

TRUTH: THEN NOW EVERYWHEN

1 JULY - 3 SEPTEMBER 2022

Curated by Deborah Sims and Matt Dickson

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GALLERY 1

Kaylene Whiskey (born 1976)

Yankunytjatjara

Strong Kungka 1 and 2 (diptych) 2016

Acrylic on linen

122 x 334 cm (122 x 167 each)

Painted at Indulkana, SA

Kaylene is an artist with a unique take on contemporary life in her so-called remote community. She mixes pop culture with her own Anangu culture in fantastical, empowering scenes. Super-heroes and pop icons celebrate Anangu truth in landscapes identifiably local, mixing global and home-grown inspiration in charming, beautifully rendered detail.

Tjunkaya Tapaya (born 1947)

Pitjantjatjara

Nintintjaku (Be Smart) 2018

Stoneware, 18 x 19 x 16 cm

Made at Ernabella/Pukatja, SA

Culture Kutjara (Two Cultures) 2018

Stoneware, 17 x 15.5 x 15.5 cm

Made at Pukatja/Ernabella, SA

Tjunkaya is a senior culture woman at Pukatja, where the Ernabella Mission was established in 1933. She has developed an innovative way to teach important truths about keeping culture strong. She incises messages into her stoneware pots in Pitjantjatjara language. Translated they tell her community:

“Take your kids to the bush and show them everything, like bush tucker, kangaroos, perenties, witchetty grubs, honey ants and wild tomatoes

Send your kids to school

Parents should be strong and look after their kids. Whitefellas are strong.

Don't hurt your wife. Don't smoke ganja. No gambling

Keep waterholes safe and teach your kids about Country.”

Kunmanara (Pepai Jangala) Carroll (1950-2021)

Pitjantjatjara/Luritja

Ilpili 2015

Stoneware with ochre and white underglaze

34 x 30 x 30 cm

Made at Pukatja/Ernabella, SA

Ilpili is the artist's Country, near Kintore on the way to Mt Leibig and Papunya, on the Seven Sisters songline. This piece manifests the Minyma Kutjarra section of the songline, at Ilpili, a small part of its 20,000-word true story. Pepai's hand-built stoneware forms meld thought and action with a holistic immediacy. Their organic expression of Country and belonging brought him acclaim, awards, and a posthumous solo exhibition, currently touring nationally.

Kunmanara (Niningka Munkuri) Lewis (1945-2020)

Pitjantjatjara

Anangu Coat of Arms 2017

Stoneware, 30 x 31.5 cm

Made at Pukatja/Ernabella, SA

Niningka Lewis has incised a coat of arms into her hand-made Uluru-inspired monolith. She has included tjala (honey ants) and other native bush flora and fauna in the design. This references the use of an emu and a kangaroo on the coat of arms of the Commonwealth of Australia. Niningka has told of how when she first saw a Commonwealth coat of arms, she saw the emu and kangaroo as Anangu creation figures and bush tucker; she thought, optimistically perhaps, their use on such an important symbol was a sign of whitefellas' respect for Aboriginal culture. Her own Anangu coat of arms emphatically rejects their appropriation.

Dennis Stirling (born c.1960)

Anmatyerr

Kangaroo 2014

Wire and raffia

Made at Alice Springs Correctional Centre, NT

Yungkurra Billy Atkins (c.1940-2021)

Martu

Kumpupirntily Ngayurnangalku 2017

Gouache on paper, 123 x 173 cm

Painted at Newman, WA

“This one the mummy Ngayurnangalku (cannibal), big mummy, and all those little babies (are) his. All the man, womans, little kids, they all stopping there. That’s his (their) Country, Kumpupirntily (Lake Disappointment). You can see the big hole there (points to central circular forms), this one the Ngayurnangalku camp, they all there. They got plenty jara (shields), yirrkilli (boomerangs), they property for the Ngayurnangalku, they maparn (holding power for sorcery). They hit you and kill you. He got to feed. Ngayurnangalku still there (in Kumpupirntily). No people gotta go come to this place. If they go there it’s one way! There’s a cannibal there. Don’t come to this place – you might get killed! They gonna eat you for lunch! Don’t go, keep away!”

Yunkurra’s Country encompasses some of the most sacred and dangerous sites in the Western Desert: Kumpupirntily and Jilukurru. The Jukurra (Dreaming) stories and beings associated with these sites, including the ancestral Ngayurnangalku (cannibal beings) and Wati Kutjarra (Two Goanna Men), form the subject for the majority of Yunkurra’s body of work. An unashamedly political artist, Yunkurra used his work as a platform to staunchly oppose the development of mining interests in the Kumpupirntily area, declaring “Ngayurnangalku still there. They’re still alive. Don’t go, keep away! I been block him, tell all the miners to keep away. Cannibal gonna come out of the lake, kill you, knock you on the head and have a feed. If they dig him up, anybody, blackfella, whitefella, they’ll get killed!” They’ll have a good feed!”

Kunmanara (Mumu Mike) Williams (1952-2019)

Pitjantjatjara

Map Wiya 2017

Marker pen on found map, 98 x 89 cm

Made at Mimili, SA

The artist has written directly on a map of Australian Land Tenure in a radical statement about ownership, connection to country and the conflicts between Commonwealth law and Anangu Law. He deliberately obscures place names and arbitrary borders imposed by colonisers, overwriting his own text in Pitjantjatjara: “Aboriginal people are the true owners of this land. They look after the land and their Law and Culture. The Government and Mining Companies are not part of our Law and Culture. To claim ownership of Aboriginal Land is a lie. They’ve got no shame. Mining Aboriginal Land isn’t part of our Law and Culture. Mining destroys our sacred sites. Listen to this strong story”

Maggie Yilpi (c.1939-2014)

Pitjantjatjara

Tjala (Honey Ant) 2014

Wool, wire and raffia

Made at Alice Springs, NT

The tjala or honey ant is an important source of food throughout the desert regions. Its abdomen contains a sweet and nutritious ‘honey’. Although this one has escaped from the nearby ceramic Anangu coat of arms and is climbing up the wall, in the desert they live about a metre underground beneath mulga trees, and must be dug out. Traditionally bush tucker gathering is the work of women and girls, and is often hot and arduous work, even with the aid of modern shovels and crow bars rather than digging sticks made from tree roots or branches.

Lily Nungarrayi Hargraves (c.1925-2018)

Warlpiri

Wardilyka Jukurra (Bush Turkey Dreaming) 2015

Acrylic on linen, 150 x 120 cm

Made at Lajamanu, NT

Kurlurrngalinyka Jukurra (Duck Ponds Dreaming) 2015

Acrylic on linen, 150 x 120 cm

Made at Lajamanu, NT

A formidable artist with immense knowledge of Ceremony, Law and Country, Nungarrayi was one of the last surviving desert walkers of the Jilla Well region in the Tanami Desert. Complex layering of paint and colour, and the confident brushwork of a true ‘Culture Boss’, mark her as arguably one of the most significant and inspirational Warlpiri artists.

Robert Punnagka Fielding (born 1969)

Yankunytjatjara/Afghan

Graveyards In-between #2, #6, #7 2017

C-type print on lustre paper, 80 x 120 cm

Photographed at Mimili, SA

Cars that once belonged to elders and are now part of the landscape have been re-animated by the artist, using paint, tea lights and mobile phone lights, then photographed at night using long exposure times. The resulting photographs show the power of Country to animate and energise.

“The 77 kilometre road between my home in Mimili community and the neighbouring community of Indulkana is scattered with car wrecks (mutaka katalypa). I call them ‘graveyards in-between’. Every car holds the stories of its owners and the passengers it once carried. Through the process of selecting certain cars, painting and illuminating them, I’m bringing back to life something long thought dead.”

Adrian Jangala Robertson (born 1962)

Warlpiri

4WD Series #3 (Toyota & Trailer) 2013

Acrylic on canvas, 20 x 45.5 cm

Painted at Alice Springs, NT

4WD Series #8 (Car in the Landscape, Landscape in the Car)

2013

Acrylic on canvas, 61 x 92 cm

Painted at Alice Springs, NT

This 4WD is in the landscape of the artist's mother's Country, Yalpirakinu, northwest of Alice Springs. But equally the landscape is in the car: everything is connected. A painting loaded with drama and memories.

Nora Walytjaka Holland (1934-2015)

Ngaanyatjarra

Olivia the Pig 2014

Acrylic on plywood, 60 x 80 cm

Painted at Warakurna, WA

Nora Holland lived in a wiltja, or rough shelter, outside her blue and yellow house in Warakurna, in the tri-state border area where Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory meet. She had a pet pig she called Olivia that lived with her. One day without warning the police came and took Olivia away in their paddy wagon, and shot her.

Ryan Presley (born 1987)

Marri Ngarr

Blood Money Dollars 2018

Polymer 'banknotes'

Made at Brisbane, Qld

Eight polymer reproductions of Blood Money banknote designs originally created as large-scale watercolour paintings. Featuring significant historical Aboriginal figures: Vincent Lingiari, Oodgeroo Noonuccal, Jandamarra, Woloa, Pemulwuy, Fanny Balbuk, Dundalli and Gladys Tybingoompa.

They are displayed alongside a T-shirt designed by artist Vernon Ah Kee, a press photograph of the first atomic bomb test at Maralinga, and the front page of The Australian newspaper that features a photograph of crowds of tourists on Uluru shortly before the climb was finally closed by traditional owners after years of requests not to disrespect this sacred site by climbing it.

WINDOW BOX**Noreen Parker's Story 2021**

Duration 4.55 minutes

Produced and Directed by Carmel Young for Desart

Executive Producer Philip Watkins

Translator and subtitles Pin Rada

Pitjantjatjara artist Noreen Parker tells the story behind her painting Maralinga, 2021, displayed alongside this video. Family histories of death and illness that resulted from atomic bomb tests in outback South Australia are challenging and correcting official accounts that have long whitewashed the tests as safe and without impact on traditional owners. The three artists whose work is displayed in this room present visual and oral accounts that powerfully "re-write" those histories.

Cannibal Story, Ngayurnangalku 2013

Narrated by Yunkurra Billy Atkins

Duration 6.52 minutes

Directed by Sohan Ariel Hayes

Produced by Erin Coates, Fremantle Arts Centre

Executive Producer Gabrielle Sullivan, Martumili Artists

Translator and subtitles Desmond Taylor, Martumili Artists

The Country of artist Yunkurra Billy Atkins includes one of the most sacred and dangerous sites in the Western Desert: Kumpupirntily, or Lake Disappointment. The Jukurrpa (Dreaming) stories and beings associated with this site, including the ancestral Ngayurnangalku (cannibal beings who live beneath the lake in a world lit by an underground sun) often feature in Yunkurra's work, including in the large-scale painting displayed in this exhibition. In collaboration with the artist, film-maker Ariel Sohan Hayes has animated figures and other elements from Yunkurra's paintings to create a fittingly frightening warning to mining companies to leave this sacred site alone. "Ngayurnangalku still there...Don't go, keep away! I been block him, tell all the miners to keep away. Cannibal gonna come out of the lake, kill you, knock you on the head and have a feed. If they dig him up, anybody, blackfella, whitefella, they'll all get killed!"

Graveyards In-between 2017

Duration 13.28 minutes

Produced and Directed by Jackson Lee

Executive Producer Mimili Maku Art Centre

A video documenting artist Robert Punngka Fielding as he re-animates abandoned cars on his Country in the APY Lands of far northern South Australia, in the project that culminated with a series of photographs called Graveyards In-between, three of which are displayed in this exhibition. "The 77-kilometre road between my home in Mimili community and the neighbouring community of Indulkana is scattered with car wrecks (mutaka katalypa). I call them 'graveyards in-between'. Every car holds the stories of its owners and the passengers it once carried. Through the process of selecting certain cars, painting them and illuminating them, I'm bringing back to life something long thought dead" – Robert Fielding.

MEDIA SPACE

Nyurpaya Kaika Burton (born 1940)

Pitjantjatjara

My Name Is Tjanpi (Self Portrait) 2014

Woven tjanpi (wild grasses), wool, raffia, punu (wood), red dirt from Amata, painting (acrylic on canvas), paintbrushes, tea-bag
Made at Amata, SA

Nyurpaya Kaika Burton is arguably the senior cultural spokeswoman in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, in the remote far north of South Australia. She is an accomplished tjanpi artist, but beyond that is a key thinker and actor in the movement to revitalise and reinvigorate Anangu culture in APY communities under pressure from the effects of alcohol, drug abuse, violence, endemic health problems, mining, and threats to hard won land rights.

Highly innovative, this remarkable work speaks out strongly and directly in Pitjantjatjara language, translated for gallery audiences:

“Children, gather around and look at this strange woman with the big hair. She has just walked in from the bush with her three hairy dogs, her digging stick, wooden bowl and grindstones, to visit you.

She is your grandmother, her name is Tjanpi, and she lives in a wiltja shade shelter.

She has come to visit Amata, to paint a dreaming story on canvas, at the Tjala Arts art centre.

She knows all about the dreamtime, and she speaks out strongly about land rights.

She had the idea to paint you an important dreamtime story so that you could see it and learn from it and live informed lives yourselves, and so that all the other children that will come after you can be the same, when they grow up, and care for and protect the land just like you and her.

This is why she has come to Amata, to paint on canvas an understandable and educational story for you. So take the younger ones by the hand and lead them now toward an informed and a stronger future.

Perhaps your own grandmother will grow old and pass away, and will one day lie underneath the earth.

You must in turn take over the role of caring for and protecting your land, or risk losing everything that matters: your land and your culture.

It does not belong to white people. Understand this.

So, when you are ready, don't be shy, go and ask your own grandmother about your culture.

That's my advice to you.

My name is Tjanpi.”

FOYER

Brian Robinson (born 1973)

Kala Lagaw Ya (Waiben/Thursday Island)

Three Fishermen and a Lamborghini 2011

Linocut from one block, 40 x 85.5 cm
Printed at Cairns, Qld

Kaylene Whiskey

Yankunytjatjara

Superheroes series 2019

Lithograph prints: Wonder Woman, Dolly Parton, and Michael Jackson
48 x 38 cm each
Made at Indulkana, SA
University of Newcastle Art Collection

GALLERY 2

Sally M. Mulda (born 1957)

25 paintings (and one tote bag) 2010-2022

Acrylic on canvas and linen, various sizes
All painted at Tangentyere Artists art centre, Alice Springs, NT

Sally Mulda vividly illustrates the complex human drama of Town Camp life for Aboriginal people in contemporary Alice Springs. Her documentary approach has created a record of everyday events, a catalogue of true-life experiences recorded without bias or judgement. Few artists convey a sense of place, time and action so convincingly.

Doggedly, with just one good arm and partial sight in her only eye, she has developed a strong and simple visual language of her own. It's rich with detailed observation that tells women's stories of raising families amidst inter-generational trauma, grog runners, domestic violence, poor health, the Intervention, and constant police attention. In short, stories from the front line of the day-to-day ongoing colonial now, though that's not a phrase she would use (ubiquitous police paddy wagons do that well enough).

Her world is Abbott's Camp (Mpwetyerre), located opposite the Todd River in central Alice Springs, and daily painting sessions at Tangentyere Artists - the Aboriginal owned art centre in Alice Springs, a safe haven and a place for expression of Town Campers' contemporary and traditional stories.

There are 18 Aboriginal Town Camps scattered across Alice Springs, generally located at the compass points closest to the Country from which their residents have come. Some families have now been there for several generations. Town Camps are overcrowded and sometimes violent places, plagued by dysfunction that's a factor of under-resourcing, alcohol and drug abuse and unemployment. Yet they are also home, with the mix of emotions and meanings conjured by that word.

Louise Robertson (born 1947)

Pitjantjatjara people

Head Full of Town Camp Stories 2018

Hand-dyed recycled blankets, wool thread
The complex psychogeography of Town Camp life, in 3D form.
Made at Alice Springs, NT

GALLERY 3

Belle Karirrka Davidson (1942 - 2017)

Ngaanyatjarra

Maralinga 2017

Acrylic on linen

84 x 100 cm

Made at Papulankutja (Blackstone), WA

“Everyone was camped at Wilkkuryl Rockhole on holiday (from the Mission) 40 km from Warburton, and when we were asleep that cloud came over us in the night. This was a very sorry time. Nultatjarra. One lady was walking around with a baby on her back and she didn’t know it was dead. Three children of my sister survived, but my sister died. There was a funny smell – people were vomiting and had diarrhea. Lots of old people and babies died. Some surveyors took us back to Warburton. My son was alright.”

This is a painting of the radioactive dust cloud from Maralinga that headed towards Warburton near where Belle Davidson and her family were camped. She recalls living in the bush near Warburton with her family and her first son as a young mother when an atomic bomb was detonated. She and others became very ill and were picked up by a Native Patrol truck and driven to Warburton Mission where sick Yarnangu (Aboriginal people) were lying in every building including the school classrooms.

Multiple oral histories of this event, from now-elderly Aboriginal survivors, have been documented in recent times, and the Australian War Memorial has added a work by Belle on this subject to its collection.

Janet Inyika (c.1952-2016)

Pitjantjatjara

Suite of 12 paintings detailing Janet Inyika’s experience of atomic bomb fallout 2012

Acrylic paint on Arches paper, each 29 x 39 cm

Made at Mutitjulu, NT

“It is hard to quite get across just how freaked out everybody was, and how much trauma has been inherited from those days of deaths. Some people have never got over it, how could they? It has been questioned why there are so many cancer deaths these days, including Janet’s. I’ve heard it said that they didn’t really escape, they only bought themselves some time. Her death by cancer was caused by Maralinga. That’s what people say, and she’s not the only one. Thanks for reminding people of the story... ‘Lest we Forget’” (Linda Rive, historian, translator, and archivist for the *Ara Irititja* Project, the Anangu archive that includes digital copies of these paintings).

Souvenir pennant

Maralinga Testing Ground, 1960s

Felt

Wall image

Official press photograph, enlarged, dated September 27, 1956, showing the radioactive mushroom cloud generated by the first atomic explosion at Maralinga. “Britain touched off her fourth series of atomic explosions today with a test at the new Maralinga proving ground that ripped out a crater half a mile wide” (original caption). Britain conducted seven nuclear tests at Maralinga in Operation Buffalo (1956) and Operation Antler (1957), followed over the next six years by 550 highly contaminating so-called minor trials.

Noreen Ngynitja Parker (born 1964)

Pitjantjatjara

Maralinga 2019

Acrylic on chipboard, 93 x 60 cm

Painted at Wingellina, WA

Maralinga 2019

Acrylic paint on found metal offcut

Painted at Wingellina, WA

Maralinga 2021

Acrylic on canvas, 76 x 122 cm

Painted at Wingellina, WA

“When my mother was a young girl about 15 years old, the people were living in the bush in wiltjas in the Spinifex Country (in the Great Victoria Desert). My mother told me this story, how the people were all sitting down when they saw a big light and then lots of smoke. The smoke just went up and up and up. The people were frightened. They thought it was a walpa pulka (big storm) or the wanampi (rainbow serpent creation ancestor). My uncle, my mother’s brother, had gone to hunt bush tucker in Maralinga Country. He never came back. He died from that bomb. That’s a true story.”

On the left are Anangu in family groups in their wiltjas (shelters) and on the right are piranpa (white people), the army, with taraka (trucks) and tents.

Maralinga 2019

Acrylic paint on found water tank remnant

Painted at Wingellina, WA

The white men sitting having lunch 2019

Acrylic on canvas, 31 x 66 cm

Painted at Wingellina, WA

The white men making a camp and discussing the preparation for the bombs 2019

Acrylic on canvas, 32 x 61 cm

Painted at Wingellina, WA

The trucks bringing in the bomb, 2019

Acrylic on canvas, 35 x 63 cm

Painted at Wingellina, WA

Danger Radioactive warning sign

R.A.A.F. issue, 1960s

Paper, ink

Curated by Deborah Sims and Matt Dickson

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