

# visual arts

## Millennia Indigena

*In this short guide, it is impossible to do justice to the prodigious numbers, diversity and excellence of Australia's Indigenous visual artists. The small sample (from a huge bibliography) of books, journals and catalogues listed at the end of the essay is where you will find some justice done. However, what Djon Mundine's essay and Rea's selection for the Biennale of Contemporary Art in Noumea do so well is show that Australian Indigenous art is a living and ever evolving phenomenon, and that arbitrary notions of the traditional and the contemporary are inadequate touchstones for comprehending the works. Nor is the notion of cultural identity fixed. Mundine describes generations of Indigenous artists and their distinct rebellions against enforced concepts of identity that are the legacy of colonialism. Affirmation of a spiritual connection to the land enters a dynamic relationship with other forces—urban life, new technologies, art theory and politics. The Editors.*

In 1900 white Australian bureaucracies had begun to set definitions of Aboriginality and as a consequence, degrees of authenticity in Aboriginal art. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century questions of identity and authenticity continue to be a problem for certain sections of society and the art world. However, for an ever expanding number of young, sophisticated, articulate and 'out there' Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists it is a problem that is seen to be irrelevant. The argument is look at our art, we create art on our own terms. Even so these artists are still defiantly black, although they expect their work to be appreciated as universal.

Earlier generations had a hard time of it just being recognised as Aboriginal. They came in three

waves: those from the 1950s, 60s and 70s—Roy Bull, Jeffrey Samuels, Raymond Meeks, Lin Onus, Gerry Bostock, Trevor Nichols, Gordon Syrons, Kevin Gilbert and others. These artists struggled in a world that wouldn't believe in their Aboriginal art and, to an extent, in their personal Aboriginal heritage. It's almost the case that Aboriginal people have had to express themselves in some kind of art in order to be considered real Aboriginals.

Artists from the 1980s—Fiona Foley, Ellen Jose, Tracey Moffatt, Karen Casey, Gordon Bennett, Les Griggs, Lawrence Leslie, Avril Quail, Michael Riley, Bronwyn Bancroft, Sally Morgan and many others—never forgot their origins and often were at the forefront of political movements over this period. I remember in 1987 Tracey Moffatt on the TV news being arrested in the UK for protesting against the appropriation of the Aboriginal flag by the 'first fleet' re-enactment.

Following the Koori 84 art show when the term 'urban Aboriginal art' was first heard, a group of mainly young graduating Koori art students met at Fiona Foley's flat in inner Sydney to form an artists' co-operative. Foley had been inspired in this venture by visiting Aboriginal artist co-operatives in Arnhem Land. They chose the name boomalli, a Wiradjuri word meaning 'to strike' and spelt co-operative with a 'k' to complete the acronym BAARK (Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Residents Ko-operative) as in the bark sheets traditionally used for paintings—a practice much more widespread than it is today. The 'k' made it 'cool' to the local Koori community and added a bit of Germanic-historical-intellectual credibility within the art world. Many of the group had attended art colleges and become politicised in the process.



Fiona Foley *Native Blood* 1994  
courtesy Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery

*Fiona Foley (Nation: Batjala) is a highly respected Australian artist working in paint, printmaking, photography and installation. Of her Native Blood series, she says, "Within my retrieval of Badjala archival material there was a mysterious and striking image of one of my forbears...Hidden in the humiliation of the colonizer's gaze is a gift, the shape of a breast. The only way I could come close to her was to recast her in my image.." (Colonial Post Colonial, Museum of Modern Art at Heide). Fiona Foley has had many solo exhibitions throughout Australia and her work has been included in major group exhibitions including most recently Aboriginal Art in Modern Worlds at the Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg and National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Bonheurs des Antipodes, Musee de Picardie, France and Echigo-Tsumari Art Triennial. With photographer Heidrun Löhr, Fiona Foley created the installation for the performance Ochre and Dust featured at the 8th Festival of Pacific Arts.*

Photography had come into popular use at the last gasp of European colonialism, the final colonisation of Oceania, the South Pacific. Ultimately and blatantly, photography was another tool for colonialism to label, control, dehumanise and disempower its subjects who could only reply in defiant gaze at the lens controlled by someone else. For many Indigenous artists, to take up photography (both chemical and digital) as an artform was a conscious move to counter this history. At the close of the millennium, however, these Indigenous practitioners have moved from mere reaction to more personal human themes. Brenda L Croft's moving memorial to her deceased father and brother through a series of digital compositions can be understood by anyone. Michael Riley, a Wiradjuri artist initially worked in documentary photography and film and has moved laterally from this path of family and friends to environment, history and wider social issues.

Artists such as Trevor Nicholls, Harold Thomas and more recently Gordon Bennett and Tracey Moffatt are reputed to have wanted to be known as artists in their own right rather than be stereotyped (ghettoised) as Aboriginal artists.

While to them their Aboriginality is never in question and their art says this in many ways, their white peers have sometimes striven to confine them within this category. Tracey Moffatt composes her private, eclectic dramatisations of history. Starting with issues of colour, she plays with truth and reality and through it, her own identity. She remains Aboriginal but her art deals with personal issues, puts up up smoke screens—her playfulness makes the viewer ask, is she Aboriginal, Jewish, gay, straight...and does it matter? Ian Abdulla addresses the dispossessed Aboriginal people whom Australian society continues to ignore, the rural poor, both black and white. His paintings depict the menial, itinerant work through which these people eke out an existence. Events are often portrayed in a nostalgic light as he maps his landscape (not dreaming), seeking out cultural and childhood memories. Autobiographical, the paintings are in reality a truer history than most for both black and white in South Australia. Recording this minority history also preoccupies Robert Campbell Jnr. His incentive to paint comes from a commitment to record events for his family. Both are practically self taught although encouraged and mentored by sympathetic white Australian artists.



Ian Abdulla *Impressing the girls* 1999  
courtesy Greenaway Art Gallery

"Created from a lively synergy of text and imagery, the narrative paintings of Ian Abdulla (*Nation: Ngarrindjerrri*) are fresh and vivid—often peppered with humour and political barbs... Apart from their historical importance, Ian's paintings...affirm the culture of rural Aborigines throughout the country who, despite being dispossessed, have been determined to stay on their own land." (John Kean, 1992). He has published two illustrated books (*Omnibus Press*) and exhibited widely in Australia including *Beyond the Pale*, 2000 Adelaide Biennale of Australian Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia. He is represented in all major Australian public collections. Internationally he has exhibited in Holland, Canada, Spain, Cuba and Japan.



Tracey Moffatt *Scarred for Life*, 1994: *Birth Certificate 1962*  
courtesy Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery

Tracey Moffatt is a successful and highly inventive artist working in photography, film and video. A feature of her work is the "staged" narrative that juxtaposes truth and fiction, natural and artificial. In the series *Scarred for Life* "the tableaux, which incorporate stories from her past and those of her friends, critique the very genre they adopt: the true/life photodocumentary." (*Art in America*, July 1995). Her films, *Night Cries* (1990) and *Bedevil* (1993), are simultaneously disturbing and visually sumptuous. She lives and works in Australia and in New York where she had her first solo show in 1997 at the Dia Centre for the Arts. In the same year her work was featured at the Venice Biennale. She is included in major Australian collections and has exhibited widely within Australia and in the US, Asia and Europe.

Choosing to live and work in Brisbane, Gordon Bennett has turned the tables on postmodernism in his borrowing of western art imagery and cherished icons to present his own 'black armband history' of Australia's colonial past. A highly intelligent and clever amalgam of colonial images and his own visual commentary challenge official sentiments of Australian and western art history.

Then there are the artists of the 1990s—social conditions had changed; a new generation had passed through art institutions in reasonably significant numbers—

Judy Watson, Destiny Deacon, Gordon Hookey, Bianca Beetson, Clinton Nain and others. The youngest of these, Brook Andrew, Rea, Darren Siwes, Christian B Thompson, Mark Blackman and others use computer generated imagery, digitally manipulated photography and mixed media—print on metal, or overlaid digitally; timber marked by incisions; spray paint or burns, found objects—are all arranged in clever ways to get the message across.

This new generation of artists, generation Dhu (a suffix added to a noun, meaning made from/out of) is the result of a period of change over



Destiny Deacon *Someday I'll fly away from It shows no fear* 1999

"A consciousness of the violent gaps and distortions in Australian history is at the centre of the work of Destiny Deacon (*Nation: Ku Ku/Erub/Mer*). Her strategy is not to rewrite that history in a more comprehensive or more accurate way; rather she begins with the remnants and illusions that shape the present and works toward a confrontation with our cultural assumptions so that, at the very least, the obvious search for authenticity is revealed as the most obscene and indulgent form of identity" (Nikos Papastergiadis, catalogue, *Beyond the Pale*, 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art). Destiny Deacon has been exhibited widely in Australia including at the 1999 Australian *Perspecta* exhibition, the 2nd Asia-Pacific Triennial at the Queensland Art Gallery, and the 48th Venice Biennale as well as in New Zealand, Hong Kong, Germany and the UK.

the last thirty years within funding bodies, curatorial practices and collecting and exhibiting criteria in institutions. The creation of a separate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board (now Fund) of the Australia Council in the early 1970s and its 'Aboriginalisation' in the 1980s meant a vertical integration from Indigenous policy to Indigenous artist and 'product'.

More importantly, a new breed of curators are using their positions to broaden the readings of Indigenous art. The first real Torres Strait Islander exhibition, *Ilan Pasin*, This is *Our Way* (still touring Australia), a wide survey show of historical and contemporary work was curated and researched by Torres Strait Islanders Tom Mosby and Brian Robinson. This was a major statement in recognising the separateness of TSI history from Aboriginal history. Researchers had been discussing showing an 'erotic' Indigenous exhibition for decades but it was Garry Lee, a Larakeyah

artist-curator who was to present his *Love Magic* show in early 2000. In similar fashion, although a number of smaller surveys of the Papunya movement had occurred, the first major show by a state gallery, *Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius* opened this year at the Art Gallery of NSW curated by Hetti Perkins. In its tenth year, the Adelaide Biennale finally recognised the new wave of young Indigenous artists by inviting Brenda L Croft to put together a completely Australian Indigenous show, *Beyond the Pale*.

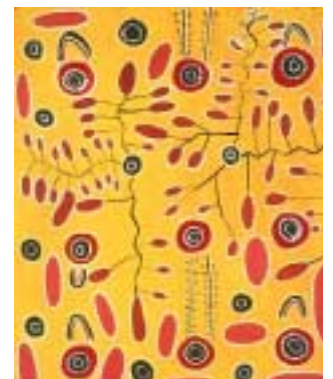
Even apparently stable forms of 'traditional' visual art connecting land and identity do evolve. From its beginnings in the 1970s the now internationally known 'dot and circle' school of painting has changed from formulaic representations to play with colour and composition and scale. It is much more personally expressive than prescribed—Emily Kame Kngwarray caught the public imagination and broke all the rules

in the art world, evolving a 'new' type of undefinable painting. One of the Warlpiri women painters now coming into her own, Dorothy Napangardi, goes from the macro—overview of tracts of her land—to the micro—a shopping list of bush food and useful plants. Sheena Wilfred's paintings follow a similar style in representing the land as a litany of plants and creatures.

A different evolution is evident in the work of Judy Watson. Watson had already made a name for herself at the end of the 1980s with a range of prints and her installation, *The Guardians*. In their first real recognition of urban Aboriginal art, the latter piece, an arrangement of five silhouette ancestral figures, was acquired by the Art Gallery of NSW in 1987 along with a painting by Jeffrey Samuels and several works on paper by Fiona Foley. Watson has since moved on to an expressionistic style of layered painting composition to win the

Billy Stockman Tjapaltjarri *Yala (Wild potato) dreaming* 1971  
Private collection  
Papunya Tula: Genesis and Genius, courtesy Art Gallery NSW

Billy Stockman Tjapaltjarri (*Nation: Anmatyerre*) worked as a stockman on Napperby Station in the Western Desert. An accomplished woodcarver, he painted the *Honey Ant Dreaming* mural on the Papunya school wall along with a number of other artists. Billy Stockman was chairman of the Papunya Tula Artists of the Western Desert in the 70s. He lives in Alice Springs and has been exhibited in *The Face of the Centre* (1985), *Dreamings* (1988-89), *Dot and Circle* (1985), *Dreamings of the Desert* (1996), and *Twenty-five years and Beyond* (1999). His painting *Yala (Wild Potato) Dreaming* (1971) is one of the many outstanding works in *Papunya Tula: Genesis & Genius* at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2000. He visited the US for the opening of the exhibition *Dreamings: The Art of Aboriginal Australia* in New York (1988) and has travelled to Papua New Guinea, New Zealand and South Africa.



Moët et Chandon Art Award and general acclaim. Most recently she and other members of this wave have taken on the Australian art world in winning a series of coveted public art opportunities.

Among this 90s group, a number of 'urban Aboriginal' artists, including Destiny Deacon, began to label their work as 'Blak art', both reclaiming the colonialist word 'Black' in their own terms and dealing with general issues of present experience that don't necessarily have a dreaming story. This is a strong statement of self-definition by artists who are not willing to wait for the art academe to pigeonhole them. They align themselves with the international post-colonial artists and curators of colour. Destiny Deacon, of Torres Strait Islander descent, who has lived in Melbourne most of her life, has exhibited from the early 1990s. She uses arrangements of objects of nostalgia and cultural memory in a reflection on contemporary existence with a fine sense of awareness, irony and biting, steely wit. The story continues.

#### Djon Mundine

Djon Mundine (Nation: Bandjalang), OAM (Order of Australia Medal for services to the visual arts) is a freelance writer and curator of Indigenous art, formerly Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

#### References

Wally Caruana, *Aboriginal Art*, Thames & Hudson, London, 1993

Catalogue, *Beyond the Pale*, curated by Brenda L Croft, 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2000

Sylvia Kleinert, Margo Neale eds, *The Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture*, Oxford University Press, November 2000

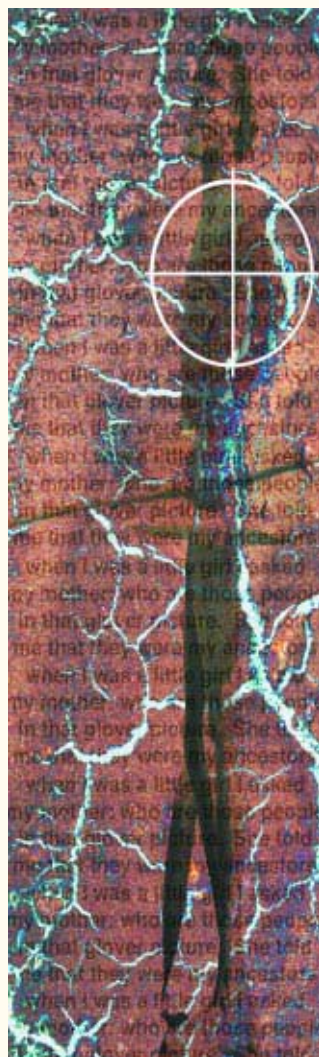
Visual Arts & Crafts resource directory, ATSIC  
P O Box 17, Woden ACT 2606  
Tel: 61 2 6121 4000

Artlink, *Reconciliation? Indigenous art for the 21st century*, Volume 20, No 1, 2000 tel 61 8 8356 8511  
fax 61 8 8235 1280  
artlinkmag@webmedia.com.au

Australian Art Collector, Special Issue, *Aboriginal Art*, Issue 13, 2000  
tel 61 2 9281 7523  
fax 61 2 9281 7529  
artcollector@gadfly.net.au

Darren Siwes *I Am Expecting*  
(sandstone house) 1999

*Darren Siwes (Nation: Kaurna) is a young South Australian artist whose work has come to public attention in recent exhibitions, notably Australian Perspecta (1999) at the Art Gallery of NSW and at the 2000 Adelaide Biennale of Australian Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia. An artist who approaches his photographic work in a painterly manner, Siwes is interested in the urban landscape and perceptions of reality, and the challenge of "trying to find natural composition yet create surreal images." (catalogue, Beyond the Pale, 2000 Biennale of Australian Art)*



Rea Jim #3 (l), Rea #9 (r) from the series *Don't shoot until you see the whites of their eyes* 1999  
courtesy of the artist

*Rea (Nation: Gamilaroi/Wailwan) works in photography and computer-generated digital imaging. In Don't shoot till you see the whites of their eyes (1999) she explores the relationship between kitsch and the black body, combining self portraits with a series of digital images taken from an old postcard depicting a "traditional Aborigine." The soundscape that accompanies the exhibition is a conversation between the two in English and Language (Aboriginal). Between the images are twelve plinths containing twelve glass heads. Rea's work has been featured in major Australian exhibitions including the 1996 and 1998 Moët & Chandon and Beyond the Pale, the 2000 Adelaide Biennale of Australian Art. She was artist in residence at the Banff Centre for the Arts (1996) and in 1999 completed the first part of a collaborative residency in London. She was recently awarded the 2000 Biennial Indigenous Arts Fellowship by the New South Wales Ministry for the Arts. Rea is one of a number of peers chosen by Artistic Director Peter Sellars to participate in the planning of the 2002 Adelaide Festival.*



**8th Festival of Pacific Arts,  
Biennale of Contemporary Art**

Many of the artists featured in this exhibition speak in their artists' statements about their personal experiences of 'healing' by creating art which re-connects them to their cultural histories via their family memories + ancestral stories. I encourage viewers to take a little special time-out to read their words carefully + I ask you to think about what each artist is saying as you look at their work.

In selecting the Australian Indigenous work for the Biennale d'Art Contemporain, I was very aware of the endless arbitrary + meaningless categorisations that have been used to divide us, minimise us and tokenise us. I felt that it was essential that I avoided any and all references to 'traditional' + 'contemporary'. I wanted to simply present the work for you to engage with, to look at for yourself and make your own connections. It was also equally important for me to ensure that the artists were 'visible' in the exhibition via their words + their images.

Each piece of work is unique and it deserves to be seen as such. Please spend a bit of time looking closely at all the work because you never know what you might 'see'.

Rea  
Curator  
Australian Indigenous Program  
Biennale d'Art Contemporain,  
Noumea 2000

**Brook Andrew**  
Nation: Wiradjuri

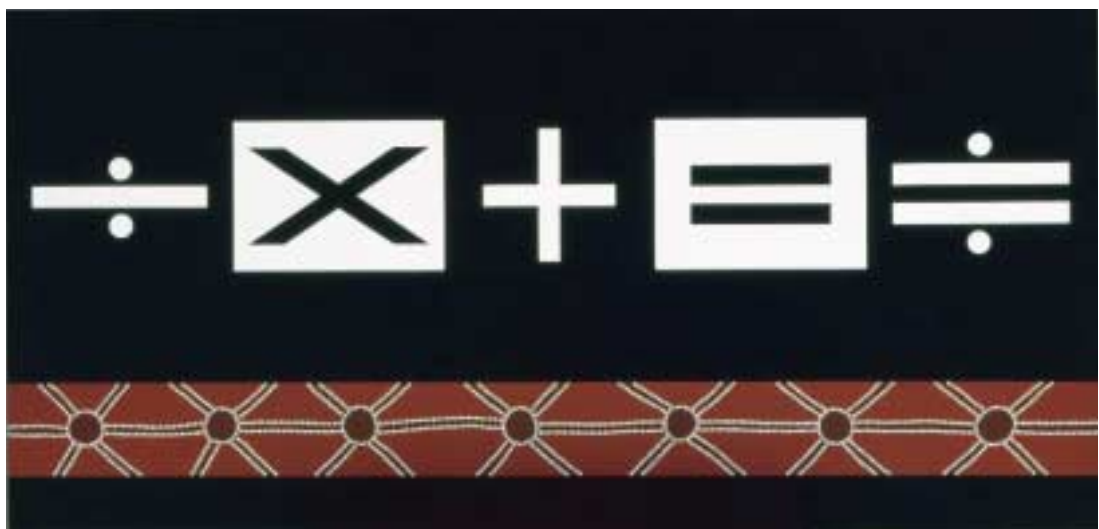
NGAJUU NGAAY NGINDUUGIRR  
(I see you), Digital Photograph  
(duratran), 20 x 465 cm, neon blue  
light, text, 1998. Artist's collection.

"The installation is a diptych of flashing blue neon text set 4 metres adjacent to a floating transparency (of eyes mounted on perspex, a close up of an Aboriginal man's eyes from an 1880s anthropological/archival photograph from the archive of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies). ...I have

aimed specifically to confront (the) issues which stereotype and divide Aboriginal Australia. Therefore, I aim to confront 'us' all—the everyday looker—where the Aboriginal gaze looks back—invades back." (from artist's statement, Biennale catalogue)

Brook Andrew lives and works in Sydney where he is studying for a PhD at the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales. He has participated in group shows at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra as well as in Sydney, Melbourne and London and has had solo exhibitions in Melbourne,

Adelaide the UK. His work is in the collections of the National Gallery of Victoria, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Griffith University Art Collection, The Vizard Foundation Collection, Melbourne. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea.*





### Mark Blackman

Nation: Murri Batjala People (Murri-unga)

Blackboard Series: Maths—Axiom 1; Music—Advance Australia Where?; History—Axiom 2; each 60.5 x 124.5 cm; sand and acrylic on board and mixed media, stainless steel and brass, 2000

"In the blackboard pieces I'm trying to create a classroom scene, give information and asking people to think about things, to think about how a blackboard operates in a classroom...All the sadness and joys of life and the importance of preservation—of not forgetting—inspire my work. Wherever I go, in Australia and overseas, I explain the cultural symbols in my work to adults and children in seminars and

workshops. I think the first thing Indigenous and non-Indigenous people need to reconcile is our doubts about who we are." (from artist's statement, Biennale catalogue)

Mark Blackman lives and works in Adelaide, South Australia. He has participated in group exhibitions at Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute in the 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival, in Ireland, the Philippines and South Africa, as well as the 13th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award national tour. He has solo exhibitions in Byron Bay, New South Wales, and at Tandanya, Adelaide and is represented in international collections. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*

### Brenda L. Croft

Nation: Gurindji

from the series *In My Father's House: Suffer the little children; Don't go kissing at the garden gate II; We looked up and there was a light; My mother recognised the man in the little boy; Every day we had to pray on our knees in the dirt; each 30 x 30 inches, Digital Ilfachrome prints, 1998. Artist's and Hugh Morgan collections.*

"My father, Joseph Croft, was born circa 1926 somewhere on Victoria River Downs (then one of the largest cattle stations in the world), in the Northern Territory, in the traditional country of the Gurindji nation. At less than two years of age he was forcibly removed from his mother and community by the NT Police under the jurisdiction of the Northern Territory Government.

"*In My Father's House* is a memorial not only to my father and brother but a memorial to all those children stolen from their families and denied knowledge of their

heritage. This work is all about chasing and catching those memories as they fall. Dad, Mum, little Brother, this is for you." (from the catalogue, *In My Father's House*.)

Brenda lives and works in Perth, Western Australia. Group exhibitions include *Signs of Life: Melbourne International Biennial*; *Retake*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; *The Boundary Rider*: 9th Biennale of Sydney, as well as shows in the UK, Germany and China. She has had solo exhibitions in Sydney and Perth. Brenda's work is included in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, Art Gallery of NSW, Art Gallery of Western Australia, and National Gallery of Victoria. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*



**Julie Gough**

Nation: Palawa

Driving Black Home, a series of 15 postcards, dimensions variable, postcards and timber, 2000. Artist's collection.

"Driving Black Home is an ongoing series of photographic works I am compiling as I make my way around this island...I see this big ongoing journey as an act of remembering. It is also my way of considering and disclosing the irony that although our original Indigenous place names were all but erased from their original sites, Europeans then consistently went about reinscribing our ancestors' presence on the land. I propose that these 'settlers' recognised the rights of occupancy of Aboriginal Tasmanians – evidenced by their renaming of 'natural' features across the entire island in the image of Black, Native, Nigger and Abo..." (from artist's statement, Biennale catalogue)

Julie Gough lives and works in Hobart, Tasmania where she is studying for her PhD in Fine Arts. She has participated extensively in group exhibitions across Australia including shows at the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Djamu Gallery, Australian Museum, Sydney; Museum of Modern Art at Heide, Victoria, and the Adelaide Biennial, Art Gallery of South Australia. She also participated in the Liverpool Biennial of Contemporary Art, UK and has had solo exhibitions at Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Victoria. Her awards include the SAMSTAG International Visual Arts Scholarship for 1997/8. Her works are in numerous collections. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*



**John Patrick Kelantumama  
(aka Yell)**

Nation: Wantarningiwi, Tiwi

Purukuparli (Father), 63 cm x 32 cm x 12 cm, yellow & black; Jinani (Son), 62 cm x 28 cm x 10 cm, turquoise & black; underglaze pigment on earthenware, clay fired to 1140 degrees celcius. Collection Di Yerbury.

"Long time ago there was Purukuparli, his wife Bima and son Jinani. And there was a man too—he was the moon man—the lover of Bima. Purukuparli, he jealous of moon man and one day they had a fight and as the fighting finish, Jinani was very sick. Moon man ask Purukuparli to take his son away for three days and Purukuparli said, 'No. You can't take my son away from me. And then we all die—same like my son.'" (from artist's statement, Biennale catalogue)

John Patrick Kelantumama lives on Bathurst Island, Northern Territory. Group exhibitions include shows on Bathurst Island, in Sydney and Melbourne, as well as the 16th National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award Exhibition, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory; and the 5th National Indigenous Heritage Art Award, Australian Heritage Commission, Canberra, ACT. His sculptural ceramics are in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia and the Art Gallery of South Australia. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*

**Yvonne Koolmatrjie**

Nation: Ngarrindjeri

Eel Trap, 560 x 955 x 560 mm; Fish Trap, 370 x 900 x 370 mm; Yabbie Trap, 440 x 800 x 440 mm; woven dried sedge rushes, 1993; lent by the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, Australia.

"(Koolmatrjie's) delight in making traditional forms, especially the highly sculptural eel traps and yabbie traps for which she has become so well known, is matched by her enjoyment in creating objects unrelated to traditional survival activities."

"Koolmatrjie's eel and yabbie trap forms are created for exhibition rather than for use within food-gathering systems. Their inclusion in

such exhibitions as *Below the Surface*, which toured nationally and fluent, Australia's representative exhibition at the 47th Venice Biennale in 1997, locate them within contemporary visual art practice. An elaboration of this context was their positioning within the 1992 exhibition *Murrundi* as a group of objects comprising an installation, which referenced their traditional use." (extracts from Doreen Mellor, *Beyond the Pale: Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art 2000*, exhibition catalogue, ed. Croft, Brenda L, Art Gallery of South Australia.)

Until just recently, Yvonne lived and worked in Gerard, South Australia. She now lives and works in Murgon, Queensland. She has participated in numerous group

exhibitions including: Emily Kame Kngwarray, Yvonne Koolmatrjie and Judy Watson, Australia's representation at the 47th Venice Biennale and national tour; *Off Shore: On-Site*, a component of the Olympics Games' Festival of the Dreaming, Casula Powerhouse Art Gallery, Casula, NSW; *Murrundi: Three River Murray Stories*, Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide. Her works are in the collections of the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, NSW. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*



### Naminapu Maymuru-White

Nation: Clan: Manggalili; Moiety: Yirritja; Homeland: Djarrakpi

Yingapungapu, 133 x 52cm; Milngiyawuy, 96 x 370cm; both works earth pigments on bark, 1999. Naminapu Maymuru-White and Buku Larrnggay Arts, Yirrkala, Northern Territory.

Yingapungapu: "...the central icon of this painting...represents a Yingapungapu, a sand sculpture created for the first time at Djarrakpi to cater for the bodies of the Manggalili first dead—the Guwak. It is designed to keep the contamination of death confined within this space."

Milngiyawuy: "The river in the middle of the painting is shown as it is today after it was sung into the sky by these Manggalili heroes—the Milky Way." (from Biennale catalogue)

Naminapu Maymuru-White lives and works in Yirrkala, Northern Territory. Group exhibitions include: New Tracks Old Land, an exhibition of Contemporary Prints from Aboriginal Australia, touring USA and Australia; Native Title, Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, NSW; Saltwater Country—Bark Paintings from Yirrkala, National Tour, Canberra, Sydney, Melbourne, Alice Springs. She won the 1996 Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award for Best Work on Paper. Her works are in the collections of the Berndt Museum of Anthropology, University of Western Australia; Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*



### Dorothy Napangardi

Nation: Warlpiri

Women Dancing at Mina Mina, acrylic on linen. 2000. Collection: Dorothy Napangardi and Gallery Gondwana Fine Art, Alice Springs NT.

"Dorothy Napangardi is Gallery Gondwana's most experimental and contemporary artist...She paints her country, Mina Mina, with no traditional iconography from her familial lines and has created her own innovative language to describe her country. Dorothy's paintings are created by an intricate network of lines that collide and implode on top of each other creating a play of tension and expansion losing the viewer in a myriad of intersections." (Gallery Gondwana Fine Art; Biennial catalogue)

Dorothy Napangardi's work has been exhibited in the 8th National Aboriginal Art Award, Darwin; Warlpiri Women, Gallery Gondwana, Alice Springs, NT; Napangardi Dreaming, Ceremony and Song, Hogarth Gallery, Sydney, NSW; Dorothy Napangardi and Walala Tjapaltjarri, Adelaide Festival, Gallery Australis, SA. Her solo exhibitions include: Dorothy Napangardi, Hogarth Gallery, Sydney; Rebecca Hossack Gallery, London, England. Highly Commended, 16th National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award, Darwin, NT; Northern Territory Art Award, Alice Springs, NT; Best Painting in European Media, 8th National Aboriginal Art Award, Darwin, NT. Her works are in the collections in Australia, Germany and the USA. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*



### Rosella Namok

Nation: Aangkum/Ungkum

Kungkay or Yiipay, 124x174 cms;  
Taywaylina, 124x174 cms; both  
works acrylic on canvas, 2000.  
Artist's collection.

Kungkay or Yiipay: "Kungkay is northside and Yiipay is southside. Kungkay, that's round Quintal Creek...a good fishing place where every one goes down, catches heaps of fish, white fish, salmon, black bream."

Taywaylina (Lightning Flash): "The lightning was wild...it cracked right through the house so we turned the lights off but the lightning kept making it bright. The whole place was so dark with that stormy cloud building up...but when the lightning hit it lighted up the whole place...no one was walking 'round...everyone was frightened...Isiah, my small boy, was screaming...I was trying to calm him down." (from artist's statement, Biennale catalogue)

Rosella Namok lives and works in Lockhart River, Queensland. She has exhibited in Beyond the Pale, Adelaide Biennial, 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival; Message Stick 99, Visions Australia touring exhibition of Lockhart River Art Gang; and the 15th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards, travelling exhibition. She has had solo exhibitions at the Hogarth Gallery, Sydney. Her works are in the collections of the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and the State Galleries of New South Wales, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*

The work addresses processes of assimilation: the removing of Indigenous peoples onto reserves to 'die out' and the imposed conversion to Christianity. Recognising both negative and positive outcomes of his upbringing, Cloud seeks to make sense of a history that defies simple resolution."

"Empire is the acclaimed and evocative 1997 film directed by Riley for the Festival of the Dreaming, with music performed by the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra." (from Biennale catalogue)

Michael Riley lives and works in Sydney, NSW. His works have been included in many group exhibitions, a few of which are: Beyond the Pale, Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival, Art Gallery of South Australia; Flesh + Blood, Museum of Sydney, Sydney, NSW; Re-Take, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; Beyond Myth/Oltre 11 Mito, 48th Venice Biennale, al latere section, Venice, Italy. Riley has had solo exhibitions in Sydney, Dubbo, Melbourne and London. His works are in many collections. Michael Riley is also an acclaimed film/video artist, his output including documentary and experimental works. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*

### Michael Riley

Nation: Wiradjuri

Cloud Series: untitled II; untitled V; untitled VII; video and inkjet prints on banner paper, 2000; Empire, 17 minute abstract soundscape, video, 1997. Artist's collection.

"Cloud is a new body of work investigating Michael Riley's enforced Christian upbringing and the wider impact of such an upbringing on Indigenous communities throughout Australia.





### Elaine Russell

Nation: Wiradjuri

Memories of Mission Life, 48 x 30 inches, acrylic on canvas, 2000  
Artist's collection.

"These are some of the memories I have of when I was growing up on Murrin Bridge Mission, in central NSW, back in the 1950s. My father, Clem was the handyman on the mission back then and when we had some spare time he would take us into the bush to teach us how and where to look for bush tucker! In the left-hand corner of my painting you can see Dad showing one of my brothers where to look for witchetty grubs —up in the gum trees, and what wild berries to eat. Some were poisonous, some were not, you had to know which was which." (from artist's statement, Biennale catalogue)

Elaine Russell's works have appeared in the 3rd National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Heritage Art Award, Canberra; Faces of Hope, Amnesty International, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney; Chip on the Shoulder, Boomalli Aboriginal Artists' Co-operative, Sydney; 16 Songs: Issues of personal assessment & indigenous renewal, the Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri, USA. She has had a solo exhibition at the Aboriginal and South Pacific Gallery, Sydney, and is in the collections of the Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Artbank, Art Gallery of New South Wales, The New Children's Hospital, Sydney and the NSW Premiers Office.  
*Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*

### Christian B Thompson

BIGIYI (Dream to Dream): Stratagem 1, Stratagem 11, Stratagem 111, Stratagem 1111; digital prints on Aluminium, each 1200 x 50cm, 2000. Artist's collection.

"(Thompson's) Bidjara heritage is the foundation of his work, as he reaches back through time, through the family photo album, sorting through those fading orange-tinted snapshots, through his patrilineal connections to his ancestors."

"A child of the 1980s he is the latest addition to a long line of other artists that grew up in urban and rural settings, whose work references influential elements from their childhood, references shared by many non-indigenous Australians."

"The linked experience of these artists is one of dislocation from their traditional homelands and cultural

practices, yet they all defiantly project a proud sense of identity and accomplishment in rural and urban environs." (extracts from catalogue essay, BIGIYI (Dream to Dream), Brenda L Croft, April 2000.)

Christian B Thompson lives and works in Melbourne, Victoria.  
Selected group exhibitions:  
Emergence E, Graduation show,

University of Queensland Library; Toowoomba Regional Art Gallery, Queensland; The Real Thing, Boomalli Artists Members show, Boomalli Aboriginal Artists' Co-operative, Sydney, NSW; Big Small Installation, University of Singapore. Solo show: BIGIYI (dream to dream), Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Victoria. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*





#### Sheena Wilfred

Clan: Wagilak; Moiety: Dhuwa;  
Language: Ritharrngu/Kriol

Dilly Bags, Tools and Weapons, 163 x 123 cm; Campsite along the Roper River, 141 x 123 cm; both works synthetic polymer on canvas, 1999. Artist's collection c/o Karen Brown Gallery, Darwin.

Dilly Bags, Tools and Weapons: "This painting is about all the old ways of collecting foods. We still use these things but not always. Looking at these bush berries makes me hungry. Sheena spends much of her spare time collecting bush foods and fishing."

Campsite along the Roper River: "Sheena talks about places she would go with her mother for relaxing, fishing and talking. This painting visits three campsites surrounded by an abundance of bush foods and animals." (Biennale catalogue)

Sheena Wilfred lives and works in Numbulwar, Northern Territory. Group exhibitions include: Gertie Huddleston and Sheena Wilfred Huddleston, Shades of Ochre Gallery, Darwin, Northern Territory; Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Art Award & touring exhibition 1997, 1998 and 1998, Darwin Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Darwin, NT. She has had a solo exhibition at Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne, Victoria. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*

#### Andrew Williams

On the Lugger, silk screen print on paper, 30 cm x 42 cm, 1997; Pamle (Family) History, lino block print on paper, 56.5 cm x 76 cm, 1996. Artist's collection.

Pamle (Family) History: "This image is about my own personal family and it shows some of the main male members in the family and images relating to the history of my lineage. These members being my Great Grandfather; Great Uncle and Grandfather both of whom fought in the Second World War; Uncle (godfather), my Father and images of my Father and one of his older brothers, as young children. All of the images were taken from old family photographs and then used in this print. I want to show how important photographs of my family are to myself as items of inspiration and they are also resources for myself and my artwork." (from artist's statement, Biennale catalogue)

Andrew Williams is a Torres Strait Islander living in Cairns, Northern Queensland. Group exhibitions have included Baggage Transfer/Tranship, an airport intervention, Cairns Domestic Airport, Cairns TAFE College and 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival; Ilan Pasin, this is our way, Torres Strait Art Exhibition, Cairns Regional Gallery and touring nationally; and in New Tracks Old Land, Touring Exhibition, USA. His work is in many private and public collections. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*





### Joyce Winsley

Nation: Nyoongar

Lizzard, 3D fibre work, Guilford grass, moulded and stitched, 1999. Artist's collection.

Story of the Lizzard sculpture.  
Why Snake and Carda (lizzard) had a fight.  
One day the Snake bit the Carda and after he was bitten he ran into the bushes and came back well. Then another time the Carda went past the Snake and he bit him again.  
So the Carda took off into the bushes and came back well again.  
So this made the Snake wonder why he never died.  
So the Snake waited for Carda so that he could bite him. When he came Snake bit him and then followed him to the bush that cured him.  
When Carda left, Snake tried to pull the bush out.  
When Carda came back and saw him they then had a fight.  
(from artist's statement, Biennale catalogue)

Joyce Winsley lives and works in Narrogin, Western Australia. Group exhibitions include: *Beyond the Pale*, Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival; *Small Figures Big Lives*, Fremantle Arts Centre, Fremantle, West Australia; *Doll*, Adelaide Festival Centre, Adelaide, and *Object Gallery*, Sydney. She has had a solo show at Narrogin Gallery, Western Australia and her work is in collections that include the Art Galleries of Western Australia and South Australia. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*

### Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency

Nations: Walmajarri, Wangkajungka, Mangala, Juwaliny

Yilimbirri; Wayampajarti Kurtal; two dances on painted canvas, 7 x 4 metres

Two groups of Mangkaja artists will perform two ceremonies on a painting, which will measure approximately 7x 4 meters and which has been especially created for the Biennale d'Art Contemporain in Noumea. One group is from the river, the traditional owners of Fitzroy Crossing and the other group is from the desert people who moved in to town when the equal pay laws were passed in the early 1970s.

Two ceremonies will be performed. Yilimbirri is the story of the Bunuba resistance fighter Jandamarra, who fought against the incursion into his country by the pastoralists in the late 1800s. The story is entwined with the creation of the area of country in which Jandamarra hid in a monumental landscape riddled with caves and passages through rocks.

The second group will perform the Wayampajarti Kurtal ceremony. There are two main waterholes in

the desert and the dancing and singing tells the story of the travels of ancestral spirits across the country during the Ngarrangkami (Dreamtime). (From the Biennale catalogue)

The Mangkaja Arts Resource Centre is located in the town centre in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia. Mangkaja Arts is governed by a committee which meets regularly and the members are responsible for decisions affecting the development of the centre. During 1999-2000 the work of Mangkaja artists has been exhibited at various galleries throughout Australia. Works have been shown internationally in the Lyon Biennale, France and the Mangkaja Group Show, Minnesota, USA. *Biennale of Contemporary Art, Noumea*





Nicole Cumpston *Mark Blackman*

**Nakkondi/Look—Indigenous  
Australians 1999/2000**  
Photography by Nicole  
Cumpston and Andrew Dunbar

Nakkondi/Look is an exhibition of 100 black and white photographs for the 100 years of the 20th century. Its willing subjects are Indigenous people, some well-known, many not, individually, in groups and in many different settings.

Heather Kemarre Shearer, an Arrernte woman from Central Australia, Aboriginal visual artist and Indigenous Arts Officer, Arts SA, speaking at the launch of Nakkondi/Look at the State Library of South Australia as part of the 2000 Telstra Adelaide Festival said,

"This exhibition is not about image. This exhibition is about providing a reality to challenge perceptions, to showcase a cross-section of our community that is our life." A journalist wrote, "The photographers have approached the project with open eyes, and invite their audience to do likewise: to look and see Aboriginal people as they really are, not as they may be conventionally portrayed" (Adelaide Advertiser).

Born in Australia of Aboriginal and Afghan descent, Nicole Cumpston lectures in Photography at the Taoundi Aboriginal College, Port Adelaide and studies in Visual Arts at the University of South Australia.

She has had numerous exhibitions, both nationally and internationally as well as facilitating the work of many other artists. Andrew Dunbar is a non-indigenous photographer whose career includes photojournalism, commercial and advertising photography and fine-art photography. Since 1996 he has been the recipient of many awards and commendations including the 1998 Australian Editorial Photographer of the Year and the prestigious Ilford Trophy. In recent years Dunbar's work has been internationally exhibited. *8th Festival of Pacific Arts*



Andrew Dunbar

### Points of Contact

A collaboration between Indigenous and non-indigenous students at the Queensland College of Art, Griffith University looking at the possibilities of reconciliation is presented on CD-ROM. "It brings together visual and audio art forms within Indigenous and non-Indigenous traditions. The many strands that have been woven together to form this project have provided us with our own point of contact from which to nurture and develop our relationship as artists and our role as agents for Australia's new cultural paradigm." Lise MacDermott and Fiona Fraser (Co-ordinators). *8th Festival of Pacific Arts*