

Presented in association with

Perth Festival

nyinalanginy



the gathering

PICA sits on the unceded cultural and spiritual homelands of the Whadjuk Nyoongar People, who have cared for this Country for thousands of years. PICA acknowledges Whadjuk Nyoongar Peoples as the custodians of this place. We offer our respect and admiration of Elders past, present and emerging, whose knowledge helps us understand this place in profound and meaningful ways, and whose stewardship continues to keep this place safe for us all.



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In 2020 the global community found itself in a state of overwhelming anxiety as we collectively navigated the coronavirus pandemic, a global health challenge that quickly become weaponised as a tool to further divide people politically and ideologically.

Simultaneously, the recent deaths of Indigenous and Black people while in police custody in Australia and the United States of America gained international attention, initiating challenging reflections on systemic racism and discrimination, unprecedented global protest during a deadly pandemic and the emergence of a new wave of allyship in both the general public and the corporate world.

In a time when our physical interactions and freedom of travel have been significantly restricted, *the gathering* reflects upon the act of gathering – the bringing together of peoples, words, politics, objects, images, identities, histories, concern, dreams, and ambitions through the presentation of works of art from Australian First Nations, Australian South Sea Islander and Māori artists.

Together, these artists offer powerful and moving personal reflections upon our cultures, our families, our ancestral relationships with lands and waters, our colonial histories and the legacies of Empire that continue to impact all of our lives.

the gathering is an invitation to reflect on our histories, values, and experiences while we reconsider what our futures can be.

Image: 12:27 PM, 9 March, 2020. Taken onboard QF10, upon descent into Boorloo on Whadjuk Boodja | Perth, Western Australia.

I took this photo as we were arriving home from Northern Ireland, (via London) on March 9, 2020. At this moment in time I knew the world was changing, but had no idea how 2020 was going to unfold. - Glenn Iseger-Pilkington

List of works

Sharyn Egan

'...turned by white men', 2021
collection of turned Balga homewares,
removed from circulation
variable dimensions

Ngop Ngooni (Blood Brothers), 2019
Balga resin, white spirit and synthetic
polymer paint on plywood panels
variable dimensions

Kalyakoorl (Always), 2021
Balga (Xanthorrhoea preissii) and
natural earth pigments

Dean Cross

Flagged Out/Second Wave, 2020
Ngunnawal ochre, synthetic binder, charcoal
and powdered pigment on stretched linen

PAS DE DEUX, 2019
projected filmic work
13:07 min.

23rd March (1770 - 2020), 2020
oilstick and gesso on linen

Pool, 2021
acrylic and molasses

Ngarra, 2021
mixed media installation

Yabini Kickett

Burdiya-ka (Bosses), 2021
assemblage of personal objects, table, giclée
prints on paper

Peggy Griffiths Madij

Wollangem Balaj Gida
(At First Sight), 2019-2020
single channel video with sound; 16:9
5:27 min.

Collaborating artist:
Jan Griffiths (Miriwoong Peoples)
Sound Design: Jinunyili (Djugun,
Jabirr Jabirr and Gooniyandi Peoples)
Collaborating animator:
Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman
Austrian/Sri Lankan

Bridget Reweti

Ziarah, 2018
single channel video with sound; 16:9
9:30 min.

Lighthouse, 2018
Circle, 2018
Tunnel, 2018
giclée prints on paper

Damien Shen

The Art of War, 2019
five hand-etched tintype photographs

*In the midst of chaos,
there is also opportunity*, 2020
*Know thy self, know thy enemy. A thousand
battles, a thousand victories*, 2020
Never Venture, Never Win, 2020
hand-etched tintype photographs

Know yourself and you will win all battles, 2019
two hand-etched tintype photographs

*The greatest victory is that which
requires no battle*, 2020
two hand-etched tintype photographs

*The opportunity of defeating the enemy is
provided by the enemy himself*, 2020
two hand-etched tintype photographs

*Treat your soldiers like your sons and they will
follow you into any battle*, 2020
three hand-etched tintype photographs

Annie, 2020
Aunty Betty, 2020
Aunty Tiggy, 2020
Dana, 2020
Mum, 2020
T.M., 2020
Uncle Chook, 2020
Uncle Moogy, 2020
Heaven and Hell, 2020
hand-etched tintype images made from
charcoal drawings

Jasmine Togo-Brisby

Into Something Else, 2021
mixed media with crow feathers

James Tylor

(Deleted scenes) From an
Untouched Landscape #2, 2013
(Deleted scenes) From an
Untouched Landscape #10, 2013
(Deleted scenes) From an
Untouched Landscape #14, 2013
(Vanished Scenes) From an
Untouched Landscape #2, 2018
(Vanished Scenes) From an
Untouched Landscape #3, 2018
(Vanished Scenes) From an
Untouched Landscape #4, 2018
(Vanished Scenes) From an
Untouched Landscape #6, 2018
(Vanished Scenes) From an
Untouched Landscape #12, 2018
(Removed Scenes) From an
Untouched Landscape #5, 2018
(Removed Scenes) From an
Untouched Landscape #8, 2018
giclée prints on hahnemuhle paper with hole
removed to a black velvet void

From an *Untouched Landscape*, 2021
giclée print on wallpaper

Wirri (club), 2020
Kathawirri (sword), 2020
Murlapaka (broad shield), 2020
Katha (digging stick), 2020,
Wakalti (parry shield), 2020
Wadnawirri (battle axe), 2020
Midla (spearthrower), 2020
timber and black paint

Dean Cross

Born 1986

Kamberri | Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
Wirimi Peoples, New South Wales
Lives and works Sydney, New South Wales

In *PAS DE DEUX* (2019) Dean Cross presents a kind of cultural study which operates in absolute binary. The work takes us back to 1988, a year where many Australians celebrated the bicentenary of Australia marking 200 years since invasion and the beginnings of colonisation. For First Nations people of Australia however, this was a year of sadness, of grief and of anger.



It was also, however, a year to stand together in unity, to be seen and heard. First Nations people organised and travelled to Sydney to protest the bicentenary celebrations and, in doing so, reminded people in Australia and around the world of the true cost of colonial nation-building to Indigenous people. While some cry, others celebrate, and it is this tension that Cross conjures through overt and deliberate juxtaposition. *PAS DE DEUX* is a timely reflection on the power of protest and the importance of activism. Cross reminds us that while progress has been made as a nation and a global community, we are far from attaining equality for First Nations people and People of Colour in world informed and governed by ideologies of British Empire.

Ngarra (2021)

From artist, Dean Cross:

Ngarra is a transitive verb in the Kattang/Gathang language, the language of my ancestors, which can be understood in five distinct ways. To hear; to listen; to think; to remember; and to know. In the fallout from 2020, *ngarra* has become a daily practice and something I wanted to engage with for the *gathering*.

Since the summer fires in early 2020, and the tragic human loss from COVID-19 around the world, I have been thinking on communal displays of reflection, grief and remembrance, in particular the practice of giving bouquets of flowers as loving gesture. It struck me as odd inasmuch as to give a flower is to kill a flower. Somehow though that incongruence holds the poetic key to unlocking this strange year – and replicating that practice for the *gathering* felt right.

My idea is a simple one – create an open opportunity for *Ngarra* through the continued placement of a bouquet of flowers into the gallery space. This can be done by anyone and everyone who would like to share in a brief shining moment of communal and collective reflection and remembering as we allow 2020 to gently fall away while we navigate the beginnings of a new year.

I invite you to take part in the creation of *Ngarra* a work commissioned for the *gathering*, by making a floral offering to the work in the galleries at PICA. You can bring flowers from home, or purchase some from a local florist or grocery store. When placing flowers upon the work, take time to hear, to listen, to think and to remember.



Sharyn Egan

Born 1957

Boorloo | Perth, Western Australia
Whadjuk Nyooongar Peoples
Lives and works Walyalup | Fremantle,
Western Australia

Sharyn Egan is a Whadjuk Nyooongar artist, whose multidisciplinary practice explores her personal and cultural relationships to Country, to *Nyooongar Boodja*. Egan's works document the relationships between places, people, plants and animals while also reminding us of our role as custodians charged with caring for the natural world. Egan's works are often made from collected materials belonging to *Boodja*, materials which her ancestors have worked with since the beginning.

Egan's newly commissioned work *Kalyakoorl* (Always) (2021) works in this same way, and is comprised of a collection of *Xanthorrhoea preissii* cores, a species of the grass tree endemic to *Nyooongar Boodja* and known as *Balga* in Nyooongar. *Ngop Ngooni* (Blood Brothers) (2019) lines the walls of the gallery and is comprised of thirteen large paintings on plywood. Each panel is a meditative reflection on *Boodja* (Country), created using the resin of the *Balga* which Egan transforms into a rich, deep-red paint. The changing fields of colour are inspired by the many variations of surfaces Egan sees in the turned *Balga* pieces she has collected, while design work within the paintings makes reference to land formations, traditional scarification and body painting practices.

Historically, non-Aboriginal peoples exploited the resource in the creation of homewares which Egan collects from second-hand stores, removing them from circulation and creating new works of art with them. Egan has included a large selection of these objects in the *gathering*, reclaimed, re-purposed and aptly titled '...turned by white men' (2021). They sit somewhat out of view, up high, with little light falling on them – for Egan they symbolise unnecessary destruction of living *Balga* forests, mindlessly felled to produce decorative items for people's homes. They are emblematic of a European desire to conquer the landscape, to tame the wilds of the Australian outback – emergent from a worldview that sees the landscape as an endless resource – ripe for the picking. For First Nations people, this is far from the way we approach and value Country, we see Country as a cultural resource, as the ultimate provider. If we care for it, seek to understand it and advocate for it, it will continue to provide. For Egan, this is central to her practice, taking only what she needs at any one moment in time.

For Egan, the central core of the *Balga*, which remains well after the *Balga* tree itself has died, represents the enduring spirit of Nyooongar peoples who have survived the many hardships and atrocities of colonisation. *Kalyakoorl* (Always) is a physical manifestation of the strength and resilience of Nyooongar peoples, who continue the traditions of their ancestors while navigating a changing world.

Yabini Kickett

Born 1998

Boorloo | Perth, Western Australia
Ballardong, Nyaki-Nyaki, Wadjuk and
Bibbulmun Noongar Peoples
Lives and works Boorloo, Western Australia

Yabini Kickett is an emerging Nyooongar multidisciplinary artist whose practice to date has explored identity, kinship, family history and the ongoing impact of colonisation and development upon the natural world. Kickett's latest body of work, *Burdiya-ka* (Bosses) (2021), commissioned for the *gathering*, is her first foray into photo-portraiture as an artistic process with the resulting works speaking strongly of kinship within the patriarchy of her family.



Traveling with her family back to Kellerberrin for the funeral of her Uncle, Kickett created a series of large-format photographs of her mother, mother, Lola McDowell-Kickett, and her four aunts, Caroline Kickett, Valda Taylor (pictured above), Barbara-Rose Kickett and Helen Pickett. This was the first time the women had gathered since coming together for the funeral of their brother many years ago. Together they visited Jureen Mission, a place of personal significance for the family and the birthplace of Kickett's grandmother, Enid Kickett-Hayden, between Jureen and Kellerberrin rubbish tip.

Over the course of the week spent visiting places and family and playing cards and Yahtzee, the women confided in each other, reminiscing about the past, speaking of fond memories as well as the hardships endured by the family. Kickett heard stories she had never heard before, some of which were painful and incredibly personal. The time together created space for the sisters to share and heal.

Burdiya-ka, which translates to bosses, is a homage to the women in Kickett's family, photographic works paired with an assemblage of treasured personal objects – some collected from near the birthing tree Nanna Enid was born under, a majestic salmon gum, a delicate piece of silk Kickett has hand dyed using the leaves from the tree; Enid's precious bible and cookbook, a golden crucifix on a fine gold chain, a deck of cards, old glass bottles and a packet of Winfield Red cigarettes. Beneath the table sits a brick and a star steel picket, a nod to stories that remain untold, below the surface, only to emerge when the time and place is right.

Images Left to Right:
Dean Cross, *PAS DE DEUX* (2019), 2019, Dean Cross, *Ngarra* (detail), 2021,
Yabini Kickett, *Burdiya-ka* (Bosses) (Valda Taylor), 2021,
Peggy Griffiths Madji, 2019, Photo Ben Seaman,
Bridget Reweti, *Lightsources*, 2018, Bridget Reweti, *Tunnel*, 2018,
Damien Shen, *Heaven and Hell*, 2018,
James Taylor, (Detailed scenes) *From an Untouched Landscape* #2, 2013,
James Taylor, (Detailed scenes) *From an Untouched Landscape* #7, 2013.
All images copyright the artist.

Peggy Griffiths Madji

Born 1941

Newry Station, Northern Territory
Mirriwoong and Gajirramoo Peoples
Lives and works Kununurra, Western Australia
& Juyilnum, Northern Territory

Peggy Griffiths Madji is an senior Mirriwoong artist who works at Wangarri Arts in Kununurra (Kimberley, Western Australia). Griffiths' paintings are important cultural documents that map *Dawang* (Country), depicting important formations in the landscape, plants and animals, but more importantly they speak of a history shared with *kartija* (white people), of frontier violence and of the tensions that remain, traces of the colonial world that saw Mirriwoong and many other First Nations peoples displaced from their Country.

Woollangem Balaj Gida (At First Sight) (2019-20) made in collaboration with Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman, draws on Griffiths' paintings to create a powerful animation recalling Griffiths' mother, Dinah Dinyngool Joowanany's first encounter with a non-Indigenous person, a manager at Newry Station. The manager was being led by an Aboriginal tracker following groups of Aboriginal people. Dinah hid from the manager in a waterhole that the Griffiths family visit regularly, and a place which often features in Griffiths and her daughter Jan's artworks. Dinah managed to escape, coming out of the water only once the manager and the tracker had moved on. This marked the beginning of a series of events that would see Dinah and her family's lives changed forever.

Woollangem Balaj Gida (At First Sight) is an important reminder of the complexities embodied in First Nations peoples' depictions of Country. While people also sit and care for these places, they are also the sites of painful atrocities. Like the narratives of the *Ngarranggarni*, the Dreaming, these more recent occurrences are etched into Country and into the hearts and minds of the custodians of these places.



Ziarah brings to the fore not only Reweti's relationship to Tupaia and his experiences, but also the nuances of colonial adventure, stories of human connection, of affection, of journeys and of humanity and mortality. This is twofold in that Islamic and Reweti forge new connections with each other, bringing forth a new shared history in the creation of this work – a connection founded on reciprocity.



Bridget Reweti

Born 1985

Tauranga Moana, Aotearoa New Zealand
Māori: Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāi Te Rangi
Lives and works Ōtepoti [Dunedin],
Moana Aotearoa New Zealand

Bridget Reweti is a Māori (Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāi Te Rangi) lens-based artist whose works explore different perspectives and understandings of landscape. Her practice unpacks the intimate relationship between people and place, revealing histories known more intimately by Māori in Aotearoa New Zealand while challenging the way that landscape is employed in western art-making traditions.

Reweti's work *Ziarah* (2018) made during a residency at the Cemeti Institute of Art and Society in Jogjakarta (Indonesia) shares the experiences of Tupaia, a Tahitian navigator, translator and priest who travelled on Captain Cook's *Endeavour* from Raiatea in the Society Islands, with his nephew Taiaia. Tupaia played a critical role in interactions between the British and *tangata whenua* (people of the land) in Aotearoa New Zealand, acting not only as a translator but as a mediator who people trusted and held in high regard. After his first visit, Tupaia never returned to Aotearoa, as both he and his nephew Taiaia died while the ship was docked in Indonesia (then the Dutch-ruled Batavia).

Narrated by Safr Islami, a Betawi man who Reweti shared time and space with, the work reveals histories of Tupaia's journey to Indonesia, information shared by Reweti paired with Islami's knowledge of the islands to the north of Jakarta in the Java Sea. *Ziarah* (which translates to pilgrimage in Arabic) is in many ways a document of the journey Islami, Reweti and translator Edwina Brennan took together to Damar Besar, which is believed to be the final resting place of Tupaia, and the conversations they shared, particularly those of the seas and oceans which both Islami and Reweti have great respect, reverence and concern for.



Ziarah brings to the fore not only Reweti's relationship to Tupaia and his experiences, but also the nuances of colonial adventure, stories of human connection, of affection, of journeys and of humanity and mortality. This is twofold in that Islamic and Reweti forge new connections with each other, bringing forth a new shared history in the creation of this work – a connection founded on reciprocity.

Damien Shen

Born 1976

Tartnanya | Adelaide, South Australia
Ngarrindjeri Peoples and Chinese Australian
Lives and works Tartnanya | Adelaide,
South Australia

Damien Shen's practice is an ongoing gathering of personal histories and identities, documenting the journey of his life and the process of self and collective discovery that many First Nations peoples engage with throughout the course of their lives. For First Nations peoples, whose lived experiences and inherited ancestral experience have been one of loss, dispossession from Country, culture and kin and victim of the aggressive anthropological gaze of empire, the process of consolidation and rebuilding of cultural selfhood can take a lifetime.



Shen, however, courageously shares this deeply personal process with us through his practice, drawing on anthropological collections for source material including images of his family, the places they were forced to move to and the people who serviced the colonial agenda. Not only does Shen reveal the faces of the men who controlled, assimilated and studied his people he also mimics the anthropological studies made of his people pictorially in the works on display, etching muscle anatomy over the portraits of his family, a nod to the way that his Ngarrindjeri peoples were perceived and documented as subjects to study, closer to animals than to humans. In this act, Shen attests to and reclaims First Nations peoples' right to define the way they are represented.

Shen's most recent works expand once again, seeking to share with the nuance and multiplicity of identity for First Nations people, who often have multiple cultural belongings and affinities to cultures and communities locally, but also to faraway places, people, lands and waters. For Shen, integration and pictorial representation of his Chinese heritage has become critical in his investigations of self, reinforcing the complexities of belonging he navigates but also attesting to his sense of pride. For Shen, art works are not simply a commodity, produced for artwork consumption, but a map of discovery that will form the cultural legacy he leaves for his children Kalani and Takoda, and for the children they may go on to have.



Jasmine Togo-Brisby

Born 1982

Murwillumbah, New South Wales
4th Generation Australian
South Sea Islander (Vanuatu)
Lives and works Te Whanganui-a-Tara
(Wellington), Aotearoa New Zealand

'Our landscape is our only monument: its meaning can only be traced on the otherised'
Edouard Glissant, *Caribbean Discourse* Selected Essays (1989)

A single maelstrom, a powerful ocean whirlpool, crafted using a network of interlacing cross feathers sits upon the gallery floor, in a darkened room. The closer we get, the more perilous a situation we find ourselves in, for at the centre of this whirlpool is a tumultuous end and the beginning of a transformed existence. Maelstroms are formed by opposing currents, or a current colliding with an obstacle, the word also used to describe a *situation or state of confused movement or violent turmoil*.

Jasmine Togo-Brisby's creative practice rigorously interrogates slave trade of the Pacific, known as 'black-birding', these practices saw people forced into slavery, and transported to colonies throughout the world. Togo-Brisby's great-great grandparents were among the more than 62,000 who were abducted from their island homes and shipped to Australia where they were forced into work on the sugarcane plantations and domestic servitude.

For Togo-Brisby, her relationship to the ocean is complex and multifaceted, like many Pacific Islander peoples, she has a deep affinity with it, a cultural legacy informed through an enduring relationship with the ocean, a notion often reinforced in discourses around the Pacific diaspora. For Pacific slave diaspora however, the Pacific Ocean is also middle passage, a complex and complicated site of memory, of loss and rupture – the Pacific was a critical tool in the colonial displacement of her ancestors, stolen from their families and homelands under Australia's Pacific labour policies between 1847-1904. The dispossession of South Sea bodies from the places they belong to faraway lands was critical to this slave agency, it created physical, emotional and cultural distance which enabled slavers to dominate and control the enslaved.

Dispossession was two-fold for South Sea Islander people, initially stolen from their Pacific homelands, the Australian government then moved to erase their experience and existence from the Australian narrative through the White Australia Policy and the largest mass deportations in Australian history. Those remaining were often forced by governmental structures to identify their South Sea bodies as Indigenous Australian, to occupy spaces within the 'blak' political struggle, a notion that continues to reinforce South Sea placelessness today.

The newly commissioned work, *Into Something Else* (2021) interrogates this spatial dilemma and acts as a physical manifestation of the Pacific and a map of discovery that will form the cultural legacy he leaves for his children Kalani and Takoda, and for the children they may go on to have.

Within science fiction novels the maelstrom often manifests as a space of transformation, of parallel dimensions – a portal one cannot escape, and from which one emerges aged and altered beyond repair or recognition. Togo-Brisby parallels the imagined realm of time travel with the unimaginable journey of her ancestors in the holds of slave ships, floating on an ocean of transformation. *Into Something Else* moves both backward and forward in time, refusing to sit in either, but offers itself as a site of South Sea possibility.

February - April 2021

James Taylor

Born 1986,

Mildura, Victoria Australia
Nungga (Kaurna) Peoples,
Māori (Te Arawa) and European
Lives and works Kamberri | Canberra,
Australian Capital Territory

James Taylor is multidisciplinary artist whose works seek to reveal histories of place through the sharing of important historical narratives while also attesting to the continued cultural practices of First Nations people around Australia. Throughout his career, Taylor has undertaken extensive research into Kaurna language and knowledge of the creation and use of cultural tools which were crafted by his ancestors and critical to survival. In doing so Taylor has made significant contributions to the cultural revitalisation and maintenance efforts of Kaurna people in South Australia.



Taylor's From an Untouched Landscape series, comprised of four bodies of work created between 2013 and the present day (*deleted, erased, vanished and removed*), explore the absence of First Nations people and our stories from the Australian landscape, from written history and in many ways from the Australian consciousness. Upon invasion First Nations people were seen as lesser beings, whose only meaningful place in the colony was as enslaved labour, supporting the ambitions of the British Empire. The options for our people were assimilation or annihilation, with colonial mechanisms geared in such ways to encourage these outcomes – many of which continue to function in contemporary Australian society.

From an Untouched Landscape poetically speaks to these absences, rendering landscapes as people invisible from the landscape for far too long, that we are here, we are resilient, and we won't be made invisible again.

In recent years Taylor has presented these works alongside the cultural tools he has learned to craft, a way of re-inserting First Nations people in these empty spaces and a reminder that while a culture of exclusion rendered First Nations people invisible from the landscape for far too long, that we are here, we are resilient, and we won't be made invisible again.



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