

**CAIRNS  
ART  
GALLERY**

# **Ritual**

**The past in the present**

**15 May – 22 August 2021**

**Extended labels**

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# list of works

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists

**Simone ARNOL**

Gunggandji

**Bernard SINGLETON Jnr**

Umpila/Djabugay/Yirrgay

*Medicine clay*

2019-2020

digital print

Courtesy of the artists

Simone Arnol is a photographer and fashion designer, and Bernard Singleton Jnr is a craftsman and cultural practitioner. They have collaborated on various projects, including fashion performances for the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair between 2018 and 2020.

In *Medicine clay*, Arnol and Singleton explore the traditional medicinal properties of clay and its ritual significance through a series of photographic portraits. Cultural knowledge about medicine clay and its many uses has been passed down to both artists by their parents. Medicine clay is simple but effective when used in the right way and in the right quantity. It provides remedial solutions to a wide array of illnesses, from gastrointestinal issues to women's business, and for the improvement of overall wellbeing.

Prior to colonisation, traditional healers, healing songs and bush medicines were the primary forms of health care in Indigenous communities. The forcible removal and disconnection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from their traditional lands and families since invasion, has had a disruptive effect on traditional practices, including the use of traditional medicine.

Traditional medicinal practices are guided by the understanding that the mind and body are inseparable, and that to prevent ill health, there is a need to maintain a balance between the physical and the spiritual. Healers are able to interpret symptoms and provide traditional healing treatments, including bush medicines and rubs.

Sixteen photographs of *Medicine clay* present the continuation of traditional medicinal practice over three generations. In the series *Wuba*, the red ochre on figures is highlighted, symbolising a strong connection to country, passing down of knowledge and wellbeing.

# Elisa Jane CARMICHAEL

Ngugi/Quandamooka

## *Jarah*

2021

single channel video, sound, 5:16mins, ungaire and basket

Courtesy of the artist and Onespace Gallery, Brisbane

Elisa Jane Carmichael is a Quandamooka woman from the waters and lands around Moreton Bay, south-east Queensland. Her multidisciplinary arts practice honours her salt-water heritage by incorporating materials collected from Country, embracing traditional techniques and expressing contemporary adaptations through painting, weaving and textiles.

In the installation *Jarah*, each strand of the weaving and each imagery overlay of Country represents the process of healing. The film captures sacred waters, animals, plants, trees and transitions of time from sunrise to sunset. Inspired by the cultural stories and song of Buangan, words and song by Joshua Walker of the Nunakul people speak about the way that spiritual life, country, land, seas and skies are all interconnected.

*Jarah is a personal reflection on experiences surrounding the passing of our loved ones. When our Elders, family and friends become sick, sometimes they must leave the island and go to the mainland for hospital care. After their passing, their spirit travels home across the waters to their resting place on our island home.*

Elisa Jane Carmichael 2020

Carmichael's basket is woven with *ungaire* (fresh water swamp reed) from Minjerribah and shells from Quandamooka – Yoolooburabee people of the sand and seas. The basket holds and carries memories of loved ones. Each stitch and strand is a weave of healing and nurturing. By weaving with living material of country and drawing upon generational knowledge, this installation is a reminder that the spirit of people always will be with place.

# Janet FIELDHOUSE

Kala Lagaw Ya/Meriam Mir

## *Warriors Arm Band*

2020

Buff Raku Trachyte, bamboo, feathers, raffia

Courtesy of the artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne

Janet Fieldhouse's sculptural pieces draw largely from her ongoing research into the material culture of Torres Strait Islander people through museum collections, as well as oral histories that have been handed down to her.

*My work is an expression of my Torres Strait Islander heritage: the material culture, rituals of social and religious life, and artefacts which are created to fulfil the functional and spiritual needs of the peoples of the Torres Strait.*

Janet Fieldhouse 2019

Fieldhouse combines the medium of clay with fibre practices to create direct and allusive expressions of her people's stories that manifest cultural practices and relationships with land and sea. In particular, *Silent Dancer (Rattle)* and *Comb Dance 1-3* are inspired by objects associated with Torres Strait song and dance.

Plant seeds, such as Kulap (Matchbox Bean), are commonly used to make dance rattles for creating sound and rhythm. Fieldhouse reinterprets the use of these seeds through a cluster of woven vessels that swing low and are attached to a central long strand of fibre that connects to a sturdy circular clay handle. The large-scale size accentuates the energy and spirit these objects create in dance movement.

Similarly, *Comb Dance 1-3* expands on adornment wear associated with dance traditions. Fastened to the ceramic comb form is a small detail of check weaving technique. In making these works, writer Freja Carmichael notes that Fieldhouse has never physically performed Torres Strait songs or dance. These works are a way of connecting with performative practices through materiality, while also acknowledging their enduring role in Torres Strait Islander identity.

# **Janet FIELDHOUSE**

Kala Lagaw Ya/Meriam Mir

## ***Body Scarification***

2020

Buff Raku Trachyte, clay, feathers, raffia, wood

## ***Breastplate Hybrid***

2020

Buff Raku Trachyte, Cool Ice porcelain, clay

## ***Breastplate Pendant 1 & 2***

2020

clay, Cool Ice porcelain, hemp string, wood

## ***Charms***

2020

Buff Raku Trachyte, raffia

## ***Comb Dance***

2020

clay, raffia, feathers, wire

## ***Crab Claw (Scarification)***

2020

Buff Raku Trachyte, raffia, feathers

Courtesy of the artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne

# **Janet FIELDHOUSE**

Kala Lagaw Ya/Meriam Mir

## ***Dogai (Evil Spirit) 1 & 2***

2020

Cool Ice porcelain, feathers, hemp string

## ***Doll***

2020

raffia

## ***Flying Brid (Scarification)***

2020

clay, Cool Ice porcelain, wood, wire

## ***Going Fishing 1 & 2***

2020

Buff Raku Trachyte, clay

## ***Hybrid Sailing Canoe Series 2***

2020

Buff Raku Trachyte, white feathers, bamboo, raffia

## ***Leg Markings (Scarification)***

2020

clay, raffia

Courtesy of the artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne

# **Janet FIELDHOUSE**

Kala Lagaw Ya/Meriam Mir

## ***Memory Marks (Scarification)***

2020

clay, feathers, jute string

## ***Silent Dancer (Raddle)***

2020

clay, jute rope, raffia

## ***Simplify (Body Scarification)***

2020

Buff Raku Trachyte, clay, Cool Ice porcelain

## ***Trade***

2020

Buff Raku Trachyte, Cool Ice porcelain, clay, jute rope

## ***Water Bowl 4, 5 and 6***

2020

Buff Raku Trachyte, Cool Ice porcelain, clay, raffia, wire

## ***Water Charm***

2020

Buff Raku Trachyte, raffia

Courtesy of the artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne

# Carl FOURMILE

Yidinji

## *Wunjuu Bayal*

2020

Eucalyptus wood, recycled timber, sound recording, 9:32 mins

Courtesy of the artist and Aunty Teresa Dewar

*Wunjuu Bayal* is translated as 'smoking ceremony' in Yidinji language and is a ritual practice conducted during Aboriginal ceremonies such as baby naming, cleansing, and communication with Ancestors and Country. Today, the smoking ceremony is an important part of opening ceremonies at both Indigenous and non-Indigenous events across Australia. It is widely known as a 'Welcome to Country' and serves as a cultural passport for people and visitors on Aboriginal lands.

Carl Fourmile's work *Wunjuu Bayal*, depicts people sitting around the fire pit during a smoking ceremony. The work is a symbolic acknowledgement of the importance of fire, smoke and ceremony to the Yidinji and other First Peoples of Australia. The clap sticks have been inscribed with traditional clan markings and designs unique to the Yidinji people.

There are three types of clap sticks used in performances as ceremonial instruments that assist with chanting and singing during rituals and ceremonies. The flat rectangle sticks create a short, deep sound; the double-pointed sticks produce a sharp pitch; and the long flat boomerang is used by the performer to generate fast double tapping or triple clapping. Each creates different sounds for different purposes throughout the ceremony.

Sound is introduced to Fourmile's installation through traditional songs performed by the artist himself, alongside Elder and Aunty Teresa Dewar from the Gimuy Walubara Yidinji clan group. The songs, which communicate ceremony and fire, feature sounds generated by the various clap sticks on display.

# **Dale HARDING with Hayley MATTHEW**

## **Dale HARDING**

Bidjara/Ghungalu/Garingbal

## **Hayley MATTHEW**

Bidjara/Ghungalu/Garingbal

### *As I remember it (H1)*

2020

dry pigment, gum arabic, Chinese ink on paper

Courtesy of the artists and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

# Dale HARDING with Hayley MATTHEW

Dale Harding is renowned for works that explore the untold histories of his communities. Harding has a particular interest in ideas of cultural continuum and investigates the social and political realities experienced by his family under government control in Queensland, with a focus on matrilineal Elders.

In *As I remember it (H1)*, Harding and his cousin Hayley Matthew, explore the idea of art as a ritual process, and cultural continuum within their family and community. The installation is made with a multi-panel colour field painting on paper. Four underpainted sheets are sealed off with additional fields of colour - veiling the actions and story underneath. Different tones of yellow reference the yellow-golden morning light on sandstone.

*Recently, my art practice has sought to continue my cultural inheritances, and with the involvement of my family members, our shared cultural practices – including elements of ceremony and ritual – have strengthened the connections between individuals and our communities through contemporary art as cultural continuum.*

*The practice of our ancestral ceremonies and rituals has been held in our lives as latent memories - the ability to draw on our inheritances means new and vital processes of cultural expression (understood here as practices of ritual) are relevant among contemporary art.*

*My cousin Hayley Matthew has recently begun the process of telling her story as a cultural woman in her own standing within our family. Through the actions of making contemporary paintings in the lineage of our shared cultural inheritances of Rock Art traditions, Hayley is developing forms and intentions for the consolidation of her cultural story in her lifetime.*

*The opportunities afforded through my art practice, provide safe spaces for the development of our new forms of cultural expression made available in the diaspora of Aboriginal People in Central Queensland.*

# Naomi HOBSON

Southern Kaantju/Umpila

Naomi Hobson lives and works in Coen, a remote Indigenous community in Cape York, where she plays an important role as an artist, mentor and creative inspiration. Her art practice often blends political and social activism with her identity to emphasise her own relationship with the land.

The *January First* series comprises a new body of photographic portraits that document a contemporary local custom related to a new year. Hobson captures the essence of renewal and reiterates local Indigenous peoples' bond and relationship with special kin in Cape York Peninsula. The portraits are of people in Coen celebrating a New Year, whether they are young or old, male or female, single, a couple, friends or colleagues.

*At the immediate start of a new year, we carry white clay, white powder, or white flour to rub the face of Coen people' specific customary relations - like grandparents, godparents and cousins. This confers the letting go of inhibitions between partners and relations, albeit for a short period. It nonetheless is surrounded by celebration, song and dance, laughter and fun where many relationships reform and renew each year. But for others it is also a ritual associated with reflection; letting go, acknowledging the moving on of deceased loved ones.*

Naomi Hobson 2020

# **Naomi HOBSON**

Southern Kaantju/Umpila

*The God Mother*

*The God Child*

*The God Father*

*The Promised One*

*The Grandmother and The God Son*

*The Grandfather*

*The Great Grandmother*

*The God Brother*

*The God Daughter*

*The God Son*

*The God Parents*

*The God Brothers*

2020-2021

from the *January First* series 2020-2021

digital print

Courtesy of the artist and ReDot Fine Art Gallery, Singapore.

# Heather Wunjarra KOOWOOTH

Wik-Mungkan/Yidinji/Djabugay

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, traditional ecological knowledge of plants and their uses vary between groups depending on geographical location and natural environment. This knowledge is transferred from one generation to the next through oral traditions and cultural practices. Many plants are not only an important food source, but highly valued for their medicinal qualities. Some species are considered highly sacred, and the uses of such plants can be of a secret nature, particularly when incorporated into rituals and ceremonies.

Heather Koowootha draws inspiration from traditional ecological knowledge of plants passed down to her from her mother (of the Yidinji peoples, Yarrabah) and father (of the Wik Mungkan peoples, Aurukun). Koowootha explores the ritual significance of local native flora based on their medicinal and magical properties. Her botanical illustrations reflect distinct knowledge systems and cultural practices established by both Koowootha's parents and their Ancestors. Koowootha visually documents and describes various plants and their uses, incorporating hand-written text into her bold and colourful work. Her illustrations carry important knowledge associated with the medicinal and ritual uses of plants in birth, women's business, marriage, death and other important ceremonies of the Yidinji and Wik Mungkan peoples.

# **Heather Wunjarra KOOWOOTH**

Wik-Mungkan/Yidinji/Djabugay

## ***Tradional Ceramonie'aL HeaL'ing Plant's Leafs For Clean'sing***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

## ***WATER LiLLY Cabbage BuLB and it's young stork EdgE's***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

## ***Blue ovual shape'd fruite Medications***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

## ***The MaiLe Orchads***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

## ***Wild Bush Apple's, The Purpose is Prepering For Marriage, And also Known For the Leaves For Law***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

Courtesy of the artist.

# **Heather Wunjarra KOOWOOTH**

Wik-Mungkan/Yidinji/Djabugay

## ***White Wild TeeTh - gum and Mouth Natural Medicne***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

## ***Eatable CaBBage like white young leaves, And nut Fruit Bush Dampers***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

## ***Cheese Fruit - Marinda Citrifolia Bunumiey, at The South East CostLe Side to the Cape York and the GuLF ReginaL area***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

## ***Blue ovual shape'd fruite Medications***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

## ***Nature's Goose Berrys, Fruit trees PicKings***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

Courtesy of the artist.

# **Heather Wunjarra KOOWOOTH**

Wik-Mungkan/Yidinji/Djabugay

## ***Tee Tree oiL Medcienes***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

## ***Creeping Loyour Caine, Medieicine***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

## ***Tradional Ceramonie'aL HeaL'ing Plant's Leafs For Clean'sing***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

## ***Cleancing S,T,D Cuire'ing bush Remie'erdy's***

2020-2021

watercolour and pen on paper

Courtesy of the artist.

# **Peggy Kasabad LANE**

Saibal Koedal Awgadthaigal

## ***Tombstone unveiling of Mrs Keru Isua***

2018

single channel video, sound, 7:44 mins

Courtesy of the artist

In *Tombstone unveiling of Mrs Keru Isua*, Peggy Kasabad Lane illustrates contemporary Torres Strait Islander ceremony and ritual surrounding death and celebration of life.

The artist's grandmother, the late Mrs Keru Isua, was born on 27 September 1926 and passed away on 10 August 2015 in Ait Koedal Awgadhalayg, Saibai Island. She was the wife of the late Mr Carolus Isua OAM, Saibai Koedal Awgadhalayg, the mother of seven children and many grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Lane's documentary film displays the final stages of funerary rites performed by the artist and her family and reflects the intergenerational relationships within the Isua and Ibuai families. The film features three different types of 'unveiling' and 'revealing' - the food, the dancing and the tombstone. The artist's use of a split screen allows the viewer to observe both the preparation and the delivery of each part of the event, culminating in the final scene of unveiling the tombstone. Emphasis is placed on sound, colour and textural elements to create a sensory experience - encouraging audiences to immerse themselves in the family's rituals, strong relationships, deep sense of community and richness of culture.

# Grace Lillian LEE

Born Cairns, Queensland, 1988

## *Future Floral Woven Forms*

2020

canvas, cotton webbing, cane, feathers, coconut palm frond

Courtesy of the artist and studio assistant Monique Burkhead

Grace Lillian Lee explores the aesthetic possibilities of traditional craft techniques within a contemporary fashion and art context.

The *Future Floral Woven Forms* series was created by Lee in response to the life of her grandmother, Marcella Lillian Lee (nee Berolah). In 1949, at the age of 17, Marcella was married to a Chinese man on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait. In Marcella's wedding photo, she wore a Western white dress. Through the presentation of twelve sculptural costumes, Lee investigates the impact of Western culture and beliefs on ceremonial dress in marriage rites across the Torres Strait Islands.

*The image of Grandma brings me so much curiosity about the life she would lead. I wanted to respond by exploring the concept of recreating a wedding dress using the techniques which have helped me connect with my cultural lineage and celebrate who I am, exploring the diversities and complexities around navigating my own journey to come to a place of acceptance.*

Grace Lillian Lee 2020

Lee draws inspiration from her Torres Strait Islander heritage, incorporating traditional palm-leaf weaving techniques (prawn-weaving) and tropical floral designs to create a collection of ceremonial-wedding wear representative of the Torres Strait region's vibrant culture and rich natural environment.

# Stephen George PAGE AO

Nunukul/Munaldjali

## *Spear*

2015

single channel video, sound, 80:00 mins

Courtesy of the artist and Arena Media, Melbourne

*Spear* tells the story of a young Indigenous man through contemporary Aboriginal dance, music, visual design and digital media.

Page is a descendant of the Nunukul people and the Munaldjali clan of the Yugambah tribe from southeast Queensland. He has been Artistic Director of the Bangarra Dance Theatre since 1991 and is renowned for his continuous reinvention of Indigenous storytelling through creative collaborations.

In *Spear*, Djali, a young Aboriginal man, journeys through his community to understand what it means to be a man with ancient traditions in a modern world. Djali's search for meaning exposes him to the troubled stories of other Indigenous men. He witnesses the indignities and hardships they face as they negotiate life in a contemporary society that ignores their needs.

The opening sequence of *Spear* depicts a cleansing practice during Djali's initiation. Djali's body is washed with water and his forehead is painted with white ochre. Smoke is used to cleanse his body and spirit.

# Alair PAMBEGAN

## Wik-Mungkan

Body painting is an ancient tradition of deep spiritual significance to Australia's First Peoples. Specific designs and motifs are used to identify family and language groups, social position, totems or tracts of land. Strict guidelines and restrictions apply to body painting designs, which must be respectfully followed.

Arthur Pambegan Jnr's *Bonefish Story Place* installation and Alair Pambegan's paintings explore the use of body painting and totems in the *Winchanam* initiation ritual of the Wik-Mungkan people.

The late Arthur Koo'ekka Pambegan Jnr was a highly respected Elder and nationally renowned artist. He was custodian of *Walkaln-aw (Bonefish Story Place)* and *Kalben (Flying Fox Story Place)* - two significant ancestral stories of the Wik-Mungkan people.

Custodial responsibilities for the Wik-Mungkan culture were handed down to Alair Pambegan from his father, Arthur Koo'ekka Pambegan Jnr. The figures in *Winchanam Ceremonial Dance* represent two brothers in *Bonefish Story Place*. In *Winchanam Body Design*, Alair Pambegan depicts body painting designs worn during Wik-Mungkan initiation through the application of striking red, black and white linear patterns onto canvas. The colours, derived from natural ochres, are sourced by Pambegan from locations shown to him as a young boy by his father.

# **Alair PAMBEGAN**

Wik-Mungkan

## ***Winchanam Clan Body Design***

2020

ochre and acrylic binders on linen

## ***Bonefish Man & Dancing Spirit Man -Winchanam Ceremonial Dance***

2020

ochre and acrylic binders on linen

Courtesy of the artist and Wik & Kugu Arts Centre, Aurukun.

# **Arthur Koo'ekka PAMBEGAN Jnr**

Wik-Mungkan

## ***Bonefish Story Place***

2007-2008

ochres and charcoal with acrylic binder on milkwood, natural fibre rope

Collection: Michael Rayner AM, Brisbane.

# Brian ROBINSON

Maluyligal/Wuthathi/Dayak

Brian Robinson's *Arcānus curio* series depicts powerful 19th century 'ritual objects' drawing on cultural traditions from the Torres Strait Islands, Melanesia and Polynesia. Referencing blue prints, design plans or technical drawings, Robinson's hand-drawn sketches explore the architectural nature and construction of ritual objects - how they have been used by various peoples over time and their ongoing significance to the peoples and cultures from which they originate.

*Rituals are a feature of all known human societies. They are a sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, hidden away from the*

*world, and performed according to lore and custom. Rituals are characterised but not defined by formalism, traditionalism, invariance, governance, sacral symbolism, and performance and are usually prescribed by the traditions of a community, including a religious community.*

*The Arcānus curio series expresses the importance of Indigenous customs and culture for the traditional land custodians of the Pacific Islands. Ritual objects are the cornerstone of practised rites and they conjure up images of the exotic, the spiritual and the fabulous in the Western imagination. Their use in ceremony permits spirits and Ancestors to be contacted and made active in this world.*

Brian Robinson 2020

# **Brian ROBINSON**

Maluyligal/Wuthathi/Dayak

## ***Wene-wenel gaugau mawa (Torres Strait)***

2018

coloured pencil on paper

## ***Pounding the produce (Upper Sepik, Papua New Guinea)***

2020

coloured pencil on paper

## ***The charm of the biro-biro (Torres Strait)***

2020

coloured pencil on paper

## ***The ritual of harvest season (Torres Strait)***

2020

coloured pencil on paper

## ***Ornaments of chieftdom (Solomon Islands) 2***

2020

coloured pencil on paper

## ***Weapons of warfare (Hawaii)***

2019

coloured pencil on paper

Courtesy of the artist.

# **Brian ROBINSON**

Maluyligal/Wuthathi/Dayak

## ***The warrior's keepsake (Marquesas Islands)***

2020

coloured pencil on paper

## ***Warriors, sorcerers and spirits (Astrolabe Bay)***

2020

coloured pencil on paper

## ***The presence of past kin (Papua New Guinean Gulf)***

2020

coloured pencil on paper

## ***The power of the effigy (Torres Strait)***

2020

coloured pencil on paper

## ***Hook of life (Tonga)***

2019

coloured pencil on paper

## ***Influence over the seas (Cook Islands)***

2020

coloured pencil on paper

from the *Arcānus curio* series

Courtesy of the artist.

# **Joel SAM**

Sui Baidam

## ***Malu Dhoeri Mawa***

2020

artificial feather, emu feather, cassowary feather, starfish thorn, foam, acrylic paint, glass, cowrie shell, dowel, seashell, twine, cane, dugong bone, Matchbox Bean nuts seed pods, mother of pearl and raffia.

## ***Darbaw Dhoeri Mawa***

2020

artificial feather, emu feather, cassowary feather, foam, acrylic paint, glass, dowel, seashell, twine, cane, dugong bone, Matchbox Bean nuts seed pods, mother of pearl and raffia

## ***Aybodh Dhoeri Mawa***

2020

artificial feather, emu feather, banana leaf, foam, acrylic paint, glass, dowel, seashell, twine, cane, Matchbox Bean nuts seed pods, vinyl, mother of pearl and raffia

## ***Umau Dhoeri Mawa***

2020

artificial feather, emu feather, cassowary feather, boar tusk, foam, acrylic paint, glass, cowrie shell, dowel, seashell, twine, cane, dugong bone, Matchbox Bean nuts seed pods, shell, mother of pearl and raffia

from the *Kulba Igilinga (Old Culture)* series

Courtesy of the artist

# Joel SAM

## Sui Baidam

Before European contact, dhoeri, dhari and dhibal (Torres Strait headdress) were worn by Torres Strait Islander men during sacred rituals, ceremonies and inter-island wars. Today, the headdress is used by men on special occasions and during ceremonial dance. It is a symbol of Torres Strait identity, unity, strength and cultural continuation.

Joel Sam is a descendant of the people of Saibai Island in the Top Western region of the Torres Strait. Sam expresses his innovative practice of Torres Strait Islander material culture through the creation of colorful, contemporary Torres Strait headdress. Sam's headdresses in the *Kulba Igilinga (Old Culture)* series are inspired by traditional Torres Strait Islander ceremonies.

*Malu Dhoeri Mawa* (1) is a Hunting Dhoeri representing a good hunt and weather; *Darbaw Dhoeri Mawa* (2) is a Garden Dhoeri symbolising protection from evil spells upon the garden; *Aybodh Dhoeri Mawa* (3) is a Harvest Dhoeri signifying a good generous harvest and *Umau Dhoeri Mawa* (4) is a Death Dhoeri. The sacred symbols, meanings and uses behind Torres Strait headdress are kept hidden and are usually known by the maker and wearer only. In the composition of each work, symbolic meaning is expressed through feather colours and the frame structure of the headdress.

# Dr Christian THOMPSON AO

Bidjara

## *Berceuse*

2017

three channel video, sound, 5:35 mins

Courtesy of the artist and Michael Reid Gallery, Sydney

Christian Thompson's work investigates identity, cultural hybridity and history. Using sculpture, performance, photography, video and sound he explores sexuality, gender, race and memory through performances and conceptual self-portraits.

Thompson's recent practice expresses his interest in language and gesture through performance, song and sound. In *Berceuse*, Thompson sings a berceuse – a cradle song or lullaby – that combines evocative chanting and electronic elements to invoke the cultural experiences and narratives of his Bidjara culture. Intended as a gesture of re-imagining his traditional Bidjara language, which has been categorised as 'extinct', the work is premised on the notion that if one word of Bidjara is spoken, or in this case sung, it remains a living language. The three channel videos are the artist's personal rite of connection to his Bidjara Ancestors.

# list of works

## Asia Pacific artists

### **Abdul ABDULLAH**

Bidjara

*Bride II (Subterfuge)*

*The wedding (Conspiracy to commit)*

*Groom II (Stratagem)*

2015

digital print

from the *Coming to terms* series

Courtesy the artist and Yavuz Gallery, Sydney

*Mutual Assurances*

2017

digital print

from the *Wedding* series

Courtesy the artist and Yavuz Gallery, Sydney

# Abdul ABDULLAH

Bidjara

Abdul Abdullah's *Coming to terms* series, is a group of unusual wedding portraits taken in Malaysia, his mother's country of birth. They are inspired by a 1806 novel by Charlotte Dacre entitled *Zofloya or The Moor*. A romantic novel, it is set in fifteenth century Venice and tells the story of the intense sexual attraction of Victoria to her Moorish servant Zofloya, which flagrantly transgresses taboos of both class and race.

Abdullah is a multi-disciplinary artist, Archibald Prize finalist and a self-described 'outsider amongst outsiders'. He is a seventh-generation Australian. He identifies as a Muslim and his work often incorporates his body and is based on personal experiences in order to explore how Muslims are portrayed in contemporary Australian society.

The brides and grooms in his photographic portraits are dressed in formal wedding attire and positioned in the traditional setting of the *bersanding* (sitting-in-state ceremony) that is a highlight of a Malay wedding. However, the faces of the brides and grooms are masked by close-fitting balaclavas that operate as powerfully contrasting devices that disrupt the otherwise joyous nature of the occasion. The balaclavas also serve to mask and dehumanise the sitters, while also suggesting undertones of criminality.

Though political in context, Abdullah's works do not specifically reference or comment on particular Islamic elements or practices, rather they address complex feelings of displacement and alienation which the artist associates with complex histories of diaspora and migration.

# Jumaadi

Born Sidoarjo, Indonesia, 1973

## *Sunan Kalijaga and Dewi Anjani*

2020

natural and synthetic pigment on Balinese treated cotton

Courtesy of the artist

Jumaadi's artistic practice spans a range of mediums, including painting, drawing, performance and installation. Born in East Java, Jumaadi now lives and works in Sydney, Australia and Imogiri, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Jumaadi's work is informed by personal experiences and the traditional values and aesthetics of his homeland. His work resonates with a poetic sensibility and subtle symbolism, while exploring universal themes such as love, conflict and belonging.

*Sunan Kalijaga and Dewi Anjani* explores kungkum, a Javanese cleansing and mediational ritual based on two important figures, Sunan Kalijaga and Dewi Anjani. The ritual involves bathing half the body in still or flowing water, such as a lake or a river, on the first day of the Javanese calendar year. The ritual lasts from midnight until 3.00am and is usually repeated over seven consecutive nights. The purpose of the ritual is to remove a curse.

The left-hand panel of Jumaadi's painting tells the story of Sunan Kalijaga, a Javanese Muslim saint who spread the teachings of Islam during the 15th century. Kalijaga's real name was Raden Said. He was a prince who became a bush ranger who one day robbed a travelling merchant. The merchant happened to be a spiritual teacher called Sunan Giri. In front of Raden Said, the merchant cursed a bunch of bitter nut fruits and turned them into gold. Said was shocked by Sunan Giri's power and asked to become his pupil. The task set for him was to support a long piece of wood between two embankments of the river while submersing half his body in the river. This task took him more than forty years.

In the right-hand panel of the painting is Dewi Anjani, an important figure in classical Javanese shadow puppetry theatre and mother of the white monkey god, Hanuman. Anjani is depicted with a human body, and both a monkey and a human face, practising kungkum under the waterfall to cleanse her of the curse. Although Ramayana Anjani did not succeed in removing the curse, her meditation became an inspiration and a reference source for the kungkum ritual. By giving life to these mythical characters Jumaadi seeks to collapse the future, present and past to explore the irregularities, variations and flaws of the human condition.

# Taloi HAVINI

Born Bougainville, Papua New Guinea, 1981

# Michael TOISUTA

Born Sydney, New South Wales, 1975

## *Dengung Hyena (Hyena Resounding)*

2020

HD video, sound, 4:27 mins

Courtesy of the artists

Taloi Havini and Michael Toisuta collaborated to produce *Dengung Hyena (Hyena Resounding)* – a work that brings together their shared interests in and concerns for the future of the natural world and its ecology.

Havini was born in Arawa, Autonomous Region of Bougainville, Papua New Guinea and is recognised for creating powerfully evocative works that respond to the immediate and everyday issues that confront local peoples living in Bougainville, including dwindling natural resources and the importance of maintaining ownership of their land.

Born in Sydney, Toisuta grew up in Central Java, Indonesia, and works as a composer and sound designer for theatre, dance, film and video installations. Unable to travel to their respective communities due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the artists worked remotely to create a work using their respective and extensive archives as primary source material.

*Dengung Hyena (Hyena Resounding)* reflects Havini and Toisuta's searching for a connection through different aspects of cross-cultural rituals. The finished work incorporates Taloi's footage of the *Hyena* ritual in Bougainville - a ritual whereby Bougainvilleans witness and celebrate the new moon ushering in coral spawning - and Toisuta's instrumentation of Indonesian gamelan instruments.

Toisuta had previously created a sound recording in a region called Srono in East Java in 2018. The artists found that the way the Srono village gamelan instruments are used in Java, allowed them to experiment with deconstructing and reconstructing visual scenes and audio sounds in order to highlight and offer new interpretations for cross cultural experiences the practice of rituals.

# Trina LEALAVAA

Born Auckland, New Zealand, 1994

## *Ifoga*

2017

single channel video, sound, 2:32 mins

Courtesy of the artists

Trina Lealavaa is a young, emerging Samoan film maker whose works are based on telling the stories of her Ancestors and her family.

*Ifoga* is a performance film, inspired by a Samoan forgiveness ritual. *Ifoga* is a noun derived from the verb *ifo*, meaning 'to bow down' on your knees with your eyes facing the earth. Lealavaa's film explores the act of forgiveness from the perspective of a young woman who has lost her younger brother to suicide. This short film investigates three stages of forgiveness – the shame occasioned by the 'offender'; the perception of accountability by the family and other members of the village; and finally, the act of forgiveness by the victim's family.

The culminating scene of the film powerfully describes the way in which the *Ifoga* ritual can purify and cleanse. It is a ritual that heals divisions and is a way of effectively maintaining vafealoai, or mutual respect, providing absolution of guilt and pacifying feelings of anger.

# Phuong NGO

Born 1983, Adelaide, South Australia

## *Dead Objects*

2019-2020

digital print

Courtesy of the artist

Phuong Ngo's parents migrated to Australia in 1982, after the 1975 Fall of Saigon (now known as Ho Chi Minh City). They brought with them a ceramic statue of Buddha which continued to be central to the family's daily rituals of worship, as it had been in their ancestral home in Soc Trang, South Vietnam.

In 1986, Ngo's parents bought their first house in Australia and his mother stitched a pleated, red-velvet cloth on which to position the Buddhist shrine. Ngo's *Dead Objects* takes this red cloth as its starting point, as the cloth and the statue continued to retain their central place in the family home for another thirty years.

Over the decades the velvet cloth progressively collected and recorded markings from the rituals of Buddhist ancestral worship, including scorch marks from joss sticks, water stains from vases, impressions of objects, and the scent of sandal wood. For the artist these markings symbolise the 'scarring' of actions and rituals resulting from the upheavals of colonialism, conflict and displacement experienced in the Mekong Delta.

*Two pairs of candlesticks, three vases, two ceramic incense pots, and a bronze incense burner that no longer hold their purpose and ripped from their place of origin, now only hold meaning in what they once were. For me they represent a connection through to my Ancestors, ones that I do not know and never will know, ones that I no longer share a place or a language with, but through these cultural rituals I am connected to none the less.*

Phuong Ngo 2020

# Chan-Kyong PARK

Born Seoul, Korea, 1965

## *Manshin: Ten thousand spirits*

2013

single channel, sound, 104:00 mins

Courtesy of the artist and Kukje Gallery, Seoul

Park Chan-Kyong is a media artist, film director and writer who lives and works in Seoul, South Korea. His work examines and comments on contemporary Korean society, with a particular focus on the ways in which socio-economic developments over the past fifty years has changed the centuries old cultural and religious traditions of Korea.

*Manshin: Ten thousand spirits* is a documentary film that traces shamanic rituals in Korea. Korean Shamanism has a long history, going back to pre-historic time before the introduction of Buddhism, Confucius and Christianity. Known as *manshin*, a shaman plays a fundamental role in connecting people with the spirit world, dealing with human problems, and aiding dead spirits. During the shaman rituals Gods, spirits and Ancestors descend into the shaman so that the shaman herself becomes a god.

Park's film explores narratives of the past and present, south and north, city and country, life and afterlife, through a fantastical reconstruction of the life of one of Korea's greatest shamans, Keum Wha Kim. In the film, Korean traditional music and fantasy scenes help the shaman perform rituals that connect her with the supernatural world. These sounds variously include loud upbeat entrancing rhythms that can last for minutes and which serve to mesmerise, tantalize and engulf the viewer as they become one with the ritual performances of the shaman.

# Koji RYUI

Born Kyoto, Japan, 1976

## *TOT*

2020

found objects, mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Sarah Cottier Gallery, Sydney.

Koji Ryui relocated to Sydney, Australia in 1982 where he continues to live and work. Since leaving Kyoto, Ryui has immersed himself in the study of Japanese ritual and culture, Shintoism and animism. These belief systems are based on the ways in which objects transcend their material properties and assume animate qualities of lifeforce and spirits.

Ryui's installation *TOT*, involves the careful arrangement and recontextualisation of material objects in ambiguous spaces in order to give them personalities and possibilities beyond their evident materiality.

*TOT* is informed by principles of Shintoism which, unlike other monotheistic religions, does not identify absolutes, or dictums of right and wrong. It also explores the practice of meditation, which is a primary ritual of Zen Buddhism.

Ryui's art practice involves processes that take the form of a ritual and a bringing together of three distinct philosophies and belief systems:

*My work can be understood through the lens of Japanese cultural traditions, namely Zen, Ikebana and Shintoism. Zen in its definition means meditation... Ikebana is located within this school of thinking, and its improvisational approach sees the making process as a form of meditation. Shintoism offers the most essential philosophy underlining Japanese culture. My work does not explicitly talk about such traditions... [it takes] fragments of familiar everyday and shifts them into something that is contemplative and extraordinary embracing spontaneity.*

# Greg SEMU

Born Auckland, New Zealand, 1971

*Frank Puletua*

*Fuifu Moimoi*

*Roy Asotasi (front)*

*Roy Asotasi (back)*

2020

from the *Body on the Line* series

digital print

Courtesy of the artist and The Greg SEMU Foundation

Greg Semu and Angela Tiatia, were both born in New Zealand and identify as Samoan. Each of their works explore elements of tattooing as a cultural practice and ritual, which defines gender, identity, hierarchical status and cultural positioning in society.

For Semu, the traditional practice of tattooing (*Tatau*), as a means of visually representing the life and status of a person, is explored through the contemporary use of tattoos worn by men. Semu received his own tattoos from a master who learned from his master. The patterns and designs that cover his body from the torso to his knees, have been handed down through families skilled in *Tatau*. However, in his *Body on the Line* series, Semu investigates the loss of ritual and authenticity related to the tattoo in mainstream society and its appropriated use as a signifier within popular culture.

The rugby players in his *Body on the Line* series are all from Tonga and Samoa. They are all portrayed as confident 'warriors' but this is where the tattoo as an authenticating cultural signifier stops. The rugby players' tattoos have not been created as part of a cultural ritual, nor have they been performed by masters who have been trained in the symbolic meanings of centuries-old designs and patterns. Rather, the tattoos sported by the rugby players have been bought with money, incised by robotic and mechanical tools and the designs are highly individualised to suit the person.

# Angela TIATIA

Born Auckland, New Zealand, 1973

## *Group Portrait*

2012

Dual-channel HD video, sound, 1:34 mins

Courtesy of the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney

Samoan artist Angela Tiatia's work explores complex relationships between cultural practices, histories, systems of belief and the practice of rituals, and how these are used to signify and determine identity. She is a multi-media artist whose work has been described as occupying a thin line between peace and chaos.

In *Group Portrait*, Tiatia films the intimate moments of receiving her *malu* (a Samoan word for a female-specific tattoo). Lasting one minute and thirty-four seconds, the work documents the final moments of a five-hour long *tatau* process where she receives the *malu tatau* that covers a woman's thighs.

Receiving a tattoo is a symbolic rite of passage. For Samoan women, it signifies that they are ready for certain cultural privileges, including the serving of ceremonial drinks and collecting gifts at funerals.

Generally, the tattoo design is made up of perfectly symmetrical lines, triangles, arrows, dots, and other geometric patterns. Each element is imbued with sacred, mythological meaning. Once a tattoo is started, it must be finished as an incomplete tattoo will bring lasting shame to the person and to their family.

For Tiatia, the use of film allows her to invite engagement with the viewer while at the same time challenging perceptions of truth based purely on archival recordings of history using these mediums.

# Charwei TSAI

Born Taiwan, 1980

## *Sea Mantra*

2009

single channel video, sound, 17:18 mins

Courtesy of the artist

Charwei Tsai lives and works in Taipei and Saigon. She is an internationally renowned artist whose multi-disciplinary works are often highly personal and explore complex narratives based on interpretations of self and cultural identity.

As with many of her works, *Sea Mantra* is based on the artist's fascination with human nature relationships that are informed by cultural beliefs, spirituality and transience.

*Sea Mantra* was commissioned by the Sherman Contemporary Art Foundation, Sydney and filmed at Little Bay. This filmic work resonates with the artist's perceptions of life and death and the ephemeral nature of existence.

In the film the artist is seen meticulously handwriting the words of the *Heart Sutra* (prajnaparamita in Sanskrit) which is a key Buddhist text that describes the concept of emptiness. This concept is central to Buddhist philosophy. The *Sutra* is made up of 262 Chinese characters. With focussed precision the artist transcribes each character onto mirrors using a felt tipped pen. As she creates the text the mirrors variously capture images of the surrounding sea, the waves and the sand.

*Sea Mantra* is a work that reverberates with the joy of the *Heart Sutra*.

*My interest in Buddhism is intertwined with my practice in art. For me, art and spirituality are inseparable. Through art, I am able to reach a purer state of consciousness that I cannot do through the chaos of daily life.*

Charwei Tsai 2009

## list of works

# Fijian Tevutevu Ceremony of Wilfred and Ada Bowie

## Fijian Tevutevu Ceremony of Wilfred and Ada Bowie

This installation is based on an ancient Fijian wedding tradition called a *Tevutevu* ceremony (meaning ‘spreading of the mats’).

The traditional attire and setting seen in this presentation were part of the cross-cultural *Tevutevu* ceremony of Wilfred and Ada Bowie in 2018. The ceremony incorporated traditional elements from Fijian, Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal cultures.

During a *Tevutevu* ceremony, each person (usually in order of their social standing in their families) places a mat on the floor to symbolise where the couple will sleep. Each mat is placed on top of the other. Usually, the bride’s mother is the last person to spread a mat which symbolises the mother making her child’s bed for the final time before she weds and becomes the head of her own family.

The *veivakani* is a feeding ceremony that represents the last meal shared with the family. An Auntie will hand feed the bride and groom to represent the love and support the family will continue to give the couple throughout their marriage.

The presentation of the *tabua* (a whale’s tooth) at the ceremony is regarded as one of the highest honours for a Fijian family. At Wilfred and Ada’s *Tevutevu* ceremony the *tabua* was presented by Ada’s father to officially release her from his family. As Wilfred’s family received the *tabua* they also received the responsibility of taking care of Ada as one of their own.

The *Tevutevu* ceremony of Wilfred and Ada Bowie was a joyous event that celebrated the transmission of customary practices, across families, community and different cultures.

## *Wall hanging*

### **UNKNOWN**

Oneata Island, Lau Province, Fiji

## *Masi*

2018

Mulberry tree fibre, acrylic paint, vegetable dye

Collection of Wilfred and Ada Bowie.

Courtesy of Oneata Island community, Lau province, Fiji

## *Floor mats*

### **UNKNOWN**

Lomaloma Village, Vanua Balavu, Lau Province, Fiji

## *Delana*

2018

Pandanus leaves, wool, dye

Collection of Wilfred and Ada Bowie.

Courtesy of Lomaloma Village community, Vanua Balavu, Lau Province, Fiji

### **UNKNOWN**

Moce island, Lau Province, Fiji

## *Vakamalumu*

2018

Mulberry tree fibre, vegetable dye

Collection of Wilfred and Ada Bowie.

Courtesy of Moce Island community, Lau Province, Fiji

## **UNKNOWN**

Lomaloma Village, Vanua Balavu, Lau Province, Fiji

### *Vakabati*

2018

Pandanus leaves, wool

Collection of Wilfred and Ada Bowie.

Courtesy of Lomaloma Village community, Vanua Balavu, Lau Province, Fiji

## **UNKNOWN**

Vatulele Island, Nadroga, Fiji

### *Gatu*

2018

Mulberry tree fibre, vegetable dye

Collection of Wilfred and Ada Bowie.

Courtesy of Vatulele Island community, Nadroga, Fiji

## **UNKNOWN**

Moce island, Lau Province, Fiji

### *Taunamu Vakaviti*

2018

Mulberry tree fibre, vegetable dye

Collection of Wilfred and Ada Bowie.

Courtesy of Moce Island community, Lau Province, Fiji

*Dress*

**Adi Vuya TALEMAIKADAVU**

Born Lautoka, Fiji

**Tabuadrau RATABUA**

Born Lautoka, Fiji

*Masi Bola Ni Cakaudrove*

2018

fibre, sea shells, vegetable dye, fibre rope

Collection of Wilfred and Ada Bowie

**Vilimone Baleilevuka MATAIWAI**

Vatani, Kaba, Fiji

*Fijian Tevutevu Ceremony of Wilfred and Ada Bowie*

2018

digital image slide, no sound, 1:21 mins

Collection of Wilfred and Ada Bowie

Courtesy of the artist

# **Adi Vuya TALEMAIKADAVU**

Born Lautoka, Fiji

# **Tabuadrau RATABUA**

Born Lautoka, Fiji

## *Masi Bola Ni Cakaudrove*

2018

fibre, sea shells, vegetable dye, fibre rope

Collection of Wilfred and Ada Bowie.

# list of works

## The Woyan-min Project

### *Walkalan – Story of Bonefish*

2021

single channel HD video, sound, 5:25 mins

Courtesy of Alair Pambegan (storyteller), Perry Yunkaporta (cultural direction), Gabe Waterman (camera), Wik & Kugu Arts Centre, the Aurukun Indigenous Knowledge Centre and the Aurukun Shire Council