites of significance; for Christian, 'there's no place like home'.

The four-screen, six-minute video *The Sixth Mile* shows a father-son connection; the elder combs the younger boy's hair, symbolising an exchange of intimacy in an intergenerational connection. This strong connection is also illustrated in the video *Desert Slippers*, in which the family tradition of inheritance is tendered explored. The title comes from a cactus that has always played an important role in Bidjara society: the desert slipper. Speaking in Bidjara, their bodies turned towards each other, the men are engrossed in acting out the same gestures repetitively. The non-Bidjara viewer,

CHRISTIAN THOMPSON WITH HETTI PERKINS

who can't understand what is being said, is nonetheless invited into this private space of communication and learning between father and son. The artist explains that this work follows on from earlier videos that similarly focused on Bidjara rituals, made visible by means of a Western visual language. Christian's father, Gary, ritually offers the sweat of his body to his first-born son, reiterating the traditional call-and-response echoing that such personal transactions have involved over countless generations.

If we reconsider how Indigenous art has an often clear but sometimes more subtle political message, we will further appreciate these videos. Christian's view is that they form a response to the increasingly conservative government policies and, in particular, to the recent media coverage of dysfunction in Indigenous communities, something described by the artist as 'Aboriginal man-bashing'. Choosing video because of its potential for direct and intense audience engagement, Christian offers insight into Indigenous rituals and notions of masculinity and father–child relationships in personal and challenging ways.

GATES OF TAMBO, 2004: PHOTOGRAPHIC SERIES

Christian's use of fantastical costumes and disguises, derived from landscape, history and cultural tradition, construct layers of themes and meanings in his illusory works. His aim is to surprise, amuse, challenge and confront his audience with the complexities of identity.

In the three four-foot square photographs from his *Gates of Tambo* series, Christian poses as Andy Warhol, Tracey Moffatt and Rusty Peters (a Gija man from the Kimberley who took up painting at age sixty after a working life as a stockman). In their embodiment of fame, recognition and cultural heritage, these artists might be Thompson's natural role-models. He plays them straight, casually, as if expressing an affinity. But, especially as Moffatt, in profile, taking a photograph, wearing lipstick, he simultaneously becomes the focus. As an Indigenous man, Christian knows that art is never considered merely on its own merits, but also by reference to the artist's personal history and the way the dominant culture permits and shapes each 'fifteen minutes of fame'.

Given the contemporary references and employment of twenty-first century technology in his work, the connections to Christian's Indigenous inheritance are both spiritual and philosophical. He refers to these as:

… the 'performativity' of ceremony and also giving yourself up to a higher being, or stepping out of your own body – that, for me, is the transformative aspect of my work. It's about 'reincarnating' myself as something that belongs to a different time and space …

… and Hetti assists in further clarifying Christian's connection to his culture:

In an often elliptical, even cryptic way, Christian's art, including film, photography, installation and performance creates a conceptual map of country and its use of vernacular and visual cues, becomes a secret language, a love-song to his people and his country.

In 2010, Christian became one of the inaugural Charlie Perkins Scholars at Oxford University, a scholarship program established in 2009 in the memory of Dr Charlie Perkins AO, the first Australian Indigenous man to graduate from university. Christian proceeded to infiltrate the establishment, imposing his unique cultural imprimatur on this venerated British icon. In the prestigious university's Trinity College Dining Hall, the notoriously conservative institution took down their historical paintings for the first time in 450 years. 'They took down all of the paintings of a cardinal and a couple of prime ministers,' says Christian. 'It was such a break in tradition but also a high vote of confidence from my college – it got people talking, which was great, and I think people said "why don't we do this every year – there should be exhibitions in here all the time".'

WE BURY OUR OWN, 2012: PHOTOGRAPHIC SERIES

Christian's doctoral research lead him to the Pitt-Rivers Museum at Oxford and its collection of archival photographs, resulting in the *We Bury Our Own* series, a groundbreaking new body of work consisting of eight large photographic self-portraits and a video installation. Here the once passive subject is replaced with an active protagonist and, as in many of his works, Christian uses his own body as an armature.

The relationship between the archival photographs and those taken by Christian is in the monochrome palette, the style of portraiture, the idea of decadence, the ornate and the transition from being anthropological images through to studio portraits. Here he sums up his goal in this work:

I was drawn to elements of opulence, ritual, homage, fragility, melancholy, strength and even a sense of play operating in the photographs. The simplicity of a monochrome and

sepia palette, the frayed delicate edges and the cracks on the surface like a dry desert floor that reminded me of the salt plains of my own traditional lands.

I wanted to generate an aura around this series, a meditative space that was focused on freeing oneself of hurt, employing crystals and other votive objects that emit frequencies that can heal, ward off negative energies, psychic attack, geopathic stress and electromagnetic fields, and, importantly, transmit ideas. I asked the photographs in the Pitt Rivers Museum to be catalysts and waited patiently to see what ideas and images would surface in the work, I think with surprising results. Perhaps this is what art is able to do, perform a 'spiritual repatriation' rather than a physical one, fragment the historical narrative and traverse time and place to establish a new realm in the cosmos, set something free, allow it to embody the past and be intrinsically connected to the present.

HEAT, THREE-CHANNEL VIDEO, 2010

In his most recent series of videos and stills, *Heat*, Christian has again adopted the role of director over that of the actor to capture the affective experience of the desert climate in the Queensland outback, and more specifically, to evoke the sense of the arid summer heat of his childhood around Barcaldine, the way the hot wind would lift the hair off the head and fan it in a way that was both seductive and simultaneously frightening. He reflects: 'I love the mysticism and the seductive cruelty of the desert, my home, and how it can be so illusive and alluring and potentially life-threatening.'

Christian Thompson's art is expressive of a continuing relationship to his people, country and culture, using subtle and sometimes more explicit references to the land and heritage of his community.

And as our journey through the art and the country of this compelling and multi-talented variety of Indigenous artists draws to a close, we have one last artist to see.

NICOLE FORESHEW AND 'POSITIVELY POLITICAL' WORKS

The human form is also integral to the public art of emerging new media artist Nicole Foreshew, a descendant of the Wiradjuri nation. The Aboriginal concept of place, tracing personal histories and connections to communities and the features of women draped in cloth imbued with traces of mineral and plant specimens are bound in her art.

BORN IN DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN, 2013: ARCHITECTURAL PROJECTION

born in darkness before dawn is a muted sepia-rich architectural still-image projection approximately three hours in duration. The visual content 'cloth' is illuminated to emphasize the transition of space, as it is always moving between the social relationships which are generated within the


NICOLE FORESHEW

logic of place: revolving around people occupying, owning, seizing, developing, losing or transforming a space. Nicole's grandfather is a traditional owner of Peak Hill in the Wiradjuri lands of central NSW and her projected work reveals a rich collection of Aboriginal artefacts, including eleven objects and one carved tree from Peak Hill.

Projected onto the façade of the Australian Museum of Sydney, the artwork includes twenty friends and family members living in Sydney, Western Sydney and the Central West – 'all Aboriginal women – who have impacted on my understanding of what we call "place",' she says. Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore said the project would remind Sydneysiders and visitors about the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture. 'These projections are part of our Eora Journey program – we're proud to be working alongside some great artists including Nicole and the program's curator Hetti Perkins,' she said.

Indigenous artists in the Australian and international community, as we have had the privilege to observe in this series, continue to reconnect to and continue their relationship with their Aboriginal identity. Dynamic and tensile, their artwork always looks at concepts of place and personal histories and how they connect with that special element bound, as Hetti says, 'in our DNA', that connection to country.

Appendix

- **'Half-caste':** In Australia, the term 'half-caste' was widely used in the nineteenth and early twentieth-century British commonwealth laws to refer to the offspring of White colonists and the Aboriginal natives of the continent. For example, the Aborigines Protection Act of 1886 mentioned half-castes habitually associating with or living with an Aboriginal; while the Aborigines Amendments between 1934 and 1937 refer to it in various terms, including as a person with less than quadroon blood. Later literature, such as by Tindale, refers to it in terms of half, quadroon, octoroon and other hybrids.

The term 'half-caste' was not merely a term of legal convenience. It became a term of common cultural discourse and appeared even in religious records. For example, John Harper notes from records of Woolmington Christian mission that half-castes and anyone with any Aboriginal connection were considered 'degraded as to divine things, almost on a level with a brute, in a state of moral unfitness for heaven'.

The term was immortalised in the Half-Caste Act, whereby the Australian government could seize such children and forcibly remove them from their parents in order to, in theory, provide them with better homes than those afforded typical Aborigines, where they can grow up to work as domestic servants, and for social engineering. The removed children are known as Stolen Generations. Other British Commonwealth Acts on half-castes and Aborigines enacted between 1909 and 1943 were also in theory called Welfare Acts, depriving these people of basic civil, political and economic rights and making it illegal to enter public places such as pubs and government institutions, marry or meet relatives.

- **'Assimilation':** Since the European invasion and until very recently, government policy relating to Aboriginal people has been designed and implemented by non-Aboriginal people. The common justification for most policies for Aboriginal people was that they were 'for their own good'. There have been policies of protection, assimilation, self-determination and reconciliation. It is now clear that none of these policies have actually made the condition of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples any better than it was prior to the invasion.

  Power over Aboriginal people was allocated to the states rather than to the federal government, each state having its own 'Aboriginal welfare board'. These boards' policies were based on a belief that 'protection' of Aboriginal people would lead to their 'advancement' to the point where they would eventually fit into the white community. Protection and segregation policies were enforced until the 1940s, when they were replaced with policies of assimilation and integration. Features of the administration of the boards included the implementation of the assimilation policy, and, from the early 1950s, the movement of Aboriginal people to Aboriginal Stations where they could be prepared for absorption into the general community.

  The policy of assimilation meant individual families were persuaded to share the life in the towns with whites. Earlier government policies had relocated Aboriginal people from their homelands to reserves, known as stations or missions. The assimilation policy aimed at breaking up these reserves and 'encouraging' people to give up seasonal and casual work, replacing this with regular work for wages (which remained unequal). The stations were considered as 'stepping-stones to civilisation'. While espousing the benefits of assimilation to Aboriginal people, the assimilation policy still denied their basic rights, even in the 1960s. It stopped them from raising their own children, stopped freedom of movement, having access to education, receiving award wages, marrying without permission, eating in restaurants, entering a pub, swimming in a public pool or having the right to vote.

  In relation to the past administration of Aboriginal affairs, it should be recognised that Aboriginal people have continuously resisted the imposition of much of this government legislation. The official records reflect this opposition and contain letters written by Aboriginal people seeking to recover their land, to receive the right to vote, to have their children returned, to receive citizenship rights and so on.
- **Boundary rider:** A person employed to ride round the fences etc. of a cattle or sheep station and keep them in good order. From the 1860s the boundary rider was a person responsible for maintaining the outer fences on a station, or a publicly owned vermin-proof fence (such as the rabbit-proof fence). A passage in an 1885 edition of the newspaper *Illustrated Australian News* describes the boundary rider's typical duties:

  The duties of a boundary rider for the most part consist in riding round the fences every day, seeing that they are all in good order, blocking up any panels that may be broken, putting out strangers (that is stock that have strayed on to the run), and, in fact, doing all that may pertain to keeping his master's stock on his own land, and everybody's else out of it …
- **Maralinga:** British Nuclear tests at Maralinga occurred between 1956 and 1963 at the Maralinga site, part of the Woomera Prohibited Area in South Australia and about 800 kilometres north-west of Adelaide. A total of seven nuclear tests were performed. The site was also used for hundreds of minor trials, many of which were intended to investigate the effects of fire or non-nuclear explosions on atomic weapons.

The site was contaminated with radioactive materials and an initial cleanup was attempted in 1967. The McClelland Royal Commission, an examination of the effects of the tests, delivered its report in 1985, and found that significant radiation hazards still existed at many of the Maralinga test areas. It recommended another cleanup, which was completed in 2000 at a cost of $108 million. Debate continued over the safety of the site and the long-term health effects on the traditional Aboriginal owners of the land and former personnel. In 1994, the Australian Government paid compensation amounting to $13.5 million to the local Maralinga Tjarutja people.

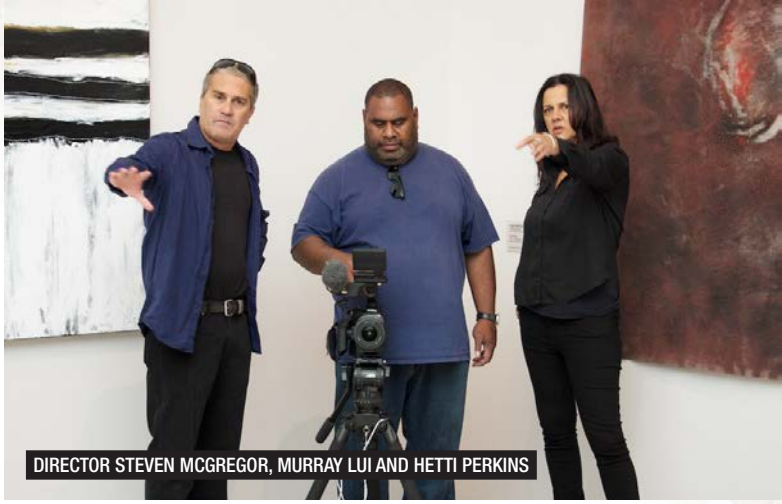
The Maralinga tests were subject to extreme secrecy, but by the late 1970s there was a marked change in how the Australian media covered the British nuclear tests. Some journalists investigated the subject and political scrutiny became more intense. In June 1993, *New Scientist* journalist Ian Anderson wrote an article titled 'Britain's dirty deeds at Maralinga' and several related articles. In 2007, *Maralinga: Australia's Nuclear Waste Cover-up* by Alan Parkinson documented the unsuccessful clean-up at Maralinga. Popular songs about the Maralinga story have been written by Paul Kelly, Midnight Oil and Alistair Hulett.

- **The story of The Seven Sisters Dreaming:** The cultures of the desert communities vary greatly, and a number of different languages are spoken. But there are lengthy song cycles cutting across cultural boundaries that explain the journeys of the great ancestral beings. Here traditional belief in the Tjukurpa permeates life. One such story, 'The Seven Sisters', tells of a journey that begins in the deserts in Western Australia and extends through several different language areas to the South Australian Pitjantjatjara country. The travels of the seven sisters are sung at *inma* ceremonies, which extend into the night. The story tells of seven young women being pursued on a cross-country trek by a sly, lustful man named Wati Nyiru. In order to remain close to them, he adopted various disguises, such as a tree or a bird. When the sisters hid in a cave, Wati Nyiru appeared at the entrance, but the women were able to escape through a tunnel. As the pursuit continued, Wati Nyiru's anger grew, and finally he decided to make one of the sisters sick through sorcery. When she died, the other sisters took her up to the sky, and they all became stars. That is why, in the night sky, we can see the seven stars of the seven sisters (the Pleiades) followed by Wati Nyiru (Orion).
- **AC Haddon:** Alfred Cort Haddon (1855–1940) was an influential British anthropologist and ethnologist. Initially a biologist, he achieved his most notable fieldwork in the Torres Strait Islands. He was invited by his university to go to the Torres Strait Islands to study coral reefs and marine zoology, and while thus engaged he first became attracted to anthropology. On his return home he published many papers dealing with the indigenous people, urging the importance of securing all possible information about these and kindred peoples before they were overwhelmed by civilisation. In April 1898, the expedition arrived at its field of work and spent over a year in the Torres Strait Islands, and Borneo, and brought home a large collection of ethnographical specimens, some of which are now in the British Museum. Haddon was convinced that the hundreds of art objects collected had to be saved from almost certain destruction by the zealous Christian missionaries intent on obliterating the religious traditions and ceremonies of the native islanders. Film footage of ceremonial dances was also collected. His findings were published in his 1901 book *Head-hunters, Black, White and Brown*.

LIST OF ARTWORKS EPISODE 3

1. **Kunmanara Riley, Katanari Tjilya:** *Punu*, 2011. Medium: acrylic paint on canvas.
2. **Hector Tjupuru Burton:** *Punu*, 2011. Medium: acrylic paint on canvas.
3. **Tjanpi Desert Weavers:** *Tjanpi Toyota*, 2005. Medium: Desert grass, jute string, steel aviary mesh, found hub caps, number-plates, steering wheel, recycled wooden planks.
4. **Brian Robinson:**
   - *He ascended* [sic.] *from the heavens with a plank of text*, 2012. Medium: linocut printed in black ink.
   - *Strait Protean series*: *As the rains fell and the seas rose*, 2011. Medium: linocut.
   - Dinghy Bio Ali, 2010, Medium: linocut.
   - *The Woven Fish* installation, 2003. Medium: stainless steel
   - *Woven Fish*, 2010. Medium: drypoint, Charbonnel ink.
   - *August 23 1898 – Today I collected with much zeal …* 2012. Medium: linocut.
   - *… and meanwhile back on earth the blooms continue to flourish*, sculptural installation 2013. Medium: wood, plastic, steel, synthetic polymer paint, feathers, plant fibre and shell.
5. **Benjamin Dutterau:** *The Conciliation*, 1840. Medium: oil painting.
6. **Lola Greeno:** Shell necklaces, including maireener (rainbow kelp) shells, brown rice shells and black crow shells.
7. **Rex Greeno:** Tasmanian paperbark canoes
8. **Selected Tasmanian artists,** including Vicki West, Lola Greeno, Julie Gough: *The Robinson Cup*, installation (group exhibition), 2011. Medium: shells, possum fur, gumnuts, kangaroo pelts, kelp, feathers.
9. **Christian Bumbarra Thompson:**
   - *The Sixth Mile*, *2006.* Medium: digital media art.
   - *Desert Slippers*, 2006. Medium: digital media art.
   - *Tree of Knowledge*, 2013. Medium: performance art, 40 mins.
   - *Gates of Tambo*, 2004. Medium: photographic series
   - *We Bury Our Own*, 2010. Medium: photographic/installation series.
   - *Heat*, 2010. Medium: three-channel video.
10. **Nicole Foreshew:** *born in darkness before dawn,* 2013, architectural projection.

THE CREATIVE TEAM


DIRECTOR STEVEN MCGREGOR, MURRAY LUI AND HETTI PERKINS

» HETTI PERKINS, WRITER/PRESENTER

Hetti Perkins is a member of the Eastern Arrernte and Kalkadoon Aboriginal communities. She is resident curator at Bangarra Dance Theatre, creative director of the *Corroboree Sydney* festival, and curatorial advisor to the City of Sydney on the *Eora Journey: Recognition in the Public Domain* project.

Hetti was an advisor to the 2008 Biennale of Sydney, on the selection panel for Australia's representation at the 2003 Venice Biennale and a member of the international selection committee for the 2000 Biennale of Sydney.

She wrote and presented the original three-part documentary series *art + soul* (ABC Television, 2010), directed by Warwick Thornton, and in 2014 has completed this follow-up series, directed by Steven McGregor.

Hetti's multi-faceted experience and expertise is brought to bear on these two series; she has worked in Indigenous visual art for twenty-five years, initially at the Aboriginal Arts Australia and Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Cooperative, and most recently at the Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) in the role of senior curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. She has edited a number of publications and is chair of the Charlie Perkins Trust for Children and Students, which she founded.

» STEVEN MCGREGOR, DIRECTOR

Steven McGregor wrote and directed several documentaries and dramas before accepting the invitation to work on *art + soul*, his biggest project to date. His most recent documentary credits include *Croker Island Exodus* about the epic journey of a group of stolen generation children during World War II and *Big Name No Blanket*, a portrait of the Warumpi Band's charismatic front man George Rrurrambu. Both films played in the Sydney and Melbourne International Film Festivals and in the FIFO Film Festival Tahiti.

Steven has also written four episodes of the ABC drama series *Redfern Now*: *Pretty Boy Blue* won the AACTA Award for best screenplay in television in 2013, and in the following year *Babe in Arms* was nominated in the same category.

Steven started his career behind the camera and as an editor in the news department of Imparja Television. Apart from when he was studying for his MA in drama directing at the Australian Film, Television & Radio School, he has lived and worked in the Northern Territory all his life.

» BRIDGET IKIN, PRODUCER

Bridget has worked with writer/presenter Hetti Perkins, and directors Warwick Thornton and Steven McGregor on the two series *of art + soul.*

Bridget Ikin is a passionate champion of new and innovative filmmaking, and has produced many films over many years under her Hibiscus Films banner. She has also had a long and distinguished career as a film executive. Bridget and her partner John Maynard recently established FELIX MEDIA, a production company working with artists at the intersection of excellence, originality, audience engagement and social conviction. See www.felixmedia.com.au

Through Felix Media, Bridget's executive producer credits include: artist Angelica Mesiti's moving image projects *The Calling*, *The Ear Of The Tyrant* and *Citizen's Band*; William Yang's *My Generation, Blood Links* and *Friends Of Dorothy,* all of which are iconic theatre pieces reworked into film.

» JO-ANNE MCGOWAN, PRODUCER/ARCHIVAL RESEARCHER

Jo-anne McGowan has produced both series of *art + soul.* Previous documentaries include the Timor-themed *Troubled Waters* (winner, Dendy Award, Sydney Film Festival, 2002) and *Kabbarli*, a short feature on the life of anthropologist and writer Daisy Bates, commissioned for the Adelaide Festival. In the last 15 years she has also worked at SBS Independent, at the NSW Film and Television Office, at ABC TV Arts, and as head of producing at the Australian Film, Television & Radio School. She is a graduate of that institution.

(For an extensive and insightful discussion with the creative team on *art + soul*, see the Q&A section in the press kit for this series.)

» CURRICULUM RELEVANCE

art + soul 2 is a text that has compelling and clear relevance to broad range of subjects in the school curriculum. Subjects such as:

- English – Year 10–VCE;
- Australian History Year 10–VCE;
- Art – Year 10–VCE;
- Film & Media Studies Year 10
- VCE Media;
- VCE Art;
- Studio Art;
- VCE Sociology;
- Aboriginal Studies

LINKS TO THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM FOR YEAR 10 ENGLISH:

A number of learning areas in the National English Curriculum are inherently addressed in *art + soul*:

ENGLISH CONTENT DESCRIPTIONS: **LANGUAGE.**

Language variation and change. Students should:

- understand that Standard Australian English in its spoken and written forms has a history of evolution and change and continues to evolve (ACELA1563) The concepts of *country* and *language* – terms which carry a different significance for Indigenous people from the usual understanding of these words are an important feature of the discourse in this series.

Language for interaction. Students should:

- understand how language use can have inclusive and exclusive social effects, and can empower or disempower people (ACELA1564)
- understand that people's evaluations of texts are influenced by their value systems
- the context and the purpose and mode of communication (ACELA1565)

Text structure and organization. Students will:

- compare the purposes, text structures and language features of traditional and contemporary texts in different media (ACELA1566)
- evaluate the impact on audiences of different choices in the representation of still and moving images (ACELA1572)

Film study is a common element of the English course at this level, and *art + soul 2* provides both a useful text to introduce students to cinematic techniques and to potentially provide an introduction to the works of Indigenous artists.

According to the rubric of the National Curriculum, this documentary may provide students with a text '*to compare and evaluate a range of representations of individuals and groups in different historical, social and cultural contexts'* (ACELT1639).

- Students can use *art + soul 2* to analyse and evaluate how people, cultures, places, events, objects, and concepts are represented … through language, structural and/or visual choices' (ACELT1749).
- They are also able 'to analyse and explain how text structures, language features and visual features of texts, and the context in which texts are experienced, may influence audience response' (ACELT1641).
- Using this documentary, students can address and 'evaluate the social, moral and ethical positions represented in texts' (ACELT1812).
- Finally, *art + soul* provides an example for students to 'compare and evaluate a range of representations of individuals and groups in different historical, social and cultural contexts' (ACELT1639).

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English/EAL Years 11–12 – National Curriculum Links

The English curriculum in the senior secondary years continues to provide a range of choice of more specialised courses to meet students' needs and interests. Some examples of options may include the study of film or literature, a general English studies program oriented to vocational uses of English and English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D).

In the Language Strand, students apply their knowledge about language to a variety of disciplines and purposes. In doing so, they demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of grammar and language features from the textual to the word level, and the ability to identify and analyse how language is used, and implement this understanding for different purposes and audiences.

In the Literature Strand, students will better understand literary texts and discuss and debate the elements that make a text culturally valuable. Students engage in extensive analysis of literary texts, in terms of contextual aspects such as social impact, purpose and message. They also analyse literature texts for technical aspects such as language, plot and character development. (Students compare past and present texts in relation to themes, purposes or language features, in order to discuss issues of form, content, and structure). Students compose texts that show informed appreciation of plot and character development, effective language use, and representation and manipulation of ideas.

The Literacy Strand involves students producing a growing range of creative expository, persuasive and other texts under various circumstances with a variety of stimuli, and demonstrate an ability to create written, spoken and multimodal texts both individually and with peers.

**

The Arts – Media, Film, Drama: Links to the National Curriculum

The scope and sequence of the Australian Arts Curriculum embodies:

. Dance
. Drama
. Media Arts
. Music
. Visual Art

Through Media Arts, individuals and groups participate in, experiment with and interpret the rich culture and communications practices that surround them. In Media Arts, students develop knowledge and understanding of five key concepts: the media languages used to tell stories; the technologies which are essential for producing, accessing and distributing media; the various institutions that enable and constrain media production and use; the audiences for whom media arts products are made and who respond as consumers, citizens and creative individuals; and the constructed representations of the world, which rely on shared social valued and beliefs.

**

Links to the National Curriculum for History Years 7–10

Curriculum focus

The Year 7–10 history curriculum will specify the required learning in terms of historical concepts, understandings and skills, through overviews and depth studies. Depth studies may include episodes of key significance to the period of study. Some depth studies will provide options, including comparative options and school developed options where appropriate, so that the required learning can be developed in a range of historical contexts. This will enable teachers to meet the interests and needs of their students. A depth study should incorporate interconnections and comparisons within a historical period where appropriate.The number of depth studies and the amount of time allocated to each study will be determined according to considerations of feasibility, conceptual ability and student engagement.

Students will develop historical skills which include:

- learning how to use, with facility, common historical terms for dealing with chronology and time-related historical concepts and continuing to acquire a sound grasp of the sequence of events
- asking and exploring inquiry questions in detail, finding relevant and comprehensive

answers and providing sound explanations and conclusions for historical events
- using a wide range of different forms of evidence in providing historical explanations, recognising how these forms of evidence may vary in their value
- developing a range of appropriate techniques of organisation and communication

Students should have an appreciation of the major civilisations of Europe, Asia, Africa, America and Australia. They should understand Australian history within a comparative framework that embraces the Indigenous and settler components, and they should be aware of its regional and global dimensions.

Indigenous – settler relations are part of the 'depth' studies of this subject. Of particular significance is the increasing recognition of the rights of Australia's Indigenous peoples and the search for reconciliation. It is in this area that *art + soul* operates as a teaching tool for understanding the identity, legacy, historical and contemporary relevance of the first peoples.

**

Film & Media Studies: Year 10

In general, Media Studies at Year 10 level involves studying aspects of both film and television, with a series of projected Outcomes:

- students develop the ability to critically analyse film and television texts in a range of ways;
- they work towards understanding the aesthetics, styles and formats of film and television texts;
- they develop the ability and knowledge to explain ways in which media texts reinforce or challenge social, cultural and artistic values – and in this specific area, *art + soul* is a valuable asset.
- they learn to use appropriate media terminology and personal interpretations to describe the structure, content and aesthetic qualities of film and television texts;
- they study critical approaches to analyse and interpret media texts;
- the language of film and television; cinematography, sounds and mise en scène are studied.

**

Years 9–10 Australian History

The Indigenous Australian historical component is to be found in the syllabus of all Australian secondary schools and features of this involve:

- a knowledge and understanding of the nature of history, past societies and periods and their legacy;
- the nature of history, the main features of past societies and periods and their legacy;
- significant features of Aboriginal and indigenous cultures, prior to colonisation ;
- a knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal and indigenous peoples of the world and the nature of contact history;
- the ways indigenous and non-indigenous peoples of the world have responded to contact with each other.
- a knowledge and understanding of the changing rights and freedoms of Aboriginal peoples and other groups in Australia;
  art + soul is an excellent resource to illustrate all these elements.

**

VCE Art

RATIONALE

The VCE Art study recognises art as an integral part of our lives. Art is a potent and dynamic visual language through which we are able to communicate personal experiences, ideas, cultural values and beliefs. In both the process of making and examining art, students can realise the power to inspire change through imagination, creativity and innovation.

Within the VCE Art study, theoretical research and investigation informs artmaking. Students are encouraged to recognise the interplay between research and artmaking. This provides students with an informed context that supports an awareness of art as a tool for cultural and personal communication, in addition to providing stimulus and inspiration for their own artmaking. The study acknowledges the value of creativity and analytical thinking in preparing students for today's world by encouraging imagination, flexibility, adaptability and risk-taking. Students develop their visual language through personal and independent learning by combining a focused study of artworks with practical artmaking.

VCE Art provides the opportunity to investigate the role of art in the world through a study of historical and contemporary cultures. The Art study challenges students to articulate their understanding of the meanings and messages contained within artworks and to examine the effects of artworks upon the viewer. Throughout their study, students develop skills in research, analysis and arts criticism to interpret and debate the issues that are raised and, in response, they form and support personal points of view. Through exploration and experimentation using art forms, materials, techniques and processes, students progressively develop their own artworks and develop an awareness of appropriate health and safety practices.

Structure: 4 units

UNIT 1

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse and interpret a variety of artworks using the Formal Framework and the Personal Framework.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to present visual creative responses that demonstrate their personal interests and ideas through trialling techniques, materials and processes.

UNIT 2

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to analyse, interpret, compare and contrast artworks from different cultures using the Formal Framework and the Cultural Framework.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to demonstrate technical and artistic development in the presentation of visual responses that include one finished artwork, through the exploration of selected media, materials and techniques.

UNIT 3

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to use the Analytical Frameworks to analyse and interpret artworks produced before 1970 and artworks produced since 1970, and compare and contrast the meanings and messages of artworks produced before 1970 with those of artworks produced since 1970.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should be able to explore personal ideas and concepts through a conceptual and practical investigation including at least one finished artwork, using selected Analytical Frameworks to reflect upon and annotate their work.

UNIT 4

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to discuss and debate an art issue using selected artist/s works as context, and present their informed opinion with reference to artworks and with the support of selected commentaries and relevant aspects of the Analytical Frameworks.

Outcome 2

On completion of this unit the student should have progressively communicated ideas, directions and/ or personal concepts in a body of work that includes at least one finished artwork, having used selected Analytical Frameworks to underpin reflections on their artmaking.

For the past four years, 2010–2013, written examinations for VCE Year 12 Art have focused on the following:

- Identifying and commenting on *formal elements* – texture, colour, tone, line, shape;
- Comparing the use of materials and techniques;
- Meanings and messages;
- Visual analysis;
- The use of symbolism;
- Distinctive stylistic qualities;
- Formal, cultural and personal analytical frameworks within which to comment on/analyse selected artworks;
- The interpretation of a work of art/ differing viewpoints about an art issue – all of which are routinely addressed in *art + soul*.

Questions raised in the area of interpretation have been:

1. 'Art creates discussion and debate." Respond to this statement with reference to an art issue that you have explored this year. Support your point of view by including

- a discussion of at least one art work;
- at least two commentaries on art

2. Discuss how one artwork made after 1970 that you have studied this year can be interpreted in more than one way. Use two analytical frameworks to interpret this framework.

3. Art may change the way people think". Respond to this statement with reference to an art issue that you have explored this year. Support your point of view by including

- a discussion of at least one art work;
- at least two commentaries on art (See the 2011 Art Exam for Unit 3&4 for the inclusion of an Indigenous artist's work)

art + soul is a valuable text in the study of VCE Art, resonating as it does to key aspects of the VCE Art course.

**

VCE Media Studies Units 1, 3 & 4 – relevance for *art + soul*

SCOPE OF STUDY

The media is a diverse, dynamic and evolving collection of forms used to inform, communicate with and connect people. Media influence the way people spend their time, help shape the way they perceive themselves and others, and play a crucial role in the creation and exchange of personal, social, cultural, national and global identities. The media entertain, educate, inform and provide channels of communication. This takes place within the broader context of: industrial organisation; political and market structures; professional practices; creative processes; traditional, contemporary and emerging technologies; regulation; and the need to attract and maintain audiences. The relationships between such frames of reference and audiences shape media products and the ways in which they are developed, constructed, distributed and consumed. Notions of audience underlie the creation, distribution, consumption and reception of media texts. Media texts are representations of social, personal and cultural reality, which have been constructed through a process of selection and omission, using media codes and conventions. Codes and conventions may be common to all media products, or specific to individual media forms, texts, genres and styles. VCE Media examines media products as the expression of creative ideas, specific symbolic languages and discourses of society and culture that shape meaning and reflect the society in which they were created. This study explores a variety of media forms, including audio, audiovisual media, print-based media, digital and interactive media technologies and convergent media processes. Students examine and analyse the relationships between audiences and the media; this analysis is undertaken through a theoretical and practical study that places the student in the role of a media creator.

In this subject, at both Year 11 and Year 12, the study of narrative structures and social values demonstrated through a variety of texts – including film – are explored. Story elements working with production elements include:

- the point of view from which the narrative is presented;
- camera/film/techniques and qualities including shot selection, movement and focus;
- lighting;
- acting;
- visual composition and mise en scène;
- sound, including dialogue, music and sound effects.

The content and focus of the four Units of the VCE Media Studies course are:

Unit 1: Representation and technologies of representation;
Unit 2: Media production and the media industry;
Unit 3: Narrative and media production design;
Unit 4: Media: process, influence and society's values.

UNIT 1 ***Area of Study 1:***

Focus: An analysis of media representations and how such representations depict, for example, events, people, places, organisations and ideas.

Area of Study 2:

Focus: Technologies of representation; different media forms and their features and practices.

UNIT 3 ***Area of Study 1:***

Focus: The narrative construction of film, television or drama texts; students learn that narrative is a fundamental element of construction of meaning in media products.

UNIT 4 ***Area of Study 2:***

Focus: Media texts and society's values; students undertake the study of an identified significant idea, social attitude or discourse … to critically analyse its representation in the media.

Area of Study 3:

Focus: Media influence; students explore the complexity of the relationship between the media, its audiences and wider community in terms of the nature and extent of the media's influence.

VCE Media written examination questions can focus on *social issues or discourses,* which are compelling elements of *art + soul.* Consider the following questions from the 2013 Media Written Examination:

1.'Society's values shape the construction and reading of texts. These values are in a state of constant evolution, and tension always exists between dominant, oppositional and emerging values.

2.Discuss the relationship between dominant, oppositional and emerging values in society, and how they have been represented in one or more media texts that you studied this year.'

Art as a means of communication is a time-honoured concept:

communication theories and models form part of this study, and *art + soul 2* surely informs as a vehicle of communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds.

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VCE Studio Arts

RATIONALE

The creative nature of visual art provides individuals with the opportunity for personal growth, the expression of ideas and a process for examining identity. The exhibition of visual art offers an insight into the diverse interpretations of life and its experience by artists. Engagement with visual art facilitates creative thinking and the development of new ideas, it also supports connection and exchange within communities and beyond.

VCE Studio Arts encourages and supports students to recognise their individual potential as art makers and presents a guided process to assist their understanding and development of artmaking. The study establishes effective art practices through the application of an individual design process to assist the student's production of a folio of artworks.

The theoretical component of this study is an important basis for studio practice as it offers students a model for inquiry that can support their artmaking practices. Students' research focuses on the visual analysis of artworks and investigates how artists have interpreted sources of inspiration and influences in their artmaking. Students examine how artists have used materials, techniques and processes to create aesthetic qualities. They study how artists have developed styles and explored their cultural identity in their artwork. Students use this knowledge to inform their own processes to support their artmaking.

The foundation for the individual design process is established in Units 1 and 2 where students develop an understanding of how to source artistic inspiration related to their individual interests. Through the study of artists from different cultures, students recognise the diversity of aesthetic qualities and examine a range of interpretations of ideas and themes. In practical application students identify elements of inspiration for the development of their own creative artworks and explore a wide variety of materials and techniques.

In Unit 3 the student uses an exploration proposal to define an area for the development of a visual design process that is based on their individual concepts and ideas. The exploration proposal underpins the student's working process and is used as a reference for the development and reflection of the design process. This enables the student to establish an understanding about how to generate a range of potential directions for the production of possible future artworks.

In Unit 4 students develop a creative folio of finished artworks based on selected potential directions. Students evaluate the use of materials, techniques and aesthetics in relation to the successful communication of their ideas in their finished artworks.

STRUCTURE

The study is made up of four units:

Unit 1: Artistic inspiration and techniques
Unit 2: Design exploration and concepts
Unit 3: Studio production and professional art practices
Unit 4: Studio production and art industry contexts

UNIT 1: ARTISTIC INSPIRATION AND TECHNIQUES

This unit focuses on using sources of inspiration and individual ideas as the basis for developing artworks and exploring a wide range of materials and techniques as tools for communicating ideas, observations and experiences through artmaking.

Students also explore and research the ways in which artists from different times and cultures have interpreted and expressed ideas, sourced inspiration and used materials and techniques in the production of artworks.

UNIT 2: DESIGN EXPLORATION AND CONCEPTS

This unit focuses on students establishing and using a design process to produce artworks. The design process includes the formulation and use of an individual approach to locating sources of inspiration, experimentation with materials and techniques, and the development of aesthetic qualities, directions and solutions prior to the production of artworks.

Students also develop skills in the visual analysis of artworks. Artworks made by artists from different times and cultures are analysed to understand the artists' ideas and how they have created aesthetic qualities and identifiable styles.

UNIT 3: STUDIO PRODUCTION AND PROFESSIONAL ART PRACTICES

This unit focuses on the implementation of an individual design process leading to the production of a range of potential directions and solutions. Students develop and use an exploration proposal to define an area of creative exploration. They plan and apply a design process to explore and develop their individual ideas. Analysis of these explorations and the development of the potential directions is an intrinsic part of the design process to support the making of finished artworks in Unit 4.

For this study, the exploration proposal supports the student to identify a direction for their design process. The design process is individually determined by the student. It records trialling, experimenting, analysing and evaluating the extent to which their art practices successfully communicate their aims and ideas. From this process students can develop directions for the development of finished artworks in Unit 4.

The study of artists and their work practices and processes may provide

inspiration for students' own approaches to artmaking. Students investigate and analyse the response of artists to a wide range of stimuli, and examine their use of materials and techniques. They explore professional art practices of artists in relation to particular artworks and art form/s and identify the development of styles in artworks. Throughout their study of art processes, students also consider the issues that may arise from the use of other artists' work in the making of new artworks. Students are expected to visit at least two different exhibition spaces in their current year of study.

Exam questions from a selection of past Examination papers include:

- Discuss the aesthetic qualities in the artwork and explain how art elements have been used to achieve these qualities.
- Discuss how an artwork that you have studied this year reflects the artist's interpretation of a historical or cultural context.
- Analyse two artworks by two of the artists you have studied this year to show how they used materials and techniques to develop individual styles. (Indigenous artworks have been the subject of these questions.)
- Analyse two artworks by different artists that you have studied this year, with reference to influences, ideas and meanings.
- Identify an art gallery or other art space where you viewed an art exhibition this year and discuss the following: the role of the art gallery or art space; the intention of the curator; the presentation of the artwork.
- Analyse one artwork you have studied this year to show how it reflect the artist's: 1.historical and cultural context; 2.artistic influences; 3.communication of ideas and meaning.

**

VCE Sociology, Units 3 & 4

SCOPE OF STUDY

Sociology focuses on the study of human behaviour and social interaction to understand how societies are organised, develop and change. There is no single sociological perspective, rather, there are several theories that offer different ways of understanding human society. Sociologists use these theories and frameworks in a complementary way to attempt to objectively examine social issues and explain concepts. In VCE Sociology students examine key theories regarding family, deviance, ethnicity, community and social movements.

In VCE Sociology students are encouraged to question their assumptions and to reflect on their understandings and ideas about social relations. Understanding society from a sociological perspective involves the use of what the sociologist C Wright Mills (in 1959) described as a sociological imagination, that is, a constantly critiquing mindset.

Sociology draws on scientific method in the exploration of social relationships and the outcomes of social activities. The scientific method is a systematic process applied to research questions and problems in an attempt to achieve objective observation, collection and analysis of data. Sociologists work to develop a reliable and valid body of knowledge based on research. In doing so, they adhere to various ethical codes of conduct. The primary goal of research ethics is to protect the wellbeing of the groups and individuals with whom sociologists work. There are many different ways that students can gather information for analysis in the course of their study, such as case studies, surveys and participant observation. As students gather and use sources of evidence, they explore and apply the Australian Sociological Association's guidelines for conducting research.

RATIONALE

The study of VCE Sociology assists in the development of an appreciation of cultural diversity, and in an understanding of human behaviour and social structures. Further, it directs students' attention to how the parts of society are interrelated, in addition to the causes and impacts of social change.

VCE Sociology provides valuable knowledge and skills for participation in everyday life. It develops a capacity for detailed observation of social patterns and group behaviour, and encourages students to become aware of and to think about daily life and activities from a sociological perspective. This study broadens students' insights into key sociological frameworks and social institutions, enabling them to pursue further formal study at a tertiary level or in vocational education and training settings.

The study of Sociology can lead to work with social groups and social processes, such as in culture resource management and community development, or work with minority and ethnic groups. It can lead to work in fields that address issues such as crime and substance abuse, youth and family matters, industrial relations, social justice and social issues related to health care. Finally, Sociology develops widely applicable skills of social research: developing surveys, collecting data, and conducting interviews and fieldwork, including the analysis, interpretation and presentation of the information collected.

STRUCTURE

The study is made up of four units; however, *art + soul* applies most appropriately to Units 3 & 4.

Unit 3: Culture and ethnicity
Unit 4: Community, social movements and social change.

UNIT 3: CULTURE AND ETHNICITY

This unit explores expressions of culture and ethnicity within Australian society in two different contexts – Australian Indigenous culture, and ethnicity in relation to migrant groups. Culture and ethnicity refer to groups connected by shared customs, culture or heritage. Students learn how these classifications can define inequality and opportunity, shape cultural activities and provide a sense of purpose.

Area of Study 1 involves a critical exploration of the historical suppression of, and increasing public awareness of, Australian Indigenous culture. This requires some knowledge of the past and its influence on subsequent generations, as well as knowledge of contemporary factors that may be supporting and/ or limiting increasing awareness of Australian Indigenous culture. Indigenous and non-indigenous perspectives and responses are integral to the area of study.

Ethnicity is investigated in Area of Study 2. Ethnicity is a key sociological category that plays an important role in social life. Individuals often define themselves, or others, as members of an ethnic category based on common heritage, language or religion that gives them a unique social identity. The category is often used in contrast to the concept of race, which generally refers to groups based on visible physical characteristics such as skin colour and facial features. Most sociologists prefer to focus on the concept of ethnicity rather than race.

Students develop an understanding of a variety of challenges that need to be addressed. For example, that the way a group sees itself might not correspond to the way that outsiders see it. Sometimes observers place people into broad ethnic categories, which do not correspond with the views of individual group members. In addition, ethnicity is not fixed and unchanging; instead, ethnic identities constantly evolve and are shaped through a variety of political and social forces.

UNIT 4: COMMUNITY, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND SOCIAL CHANGE

In this Unit students explore the ways sociologists have thought about the idea of community and how the various forms of community are experienced. They examine the relationship between social movements and social change. In Area of Study 1 students examine the changing definitions and experiences of community and the challenges posed by political, social, economic and technological change. Students examine a range of theoretical understandings of the concept of community with particular reference to the theories of Tonnies and Castells.

In Area of Study 2 students investigate the role of social movements. A social movement involves a group engaged in an rganized effort to achieve social change. Students develop an understanding of the purpose, evolution, power and outcomes of social movements.

Indigenous artists in *art + soul 2* are part of an ongoing emergent force in the Australian and international art world, a movement that demands, by its existence, recognition and appreciation.

Typical examination questions, for which *art + soul* acts as a supplementary text, involve:

- Describe the main aspects of the Northern Territory Emergency Response – the Intervention'.
- Outline how one government policy of the past suppressed Australian Indigenous culture.
- Interpreting differing representations: Identify an example of material culture from one representation and an example of non-material culture from the other representation.
- Explain the effects that one of the representations is likely to have on the perception of Australian Indigenous culture by either Indigenous or non-Indigenous Australians.
- Describe one difference between an ethnocentric and a culturally relativistic study of Australian Indigenous culture. Provide examples from the representations or material that you have studied this year.
- Explain the difference between the policies of assimilation and multiculturalism.

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VCE Australian History

RATIONALE

History is the practice of understanding and making meaning of the past. It is also the study of the problems of establishing and representing that meaning. It is a synthesising discipline which draws upon most elements of knowledge and human experience. Students learn about their historical past, their shared history and the people, ideas and events that have created present societies and cultures.

This study builds a conceptual and historical framework within which students can develop an understanding of the issues of their own time and place. It seeks to extend students' cultural, economic, social and political understanding while developing analytical skills and using imagination.

Historical understanding is communicated through written, oral and visual forms. The analysis of written documentary evidence such as letters, diaries, court proceedings and government records has long been the foundation of the study. Visual evidence, however, often pre-dates written material; for example, rock art, mosaics, scrolls. More recently, there have been many film and television documentaries presenting and interpreting historical events. It is therefore important in the study of history for students to develop the skills necessary to analyse visual, oral and written records.

The study of history draws links between contemporary society and its history, in terms of its social and political institutions, and language. An understanding of the link between accounts of the past, and the values and interests of the time in which the accounts were produced, is also a feature of the study of history.

VCE History is relevant to students with a wide range of expectations, including those who wish to pursue formal study at tertiary level, as well as providing valuable knowledge and skills for an understanding of the underpinnings of contemporary society.

art + soul is a text most applicable to Units 2 and 3:

UNIT 2: KOORI HISTORY

Koori is a term most commonly used by Aboriginal people in South Eastern Australia to describe themselves. Koori history provides an introduction to the experiences of Koori people from a Koori perspective. It examines Koori views of the past and present, explores Koori connections with the place now known as south-east Australia, and promotes understanding of Koori culture and Koori visions for the future of this land.

The following unit is intended to reflect a Koori perspective on the experiences and events that are critical to the Koori community. For example, although there may be debate in the broader community about use of the term 'invasion' to describe European settlement in Australia, it is the term most commonly accepted in the Koori community and therefore is used in this unit.

Before 1788, Koori communities managed their societies in accordance with their own economic and kinship systems, customs and law. However, after their lands were invaded and as a result of the impact of European policies, Koori people were no longer able to occupy their land, practise their ceremonies or hunt and gather food as they had done for thousands of years. Initially, Kooris fought against the settlers and the impact of colonisation. With diminished numbers they then struggled to make places for themselves in the new society being formed.

Despite restricted opportunities and racist attitudes in the broader community, strong individual Koori leaders and groups emerged to work for better conditions and greater independence. In the nineteenth century most efforts were on a small and local scale, but by the early twentieth century, Kooris came to see themselves as part of a national movement and to act nationally. Examples of this were the Day of Mourning that Aboriginal peoples staged in 1938 and the establishment of the Australian Aborigines League.

The upsurge of activism in the 1960s was influenced by political changes within Australia and by international movements such as the civil rights movement in the USA. Many Aboriginal community organisations helped achieve significant changes in the legal status of Aborigines and to assert control over issues affecting the lives of Aboriginal people in areas such as housing, employment, education and welfare. Activism in the 1970s and beyond emphasised land rights and stressed the centrality of land for all Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders.

More recently, the Mabo and Wik judgments have been milestones in the struggle for land rights and there has been greater recognition of the damage done through many government policies and actions, especially the removal of Koori children (the stolen generations). A significant national movement for reconciliation has grown up to acknowledge these issues and to offer hope for the future.

Koori identity remains strongly connected to the concepts of land, kinship and culture. These are not separate values, but inextricably bound together in lived experience. Koori people assert their identity by using the term Koori or more particular names related to their clan or language group, flying the Aboriginal flag, and in many other forms of cultural expression such as song, dance, oral history, painting and film.

Each of the following areas of study concentrates on themes in Koori history and connects to contemporary issues. The areas may be treated separately or integrated into a single chronological framework.

UNIT 3: AUSTRALIAN HISTORY – IMAGINING AUSTRALIA

This unit focuses on the European experience in Australia from the early years of the Port Phillip District (later Victoria) through the nineteenth century and up to the eve of World War I.

The study introduces students to the visions and ideas which underpinned colonial society and examines the ways in which they changed over the colonial period, especially under the impetus of significant events such as the discovery of gold and the Eureka rebellion. The underlying visions will also be explored in relation to their impact on those who lived in the Port Phillip District, including the Indigenous people.

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VCE English/EAL – Units 1 & 2 : Contexts

These Contexts often foreshadow or utilise those proscribed for Year 12. For example, Units 1&2 Contexts such as '*Who are you?', 'Personal Journeys'* and '*Australian Identity'* have a strong connection to the 'Identity and Belonging' Context in Units 3&4. *art + soul* applies to these Contexts in the following ways:

. Indigenous Australians see themselves as being at one with the land; creation myths, connections to *country,* the spirit of *place,* the intense belief that the land is 'in our DNA', contribute to a unique sense of identity and belonging.
. Identity is a complex concept, involving *moiety, songlines,* a re-interpretation of the weight of history.
. Cultural traditions that are 'secret' and highly specific to a sense of connection.
. We can see in *art + soul* how these elements are manifested – and re-interpreted – by artists to express a sense of pride and celebration in their own and by close extension, their people's identity and sense of bonding to their country.

VCE ENGLISH/EAL UNITS 3&4 CONTEXTS

IDENTITY AND BELONGING

Study guides will tell us that our identity is a construction of our interests, relationships, social activity and much more. Our sense of identity and belonging is impacted upon by various factors, including our family dynamic, our experiences, relationships, culture and our environment. The journey to find identity and belonging can often be a struggle, since

we ask ourselves 'who am I?' versus 'who do others want me to be?' and 'where do I belong? Where do I fit in?' This search is completely subjective, meaning that it is our personal view that influences our decisions. But as *art + soul* begins, our narrator informs us about the significance of the land to its original peoples, how they see themselves, drawn to a sense of unique connection, both spiritual and emotional. This is indeed a personal view, but it is also, without doubt, a communal one for the first Australians, as clearly expressed in the art we will be introduced to.

In different situations, we may alter our identity accordingly to the environment and the people we encounter. This is usually due to our innate desire to belong, sacrificing or amending our identity to do so. And yet in the context of *art + soul*, we see little of this need for affirmation from others; our artists are soundly connected to their work, their sense of family, and of course, their country.

Belonging, the other half of this Context, means to feel a sense of welcome and acceptance to someone or something. As suggested by Maslow's hierarchy of needs (a psychological theory centered on humans' innate desire for fulfillment), belonging is a need that we naturally seek in order to feel loved. In the same manner as our identities, there are many forms of belonging. Relationships – with family, friends, partners, associates and in the workplace – may give us a sense of belonging that is vital or a sense of rejection that is painful. A social milieu evokes for the individual a feeling of inclusion, and we can see this exemplified in the various Indigenous artists communities with their common purpose.

If we fail to find a sense of belonging, isolation and depression often ensues. However, there are those who do not belong but are in fact liberated by their independence. This may be due to their desire to rebel against family tradition, friends' expectations or work commitment and thus are pleased to be set apart. What influences identity and belonging?

Everything and everyone can influence a person's identity and belonging. While some influences can be major, such as a move from one country and culture to another, or relationship with one's family, other influences may be minor, for example an incident with a friend many years ago. *art +soul* suggests that for the Indigenous Australians, the painful events of past history have influenced their artistic expression in a variety of ways.

Our artists 'live in a different world' in a sense, but while many of our experiences as part of the human family overlap, the reason why we are all unique is because we ultimately choose what does or does not impact us in a crucial or unimportant way. It is the myriad parts of our lives that come together that create our identity. We can see, by the documentary's end, the sum of the many experiences and influences in the lives of our artists – good or bad, happy or sad – that have made them who they are.

Is there ever struggle with identity and belonging?

Everyone has struggled with their identity and belonging during a chapter of their life. There comes a time when our opinions and beliefs begin to differentiate from those around us. During this time, some people may discover where they belong, whereas many others do not. It is not solely at one stage of our lives when we are confronted with an identity crisis; it is a continuous challenge throughout our lives as we encounter new experiences that will alter our thoughts, emotions and perspective on ourselves.

CONTEXT: WHOSE REALITY?

The question mark in the Context's title is deliberate: it recognizes the existence

and validity of multiple perspectives regarding what is considered 'real'. The wording of the title also clearly suggests that we should be prepared to accept the existence of alternative versions of reality to our own, whether we share these perceptions or not. Reality is defined as the state or fact of being real, but as humans we have the capacity to perceive and interpret our own realities in many different ways. This Context, therefore, is chiefly concerned with the subjectivity of human experience and emotion, and how differences in individuals and in their personal circumstances lead to alternative perceptions of what reality is. Furthermore, understanding other perceptions of reality can help clarify our own version of what is real, in addition to enlightening us about our understanding of our place in the world and thereby further enriching our experience of life.

Who or what shapes our sense of reality?

The notion of "reality" is inextricably linked to the subjectivity of individual human existence. As such, "reality"is viewed differently by each individual, through the filter of his/her personal circumstances, values and emotions. In addition to this, "reality" is determined through a combination of other factors and perspectives.

Our sense of reality is shaped from a multitude of sources. The media is one entity that plays a significant role in shaping reality. How? Other realms include:

- Science – where reality is perceived according to what is factual or demonstrable
- Religion – where reality is considered according to "dogma" (doctrine)
- History – where reality is considered according to human development - this also applies on a personal level in terms of an individual's history
- Psychology – where reality is viewed in relation to theory and research.

The notion of one, single and definitive version of 'reality' is extremely hard to justify in the face of so many subjective and variable perspectives.

What are the broader ideas and arguments that emerge from this Context?

One answer to this question must

surely be the interpretation of reality through an artistic medium, and this is where *art + soul* can be a useful supplementary text. Broadly speaking, all artists featured in this documentary series interpret the world around them in a variety of ways:

. By re-evaluating the history of Australia from an Indigenous perspective, as opposed to the white European perspective. (think Daniel Boyd, Christian Thompson, Warwick Thornton, Julie Gough);

By responding to current government policy by 'hands-on' personal 'intervention' into the realities of social problems. (think Yarrenyty Arltere Art Centre artists and their animated films, Vernon Ah Kee's cinematic interpretation of the Palm Island riots);

By 're-creating' past realities as a demonstration of Indigenous skills in response to historical misinterpretations of Indigenous peoples. (Think Lola and Rex Greeno);

. By preserving past traditions and culture to inform and educate young Indigenous Australians of the reality of a proud past which may be celebrated in the present. (Think of Wanyubi Marika and Tjala Arts).

As *art + soul* demonstrates, there are varied ways that experience can be recorded and interpreted. The set texts, and supplementary texts, provide opportunities for to analyse the ways that different people perceive and respond to the world. As Warwick Thornton remarks of one of his recent films:

It is important for English students studying any of these Contexts to compile a file of appropriate texts to employ in creating and presenting their own written pieces. When considering *The Darkside* as a supplementary text, it is important to reflect on the words of Director Warwick Thornton:

Aboriginal people live on the threshold of two dimensions. One is a world of everyday reality and the other a world of spirits, demons and entities....Is it possible that Indigenous people, with a culture rooted in stories of an ancient Dreamtime, have a deeper insight into spiritual reality than those of us reared in the traditions of Western scientific enlightenment?

CONTEXT: THE IMAGINATIVE LANDSCAPE

When studying *Imaginative Landscape*, there are some key questions that we need to ask ourselves in order to understand the concept.

What is a landscape?

Landscape is the physical environment we see around us everyday and everywhere we go. All landscapes are unique, from the quiet countryside to the hustle and bustle of the city. This individuality stems from their geographical location to their scenic backdrop – some consisting of buildings, vegetation, rivers and more. It is through our perspective of the landscape that allows us to appreciate what is before us. However, our other senses also come into play when conceptualising a particular space. While we may not notice it, when we look at a picture or painting of the ocean, our mind absorbs more information than what we simply see. We subconsciously imagine the warmth of the sun, the breeze of the ocean and the salty smell of the sea lingering around us. Thus, it is our 5 senses that help us understand and appreciate different landscapes.

All our senses are important in shaping a landscape. When we think of home, we may associate it with lots of noise, smells of Italian cooking, or the warmth of the fireplace. However, it is not just these senses that help us connect with our home landscape, but also our emotions and experiences.

What is an imagined landscape?

An imagined landscape is the meaning we add to a physical landscape. Our perspective of landscape is not as simple as it may first appear. Since it is through *our* view that we see a landscape, the natural world around us is not viewed through an objective lens – rather, it is subjective as our thoughts and feelings influence what we see.

Many personal factors influence our subjective view of landscape. These include:

- Culture
- Tradition
- Values
- Morals
- Beliefs
- Religion
- Emotions
- Attitude
- Experiences
- Choices
- Career
- Lifestyle

Whose landscape?

Every person sees landscape differently. This is mainly due to the human factors discussed above. However, another factor that influences the way we perceive landscape is other people around us. Through our family, friends, and associates' experiences and beliefs, we come to view a landscape in different ways. While landscapes are static, they are perceived differently for each individual.

And here is where *art + soul* functions as an exemplary text for this Context. The Imaginative Landscape Context which, interestingly features an Indigenous story as one of the principal texts – *One night the moon* directed by Rachel Perkins – illustrates clearly the relationship the artist has with the world around him or her, interpreting it in a variety of ways, layering this world with a selection of colour, symbolic significance, caricature, mythic and spiritual references and variety of distortions which demonstrate a viewpoint or an agenda.

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Aboriginal Studies – Elective/standalone subject

art + soul is an appropriate text for inclusion in Aboriginal Studies. In the NSW curriculum, Aboriginal Studies is a subject in its own right and focuses on Aboriginal content, achievement

and issues.

The NSW Department of Education and Training has supported an Aboriginal Education K–12 Resource Guide titled: 'Aboriginal Education K – 12' which has been developed to facilitate the ongoing commitment of schools and Aboriginal communities to the teaching of Aboriginal studies across all curriculum areas in NSW. The intention is that

all students can learn about Aboriginal Australia and gain a proper understanding of Aboriginal cultures, communities and histories. In this way cross-cultural understanding is improved and the processes of Reconciliation are strengthened.

...Teaching Aboriginal studies will strengthen the cultural identity of Aboriginal students in NSW schools, enhance Aboriginal community involvement,

and promote understanding by all students of Aboriginal culture, history and current issues.

The two Aboriginal Studies syllabuses in the NSW curriculum are:

- Aboriginal Studies 7–10
- Aboriginal Studies: Stage 6 syllabus.

The Resource Guide links resources with the NSW Department of Education and Training Curriculum Key Learning Areas, from Early Stage 1 through to Stage 6. These curriculum links are vital as there is a continuum of learning for Aboriginal Studies from K - 12.

Selection Criteria for resources in this subject involve questions of up-to-date materials, accuracy, 'positive and accurate portrayals of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people', the 'balanced nature' of the material and an acknowledgment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the creation of the resource. In all these areas, *The Darkside* is an impeccable resource.

In Queensland, a number of schools and communities provide a P- 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages syllabus. This Syllabus promotes opportunities for students to develop knowledge of and communication skills in the target Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Language. The syllabus promotes active engagement and communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. *The Darkside* is an excellent example of an ancillary text to this programme. The website https://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/12798.html also provides a wide variety of resources for the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and history.

In Victorian schools, Aboriginal Studies is an elective choice within the HSIE learning area.

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