Urban Dreams

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Pallingjang
Saltwater 2009

DEVELOPED WITH INDIGENOUS CURATORS JESSICA BUIGER, CHERYL DAVISON AND CLIVE FREEMAN, AND TRAINEE INDIGENOUS CURATOR DEB CALLAGHAN
Since 1995 the Pallingjang project has provided a forum for the exploration of local and South Coast Aboriginal art and culture. The project has developed and evolved over the years through an insistence on consultation and collaboration and through the concerted effort, contributions and dedication of the many artists, curators and Gallery staff who have worked on the project.

Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 is the fourth project in this series which has at its core a principal of fostering local and South Coast Aboriginal traditions and culture through working and engaging directly with Aboriginal communities and artists.

Consultation with these communities and artists has at all times been integral to its development and has assisted in maintaining the project’s integrity and continued relevance, as well as contributing to its ongoing success.

Pallingjang Saltwater I and II both broad survey exhibitions, set the important ground work early on in the project’s development and created the working model for the later exhibitions.

Pallingjang Saltwater III, a smaller exhibition based around the broad theme of family and co-curated by local Elder Vic Chapman, exposed the work of eleven selected local and South Coast artists to audiences across regional Australia including several Keeping Places in the Northern Territory.

Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 has taken another important step in the development of this project which now includes a strong skills and professional development component, as well as significant creative input by four Aboriginal curators working with the sixteen participant artists.

We would like to thank the curators Jessica Bulger, Deb Callaghan, Cheryl Davison and Clive Freeman for sharing their knowledge, skills and passion. The Gallery would like to thank Master Printer Tom Goulder from Duckprint Fine Art Studios for his expertise and guidance with the printmaking workshops which formed an integral part of the project.

We would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge and thank Gallery staff past and present, for their contribution to the Pallingjang Saltwater project, and in particular Naomi Horridge, who set the ball in motion all those years ago. Sheona White, who oversaw the development of that very important first exhibition, former Gallery Director Peter O’Neill who recognised the importance of the project, and Gallery curator Louise Brand, who has managed this current very successful iteration of the project.

An exhibition of this type requires significant support and we would also like to thank Arts NSW and the Australian Government’s Indigenous Support Program of the Department of the Environment, Heritage, Water and the Arts for their funding support of this project.

Finally we would like to thank the participating artists through whose art and stories we have been given a rare personal glimpse into the rich and vibrant world of local and South Coast Aboriginal traditional and contemporary culture.

John Monteleone
Acting Director
Wollongong City Gallery
Early Pallingjang Saltwater - Reflections

Pallingjang, a Tharawal word meaning saltwater, was nominated as an exhibition title by local language researcher Carol Speechly (Wadi Wadi) in discussions with Katinka Seaberg (nee Carr) and Julie Freeman (Gorawarl-Wandandian). The other artists and the Gallery team were also taken with this Tharawal word and felt that it emblematised the Illawarra and South Coast region.

The earliest idea and impetus for Pallingjang came from a number of rich seams and the collective nature of this was continued in the curatorial composition and the rationale for the exhibition itself. The exhibition curators, Katinka Seaberg, and myself, cast a broad net across all the art that we could find being produced by Aboriginal people within the geographical confines of the area. Not so much to define a regional aesthetic but to look to profile the visual languages exploring Aboriginal identity and culture being produced on the South Coast. What we also found was a great strength of oral-based culture. “Even though there’s lot of cultural stuff on the South Coast that’s lost, the stories always come through —— Storytelling has always been the one consistent thing and the stories are becoming more and more important as time goes on. Whole pictures emerge from these stories that reflect a very special Aboriginal idea of the South Coast.” The strength of these oral histories and cultures contributed the majority of the text for the first catalogue and indeed there was so much valuable text transcribed from interview recordings that a companion booklet was produced - Pallingjang Saltwater Book of Stories. In this way the voices of the Aboriginal people of the South Coast were profiled as well as their visual culture.

The precursor for this first manifestation of Pallingjang was curated by Tess Allas (nee McLennan) (Wiradjuri) and shown at Project: Centre for Contemporary Art in late July, early August 1995. It was Project’s second exhibition since its inception just three weeks earlier and Tess’ exhibition proposal received great support from the directors of Project, Lisa Havilah, Glenn Barkley and Nathan Clark. Tess was the Aboriginal Cultural Development Officer based at the Aboriginal Community Centre in Wollongong. The exhibition was held in conjunction with NAIDOC week and titled Unjustified. It featured the work of artists such as Vic Chapman, Graham King, Valerie Law, Leanne Morris, Milton Budge, Kevin Butler, Jeff and Laddie Timbery, as well as artists from the TAFE Colleges, the Aboriginal Medical Centre and the local Community Development Employment Project (CDEP).

The artwork was as varied as the artists were individual and included carved and painted didgeridoos, conceptual installation pieces, ceramics, and acrylic and oil paintings. The subjects of these works ranged from family stories, dreaming stories through to contemporary history and portraiture.

Wollongong City Gallery curator at the time, Naomi Horridge, was concerned by what she considered the paucity of local Aboriginal art in the Gallery’s collection of Aboriginal art from central Australia and the Top End. She saw this as a “disconnection” and had been researching urban and local Aboriginal art for a while. Unjustified was a social and cultural success and the Gallery acquired many works, more than tripling its nascent local Aboriginal collection. Tess had planted the seed for Pallingjang in Wollongong City Gallery - the highly successful exhibition at Project was a great inspiration and resource.

Naomi wanted to redress an erroneous perception she observed generally at that time, that only the art of remote Aboriginal people was “authentic” and urban Aboriginal art was somehow not. This was a common misconception even with the great work of Boomali Aboriginal Artists’ Cooperative, founded in Sydney in 1987 to confront the lack of representation of urban Aboriginal art within the wider art scene; and to debunk predominant stereotypes of Aboriginality and aesthetic production. Naomi wrote a successful Regional Galleries Association funding application and the project was on its way.

The seed of an idea was planted at the Gallery and it was fertile ground. The vision and purpose of the Gallery was seen as simply to use every resource possible to propel the Gallery into the daily lives of as many people as possible. The Chair of the Gallery Board and Lord Mayor of Wollongong at the time, Councillor David Campbell, regularly studied this vision and purpose for the Gallery in 1992 several projects had been initiated in association with the “World Indigenous Peoples’ Conference” held at the University of Wollongong in 1993 and the Gallery was attempting to develop its collection of Indigenous art through the addition of works by Western and Central Desert artists to balance its already superb collection of barks.

The Gallery was very honoured to have Uncle Vic Chapman (Yuwaalaraay), the first Aboriginal primary school headmaster in Australia and artist in his own right, as part of its team of dedicated Gallery Guides. He and local artist Valerie Law (Gamilaraai) also became workshop tutors at the Gallery and provided invaluable insight, information and support through the complex subjects that arose in relation to Indigenous art at the Gallery. Local artist Kevin Butler soon joined Uncle Vic and Valerie as local Indigenous artists at the Gallery, when in 1997 he was selected as the Gallery’s annual Resident Artist. The art of all three was represented in the inaugural Pallingjang exhibition and subsequent exhibitions since then.

The process of developing the first Pallingjang exhibition involved a massive amount of driving! Consultations with Indigenous artists and communities were conducted far and wide. The Gallery staff that participated found the experience hard work but enormously exhilarating, profoundly rewarding and enlightening.
Katinka Seaberg remembers hitting the road for the community consultation process and the unearthing of further artists. These are amongst the fondest memories of her time at the Gallery.

She felt very privileged to be invited into peoples’ homes, sharing a ‘cuppa’ while they generously shared stories, artworks and referrals to other artist friends and family.

Mathew Poll (Natagai), who now works in the University of Sydney’s Indigenous Collections and Repatriation program, began his curatorial work at Wollongong City Gallery as an Indigenous curatorial trainee in 1998. He reflects that one of the great highlights for him was meeting such great artists as Kevin Butler, Julie Freeman and Cheryl Davison. Mathew feels privileged to have had such an early glimpse of the South Coast region’s artists engaging in a national dialogue of self determined Indigenous art.

The Pallingjang artists’ engagement in the dialogue is profound. It confers cultural heritage to future generations and generously shares its artistic and historical legacy with non-Indigenous audiences. This is poignantly evinced by these two artists quotes from the first catalogue:

“... it's really hard for myself and for people like Julie ... to let go of a piece of work like this, because it's not just for me but I think of it as a thing for the next generation as well.” - Cheryl Davison, (Walbanga).

“Gerniero is a painting depicting the language symbol passed on to me by my elders. In 1996 I went back to where I was born, to learn the traditional stories of my people. I was removed from my mother by authorities along with my twelve siblings. We were fostered out to different families and I was brought up in the Southern Highlands.

My dream when I was at school was to become an art teacher, and now my dream has come true. I can combine what I’ve learnt in my degree with my love of children and knowledge of Aboriginal art. I also enjoy teaching adults, and my role as an adult educator.” - Valerie Law

The Pallingjang exhibition of Aboriginal artists of the Illawara and the South Coast was launched in October 1997. The Gallery’s expanded and sustained commitment to local Indigenous art has continued with more exhibitions in the Pallingjang series along with other local Aboriginal art exhibitions.

Pallingjang was very fortunate to have the benefit of knowledgeable contributions from artists, curators, elders and Aboriginal community councils and groups of the region. The ‘IRRE’ colleges at Wollongong, Bomaderry and Bega were greatly appreciated for their enthusiasm and support of the project. It’s a credit to all these people that Pallingjang has become an ongoing feature of South Coast Aboriginal art practice, which has toured intrastate, interstate and internationally and provided inspiration, revelation and education to a great many people from the Illawara, the South Coast and beyond.

Sheena White
Curator Pallingjang Saltwater 1997 and consultant curator Pallingjang Saltwater 2009.
Currently working at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

2. Tess Alias, email correspondence, 8 September 2009
3. Naomi Horridge, September 2009
4. Tess Alias, email correspondence, 8 September 2009
5. Bronwyn Bancroft published Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative & Supporters Facebook group page, September 2009
6. Katinka Seaberg, September 2009
7. Mathew Poll, 7 September 2009

Lorraine Brown and Narelle Thomas, Ancestral Knowledge, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 96.5 x 76cm
The cultural highway that links the urban Sydney suburb of La Perouse to the far South Coastal town of Eden, and beyond, is timeless. Rock art, stone arrangements, ceremonial grounds and sacred ancestral sites signpost the region’s strong and unique cultural ties. Such sites are narrated in the {quote}Mountain print suite{quote} by Wreck Bay artist Julie Freeman. In one print Freeman tells the story of ancestors Dithol and Little Dithol, or Eel and Lyre Bird, their broken friendship and how the consequent violent actions of one towards the other created the skyline of what Captain Cook re-named{quote}Flinn House Mountain.{quote} Dithol and Little Dithol formed part of the imposing escarpments and mountains of the Great Dividing Range, these along with the rugged pallingiang salt coast, sculpted by the tempestuous southern ocean, frame the South Coast. This country takes in the traditional homelands of the Tharawal (Gharawal), Wodi Wodi, Wamandalan, Wallaga and Dyingini of the Yarli and Jenjrja, and in recent time has become home to many displaced Kooris, who, over generations, have become part of the cultural landscape. Flowing rivers, fertile banks, magic forests, comfortable bays and serene beaches with golden sand dunes make up this land, which is largely dominated by the rich ocean and its dramatic seasons. The local community is defined by its knowledge of country: this innate knowledge is evident in everything from monolithic middens to contemporary artworks.

The region has engaged with Europeans since the late 1790’s, most notably with George Bass (1771-1803) and Mathew Flinders (1774-1814), who not only charted the coast in 1796 but were also charged with being the first Europeans to come ashore but were intimidated and made a hasty retreat. Located on route between Sydney and Hobart, and later Melbourne, as the city was established traditional canoes contested for the region’s waterways with sail and steam ships and the coast line became littered with numerous shipwrecks, the shore with their castaways. As awareness of the fertile country grew, the region became the focus of intense colonisation. The seas ran red with blood as an unregulated whaling and sealing industry boomed - over 300 tonnes of New South Wales sperm whale oil was exported to England in 1798 alone - while ancient cedar and eucalypt forests were also targeted and felled to waste as sawmills were established. Pastoralism was introduced in 1815 with Charles Throsby’s farm in Wollongong, the earliest documented in the region. With it came the takeover of people’s traditional homelands, the fouling of freshwater, trapping of prized yam beds and the displacement of the traditional owners. As these un welcomed advances were made, communities took arms and defended their country, resulting in many known and unknown violent clashes and reprisals. Throsby, perhaps ironically, protected against the blanket destroyed and unexplained violence toward the local community (specifically the people working on his property) stating that{quote}the ignorant part of the white people will lead the local community (specifically the people working on his property) stating that{quote}the ignorant part of the white people will lead them to accuse the whole, indiscriminately, therefore it is to be hoped, steps will as much as possible be taken to prevent any friendly native being injured…{quote}. However, conflict was inevitable and traditional Aboriginal cultural practices were pushed to the limits as the issuing of land grants moved southward, enveloping the landscape.

Yet within this turbulent and rapidly changing period the Aboriginal communities along the coast adapted and began working in the developing industries, while living on the fringes of society. Aboriginal stockmen, lumberjacks and whalers made the region prosperous with the Australian reporting in 1861 on the whaler Cornelius O’Brien having{quote}several{quote}boats manned{quote}chiefly by native lads.{quote}. The cosmopolitan combination of traditional culture and the community’s newly applied skills is illustrated in the revered work of Mickey of Ulladulla (c. 1820’s-1891). These unique works, a window into Ulladulla and the surrounding communities in the 1800’s, are solely Aboriginal-authored documents of a dramatic era of everyday life. Dominated by ceremonies and seascapes (often shown together), Ulladulla’s works on paper combined coloured pencil, watercolour and ink, to portray dancing and singing, fishing and hunting, sailing and steam ships, sawmills, and a variety of fish, birds and animals. Several scenes were at work in Ulladulla’s paintings where key subjects were enlarged over others to present a culturally minded perspective. Working on a plain background, Ulladulla’s style resonates with a strong caning and relief tradition that, at its best, achieves harmony between the push and pull of positive and negative spaces. A collection of Mickey’s work was internationally exhibited posthumously at the Chicago World Fair in 1893. The early international recognition was also awarded to the region’s Queen Emma Timbery (c. 1842-1916) whose delicately signed work was represented in an exhibition of Australian manufacturers in London, 1913. Almost 100 years later, this international presence has been renewed with exhibitions such as the solo show of Cheryl Davison, established artist, long time cultural worker and one of this exhibition’s curators, in New York in 2003.

It can be surmised that Mickey of Ulladulla was part of a major initiation ceremony in the Bega district in 1883. It was reportedly attended by 110 people from that district and the extended groups of Muruya and Two Fold Bay community. The ceremony was sponsored by anthropologist Alfred William Howitt (1830-1908), who noted the practice of dendrograms, or carved trees - a treasured part of Koori heritage - and the production of ground sculptures, both depicting sacred figurative imagery. These practices can be seen as a traditional context for reading Ulladulla’s, and subsequent south-east artists’, figurative work. These elements were echoed in the work of Albert Thomas (1860-c.1973), locally known as Uncle Bookeil, a whaler, lumberjack and renowned fisherman from Two...
Field Bay, At Wreck Bay, Thomas painted his own unique experiences and lifestyle, more than half a century ago. For many, it is the beginning of an artistic odyssey that has brought him to the present. Wreck Bay’s sandstone cliffs, lined with the waves of Time, have been a constant inspiration throughout his life. His work reflects his connections with the land, the sea, and the history of the coast.

The importance of family, kinship, and memory is evident in the work of many South Coast artists. This is particularly true for the work of Phyllis Stewart. Her recent woodcut print, Lost Bugari, features a sea eagle sitting high over her country. The elements of the embossed relief forces us to re-engage with her subject. Akin to a traditional art form, the print mimics the landscape and the substitution of impression for tone is like the ‘substantial’ nature of memory itself. Keeping memory alive for the next generation is the goal of this important project. The embossed relief forces us to re-engage with her subject. Akin to a traditional art form, the print mimics the landscape and the substitution of impression for tone is like the ‘substantial’ nature of memory itself. Keeping memory alive for the next generation is the goal of this important project.

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The ubiquitous fishing culture illustrated by both Ulladulla and Thomas continues in the work of many Pallingjang artists. Over countless generations, the South Coast community developed its renowned fishing skills. Every year people would return to the fishing grounds, and the sea was a source of sustenance and livelihood. The work of Mally Smart, illustrated as a reminder to the traditional custodians of the country, shows a deep connection and ongoing Indigenous responsibility to country, both land and sea. Her Seafood storytelling is framed with murram fish (abalone), prawn, crab and lobster. Russell’s prints (and paintings) feature the distinctive imagery of running mullet, heralded against the shore, and the story is told through the sea. His work is a testament to the enduring connection with the land and sea, and the importance of passing on knowledge to future generations.

Other artists from the group have worked with intimate subjects, with personal detail, and in the still life genre as witnessed in the exquisitely elegant work of Georgina Parsons. Her recent woodcut print, Lost Bugari, features a sea eagle sitting high over her country. The elements of the embossed relief forces us to re-engage with her subject. Akin to a traditional art form, the print mimics the landscape and the substitution of impression for tone is like the ‘substantial’ nature of memory itself. Keeping memory alive for the next generation is the goal of this important project.

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diptych floral print by Beryl Brierly. The old fashioned flowers and paper daisies Brierly creates appear pressed and flattened, reminding us of old memories from the pages of a photo album. Brierly's family lived at the Wallaga Lake Mission, where she learnt much from her grandfather, Robert Andy, whose generation pioneered a new era. Mally Smart similarly focuses on significant plants; her acrylic painting of Pituri, a traditional medicinal plant used to focus ancestral knowledge and spirituality, is beautifully illustrated with interacted line work. The detailed study of flora is echoed in the woven imagery of Val Law, with her Woven Stories print series. Woven forms, like that seen in the sculptures of Julie Freeman and Phyllis Stewart who both weave with local grasses, vines and bark, often decorated with nuts, shells and feathers, are translated into print media by Law, who brings together the different strands on threads of life to create a whole sense of self. Her work, like that of her peer Regina Pilawuk Wilson (b. 1942-64) from Pappinbarra in the Northern Territory, is a lifetime of lines forming and re-forming, referencing her earlier line design work.

In Aboriginal communities, knowledge, imagery and the forming and re-forming of the community structure is part of the everyday. This exhibition's featured artists have come from throughout the South Coast region and beyond, bringing together unique stories, stories told in no other arena. Julie Freeman commented that "families tell their stories up and down the coast, which fill in any gaps; then the whole image of the South Coast forms. Stories spread out and glue it all together and art is a way of strengthening that." In this exhibition many of these stories are harmonised through the participation in print making workshops; the results of these workshops express the myriad of artists' subjects and ideas in the one visual language, comprising an amazing narrative of the region, testament to the creativity and cultural activity of the South Coast. Cultural activity in the region is growing and ever-present. In 2006 Blamamba and Gulaga National Parks were handed back to the traditional Yuin land owners, after almost 30 years of protesting, while the local Dhurga language has been taught at Broulee Public School for the past 5 years. Julie Freeman poetically attested to this conclusion in conversation, "we were painters, we were dancers, and we were singers, and we are still painting, we are still dancing and we are still singing." 

Jonathan Jones

1. The term country includes the sea and the sky
3. Michael Organ (compiled) 1990, Illawarra & South Coast Aborigines 1770-1850, Aboriginal Education Unit, Wollongong University Printery, Pg.48
4. Charles Throsby in a letter to D'Arcy Wentworth, chief magistrate, Sydney 5 April 1816 in Michael Organ (compiled) 1990, Illawarra & South Coast Aborigines 1770-1850, Aboriginal Education Unit, Wollongong University Printery, Pg.61
5. The Australians 28 October 1931 in Michael Organ (compiled) 1990, Illawarra & South Coast Aborigines 1770-1850, Aboriginal Education Unit, Wollongong University Printery, Pg.171
6. Alfred William Howitt, 1904, The Native Tribes of South-east Australia, published Australia Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies 2001, p516-562
7. Julie Freeman in Pallingjang Saltwater, exhibition catalogue, Wollongong City Gallery, 1997, Pg.5

I would like to acknowledge the artists for their inspiring work, and, along with the Indigenous curators and Wollongong City Gallery the opportunity to write, and a special thank you to both Cheryl Davison and Julie Freeman for their guidance.
I am a Wandandian Gorawarl man from the South Coast of NSW Australia and I was born in Nowra in the early 1980’s. I have grown up being taught my culture and connection to country, and enjoy the unique difference of every individual’s relationship to his or her environment. I chose to participate in Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 to observe how others view their surroundings and how these views are expressed through art.

Throughout my life, I have experienced the struggles of my people (Aboriginal Australians) to gain control over their lands and waters. This unique way of life led me on a journey to further my studies and in 2007 I graduated from the University of Wollongong with a Bachelor’s Degree in Science. Using both Western and Aboriginal knowledge systems I have dedicated my life to improving Aboriginal peoples’ way of life and ensuring its continuation.

As a curator I enjoy assisting others branch out and explore different artistic mediums and better understand their own artistic style. I am honoured and privileged to be a part of an exciting group of people who live on the South Coast and choose to express this landscape through art.

I am from a long line of storytellers, from a heritage of oral historians, and I choose to express these stories through visual artistic mediums in an attempt to conserve this unique cultural heritage for future generations. The Pallingjang project has given me a unique opportunity to participate, guide and develop, as well as be guided and developed by, some of the South Coast’s most outstanding Indigenous artists.

Clive Freeman
Indigenous Curator, Wollongong/Nowra area
Lorraine Brown is a Jerrinjah woman born in Bega and is one of seven children. In addition to being the chairperson of the Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation, she is a community worker and a premier corporation artist.

Lorraine views her ability to paint as a gift, using bold colours that reflect her coastal upbringing, she states; “We’re East Coast Saltwater People, my colours symbolize my life. I had a great childhood, great parents, family and extended family. My father’s people were the people of Lake Tyres and they were the best eel fella’s around.”

Lorraine has six children, and plenty more foster children, sixteen grandchildren and a huge extended family of nieces, nephews and their kids.

She creates the designs and teaches, guides and mentors other artists at Coomaditchie. She says she wouldn’t be able to do all the things she does if it weren’t for her incredibly supportive husband, Sonny.

Lorraine is an ambassador for South Coast Aboriginal people, influencing many different organisations and groups who utilise Coomaditchie as an opportunity to learn about Aboriginal art and culture.

Narelle Thomas was born in Nowra in the mid 1960s and is a Jerrinjah woman. Narelle and Lorraine Brown are sisters and work together as a team. Usually Lorraine does the fine work and Narelle fills in the details. “But I need to be able to see what Lorraine is thinking - otherwise it’s no good, I can’t do it”, she says. Lorraine and Narelle work like professional dancers, one leads and the other follows, and no-one steps on any toes. You can see they have been working together for many, many years and have created an incredible partnership.

In addition to painting and art making, Narelle has a sound knowledge of Australia’s native bush and has led a team of people as caretakers of the land around Coomaditchie lagoon for years.

Narelle has a family of four children and twelve grandchildren and the ‘grannies’ love to hang around with Nani. Narelle is supported in her work by her partner Les who she says “is always there when we need him”.

Narelle works as a Bush regeneration worker, Community artist and Co-Chairperson at Coomaditchie. Many different organisations and groups utilise Coomaditchie as an opportunity to learn about Aboriginal art and culture.

Lorraine and Narelle have worked on a vast number of community events including the Southside Festival Lake Walk event, the Shellharbour Kids Fest and Grandparents Day and ran a series of workshops with Aboriginal children at the PCYC. Some of the major projects Lorraine and Narelle have been involved with in the past have included South Coast Bushcare, Viva La Gong and Active project where she worked with groups of children and young people to create props from recycled materials for the Southside Festival 2008.

Lorraine and Narelle have worked on more public art projects than any other Wollongong artist including; Sirens of Wollunghah, Belmore Basin Wollongong (with Michael Keghney), Shellharbour War memorial and Remembrance Park pathway, Ribbonwood Centre Dapto wall (rainbow serpent painted and mosaic mural), Belmore Basin outdoor cafe (Blue Dreaming mural), Cringilla Park Community Bread Oven (Bush Tucker mosaic), Kembla Shores Park amenities block (Communities Against Crime mosaic mural), Belambi Park (Safe Streets project, painted totem poles).

Their works have been exhibited at Wollongong City Gallery; Parliament House, Sydney; Long Gallery, University of Wollongong; De Havilland Gallery, Wollongong; Vision and Space Gallery, Austinmer; School of Arts, Scarborough; Coomaditchie Hall; Kembla Shores; and at a variety of cafes and for special events.

Clive Freeman

Lorraine Brown and Narelle Thomas, Heritage of the Blue Edge, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 61 x 61cm

Lorraine Brown and Narelle Thomas, Yabby Dreaming - The Creeks Edge, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 152 x 51cm

Lorraine Brown and Narelle Thomas, Watip Dreaming - The Croc’s Edge, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 152 x 51cm
Kevin Butler was born in 1962 at Nambucca Heads, NSW and is from the Gumbainggir people. As a child, he was always drawing but did not begin to paint until 1989. A member of the Stolen Generations, Kevin found that painting was his way of getting in touch with his Aboriginal heritage. Removed from his birth mother at the age of two weeks and then raised by a non-Aboriginal family in Sydney, at the age of 16 he left home and moved to Menangle, a rural community on the outskirts of Sydney.

In 1990 he moved to Wollongong and began his career as an artist and his first exhibition was later that same year, when he participated in a group show, Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow at the Sydney Opera House. Since 1990 Kevin has participated in over 25 group exhibitions including the 2006 Parliament of NSW Indigenous Art Prize, in which he was a finalist. It was from the exhibition Unjustified at the Project Centre for Contemporary Art in Wollongong in 1995 that Butler sold his first work to an art institution, when Wollongong City Gallery purchased Assimilation. Assimilation was Kevin’s comment on being one of the Stolen Children and he gave Lorena Allam, the Media Officer for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission’s ‘National Inquiry into the Forced Removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families’, permission to use the image as the Inquiry’s poster. The Australian Museum, also impressed by the work, created a three-dimensional walk-through version of it for the Indigenous Australians exhibition in 1997.

In 1996 Kevin was the Artist In Residence at Wollongong City Gallery, and his culminating solo exhibition, 60,208 From Dreams to Screams featured works that commented on the Stolen Generations and environmental and political concerns that affected Aboriginal people at that time.

Kevin’s commitment to his community is very strong. He is an accomplished mural artist having worked on over twenty different murals in the Wollongong and greater Sydney region.”

Group exhibitions include law week exhibition (2006), NSW Parliament House; Reconciliation Ready or Not (2003), Wollongong City Gallery; Pallingjang Saltwater exhibitions (1997, 1999, 2002), Wollongong City Gallery and national tour; Federation V’s Eternity (2001), Boomali Aboriginal Artists co-op Annandale (War Cry Aboriginal expo 2000 (2000), Homebush Bay (Sydney Olympic Games).”

Kevin has received many art awards and awards in recognition of his services to his community. In 2004 he was the recipient of Wollongong City Council’s NADCC Award presented in recognition of his contribution to public arts within the local government area. Kevin is still working in the area of community arts and group shows and says that “like many other Indigenous artists, the work that I produce comes from the heart. My artworks contain personal issues such as the Stolen Generations and are created with a lot of my own emotions that I transfer onto canvas.”

His work is held in numerous collections including Wollongong City Gallery, Wollongong & Monash Universities and the Australian Museum, Sydney.”

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Kevin Butler was born in 1962 at Nambucca Heads, NSW and is from the Gumbainggir people. As a child, he was always drawing but did not begin to paint until 1989. A member of the Stolen Generations, Kevin found that painting was his way of getting in touch with his Aboriginal heritage. Removed from his birth mother at the age of two weeks and then raised by a non-Aboriginal family in Sydney, at the age of 16 he left home and moved to Menangle, a rural community on the outskirts of Sydney.

In 1990 he moved to Wollongong and began his career as an artist and his first exhibition was later that same year, when he participated in a group show, Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow at the Sydney Opera House.

Since 1990 Kevin has participated in over 25 group exhibitions including the 2006 Parliament of NSW Indigenous Art Prize, in which he was a finalist. It was from the exhibition Unjustified at the Project Centre for Contemporary Art in Wollongong in 1995 that Butler sold his first work to an art institution, when Wollongong City Gallery purchased Assimilation. Assimilation was Kevin’s comment on being one of the Stolen Children and he gave Lorena Allam, the Media Officer for the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission’s ‘National Inquiry into the Forced Removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families’, permission to use the image as the Inquiry’s poster. The Australian Museum, also impressed by the work, created a three-dimensional walk-through version of it for the Indigenous Australians exhibition in 1997.

In 1996 Kevin was the Artist In Residence at Wollongong City Gallery, and his culminating solo exhibition, 60,208 From Dreams to Screams featured works that commented on the Stolen Generations and environmental and political concerns that affected Aboriginal people at that time.

Kevin’s commitment to his community is very strong. He is an accomplished mural artist having worked on over twenty different murals in the Wollongong and greater Sydney region.”

Group exhibitions include law week exhibition (2006), NSW Parliament House; Reconciliation Ready or Not (2003), Wollongong City Gallery; Pallingjang Saltwater exhibitions (1997, 1999, 2002), Wollongong City Gallery and national tour; Federation V’s Eternity (2001), Boomali Aboriginal Artists co-op Annandale (War Cry Aboriginal expo 2000 (2000), Homebush Bay (Sydney Olympic Games).”

Kevin has received many art awards and awards in recognition of his services to his community. In 2004 he was the recipient of Wollongong City Council’s NADCC Award presented in recognition of his contribution to public arts within the local government area. Kevin is still working in the area of community arts and group shows and says that “like many other Indigenous artists, the work that I produce comes from the heart. My artworks contain personal issues such as the Stolen Generations and are created with a lot of my own emotions that I transfer onto canvas.”

His work is held in numerous collections including Wollongong City Gallery, Wollongong & Monash Universities and the Australian Museum, Sydney.”

Kevin has received many art awards and awards in recognition of his services to his community. In 2004 he was the recipient of Wollongong City Council’s NAIDOC Award presented in recognition of his contribution to public arts within the local government area.
Garry Jones, n. d., acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 cm

Garry Jones was born in Sydney in 1964 and raised in Green Valley in Sydney’s South Western suburbs. Through his mother he is of Gamilaroi and Ngemba heritage. His father was of family from Eastwoods and Cowan, Sydney and his mother the daughter of a ‘worker’ and screen printer with the Mount Druitt-based community arts organisation Garage Graphix, in the late 1980's. After dropping out of school early Garry went on to complete undergraduate and postgraduate studies in architecture at the University of NSW. After settling in Sydney in 1989 he studied sculpture at the University of Wollongong before completing the Bachelor of Arts (Visual) Honours at the Australian National University (ANU) in 2003. He is currently enrolled at ANU in the Doctor of Philosophy in Visual Arts program.

Garry's practice to date has attempted to engage issues of identity and belonging, and personal experiences of discrimination, but it is honesty, self-exploration and awareness-building that motivates and guides his practice.

Garry's work in Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 is a playful exploration of notions of (dis)connections to place — physically and culturally, in both time and space. Referencing the work of the Gallery in Wollongong, he questions: “In the presence of the Gallery and the work of the artists, what do we legitimately forge new and authentic forms of cultural connectedness in Country we know not to be ours by rite?”

Garry’s art work Here I Lie was hung in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in 2000, and that same year he won the Monash Paper section of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory. He was subsequently acquitted by the Gallery in 2002 of his work Bound I, II, III and IV, and was subsequently acquitted of his work Drawn and Quartered in 2007.

Tess Allas

This is an edited version of the artist’s entry on the Dictionary of Australian Artists Online with additional text by Garry Jones.
Valerie Law was born in Walgett NSW 1965, and is a Gamilaroi woman who has lived on the South Coast since moving to the Illawarra, Dharawal Country, around 20 years ago. Val was fostered at a young age and did not live at Walgett but still considers herself to be a Gamilaroi woman. “In my heart I feel a sense of belonging to both the Gamilaroi and Dharawal language groups in which I have worked as a practicing emerging artist for fifteen years.”

Val’s artistic career began in 1995 when she exhibited in Unjustified, a local NAIDOC group exhibition at the Project Centre for Contemporary Art, Wollongong. The following year she exhibited again in Project’s NAIDOC exhibition, Looking into Aftertime. Both of these exhibitions were curated by Tess Allas.

Val’s Woven Stories series of works are representations of internal landscapes, feelings, and her sense of light and space. “I have tried to create a sense of the woven organic, which to me are symbolic representations of my own sense of interwoven experiences throughout my life’s journey.”

Val’s recent work is influenced by the Portuguese-born French abstract painter, Maria Elena Vieira da Silva (1908-1992), after viewing images of her work in an art book. “I like her use of light and tonal variations as though her work is illuminated from within the work itself. I also like watercolour works that appear to be illuminated and shimmer as though the light is radiating through and within the work. I love this sense of light and freedom of space and have tried to communicate this in my own works.”

Val has been a consistent community arts worker in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven districts of NSW. She has conducted workshops at the Wollongong City Gallery, taught art at the NSW TAFE Ilawara Institute, and worked on numerous community art projects including the Shellharbour Foreshore Walkway and a mosaic at the Ribbonwood Neighbourhood Centre’s Youth Courtyard in Dapto. In 2004 she received recognition from Wollongong City Council for her contribution to NAIDOC Week. Val is still working in the area of community arts from her home base in Wollongong and has stated that this dedication to lifelong learning in creative arts, visual arts and adult education is strengthened through her practical experience, academic studies and facilitation of adult and further education within the visual arts industry.

Val Law

Clive Freeman

Reggie Ryan was born in Taree in 1969. He is part of the Biripi people and was taken to Bomaderry as a very young boy where he still lives today. Although Reggie was not born on the South Coast he is a recognised member of the South Coast Aboriginal Community in Nowra.

Reggie expresses emotions through his work and paints his family and stories which he relates to. He is inspired by the environment and often depicts animals which inhabit different areas. Although his preferred medium is acrylic on canvas, Reggie has successfully experimented with sculpture and print making.

Reggie is motivated to produce art to express who he is, and to reveal the process of the creation of his identity.

Reggie speaks of how his work relates to others, and how through the relationship others have with his work, he is inspired to continue to tell his story.

Reggie has studied Certificate II in Aboriginal Art & Cultural Practice at Bomaderry TAFE and has works displayed at this institution. Reggie has been a part of all the Pallingjang exhibitions and his works can be seen at Boolang Boolang Aboriginal Art & Cultural Centre, Gerringong, Lady Denman Huskisson Aboriginal Art Shop and the Aboriginal Medical Centre in Nowra.

Clive Freeman
In November of 2008 I was invited by Louise Brand to take on a curatorial position in the Wollongong City Gallery’s Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 project. Whilst studying at the College of Fine Arts (COFA), University of New South Wales (UNSW), I met Tess Allas, who is currently the Indigenous Research Officer for the Storylines Project with the DAAO (Dictionary of Australian Artists Online). Tess became a mentor and then a close friend who ultimately referred me for this position.

In mid 2008 whilst completing my Bachelor of Art Education with a Fine Art Major in Printmaking at COFA, UNSW, I traveled to Papunya in the Northern Territory for a Professional Teaching Experience at Papunya School. While in Papunya I also assisted with printmaking workshops for the artists of the Papunya Tjupi Art Centre. This experience, facilitated by COFA gave me confidence in working with established artists whilst guiding those artists who were new to printmaking. It was this experience and the lessons learnt working in a group dynamic of a close-knit community that I brought to the Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 project.

I was eager to participate in the Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 project because it would allow me to gain experience in the gallery sector and to expand my knowledge and skill in the printmaking medium. As a member of the Wiradjuri nation, I recognized Pallingjang as a way to engage with Indigenous artists from other regions, specifically the South Coast.

Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 kicked off in January 2009 with an induction weekend at the picturesque and artistically charged Riverside property of the Arthur Boyd Trust at Bundanon, NSW, near Nowra. Bundanon provided the ideal location, due to its proximity to the artists, as well as the facilities available. The generosity of the Bundanon Trust staff allowed artists and the curatorial team to rekindle established working relationships and to build new ones. Listening to the artists and curators talk about themselves and their experience in the arts and their communities, I realized just how much substance the project had in its goal to represent a diverse range of cultural and personal identities.

At Bundanon, artists and curators were organised into groups that would work closely throughout the process of building ideas and conducting workshops in order to create works for the exhibition. Originally, I was assigned to a group of artists which consisted of Steven Russell, Phyllis Stewart, Mally Smart, Lila Lawrence, Jodi Stewart and Julie Freeman. Over the course of the project I also had the honour of working closely with Deb Callaghan, another member of the curatorial team. Deb generously shared her region-specific knowledge and built on her pre-existing relationships to aid in the project’s development and cohesion of the group.

An integral element of the project has been the artists’ skills development gained in the printmaking workshops. Tom Goulder, who introduced the printmaking phase at Bundanon, then hosted the printmaking workshops at his studio, Duckprint Fine Art Studios, in the subsequent months. Intensive group workshops under Tom’s tuition achieved highly considered and refined works from all artists across the media of woodcut, screen print and etching. Instruction in printmaking provides an extra dimension to the artists’ available skill set, unlocking an additional method for expressing their thematic concerns.
Broadly, the stylistic devices and motifs used in Indigenous paintings lend themselves to the process of relief printing due to their two-dimensional and block colour format. This collection of prints also makes references to weaving patterns, a medium with which many of the artists I worked with are familiar. The ease with which these artists translated their style into the visual language of printmaking was impressive, despite the great effort required to develop these highly technical skills. When the artists revisited Duckprint Fine Art Studios several months later, they achieved much quicker results due to the proficiency gained in the first workshop and the time available in the interim to refine their body of works.

The Pallingjang exhibition has become something of a tradition, combining the works of both established and emerging artists. The project serves as a point around which Indigenous artists in the region can gather to enhance their skills, share stories and experiences, and generally enjoy each other’s company. The artists all engender a willingness to share their knowledge and experiences for the cultural awareness and artistic enrichment of current and future generations. This motivation to convey their histories and experiences to the Aboriginal and wider community is shared by all artists exhibiting in Pallingjang. Saltwater 2009. The artists that I have worked with all hold formal art qualifications, which they draw from on a daily basis as active community members contributing to cooperatives and organisations within their region.

The time spent on this project has given me the opportunity to immerse myself in the culture of the Indigenous people of a neighbouring region to my own. It is moving to see that the culture of openness I admire in my community of Tumut in the Snowy Mountains region of NSW is also alive in the people I have come to know through this project.

Jessica Bulger
Indigenous Curator, South Coast area

This page
Garry Jones and Val Law at Bundanon, 31/1/09, LB
Julie Freeman and Phylis Stewart at Bundanon, 31/1/09, CF

Opposite page
Djon Mundine, Indigenous Curator, Contemporary Art, Campbelltown Arts Centre, with Kevin Butler, Val Law, Amy Dunham, Lornella Paradise, Jessica Bulger and Cheryl Davison at Bundanon, 21/6/09, LB
Pallingjang artists and curatorial team with Clarence Skochew, Aboriginal Education Officer, Sydney Botanic Gardens, 31/4/09, LB

Following pages
Tom Goulder with Lib Lawence, Deb Callaghan, Steven Russell and Jessica Bulger at Duckprint Fine Art Studios, Port Kembla, 11/4/09
Master Printmaker
Tom Goulder
I was born in Goondiwindi, Queensland, and am a descendant of the Kamilaroi Nation. I now reside in the Illawarra where I have lived and worked for 23 years. Through my positions, I have gained invaluable experience working with Aboriginal organisations and the community.

I have been a practicing artist since 1995 and have completed my Advanced Diploma in Visual Arts. I have exhibited locally, nationally and internationally, and have had a series of solo exhibitions. My work is influenced by my personal experiences and stories, and my use of traditional art forms and materials. I have worked with a variety of media, from paintings to prints, and my work is informed by my cultural background.

During the Pallingjang project, I have been able to share my experiences and insights with other artists, and this has been instrumental in helping me to evaluate my own feelings about my work and motivation. I have also made lasting and constructive friendships with the other artists involved.

Deb Callaghan
Trainee Indigenous Curator, Wollongong and South Coast area

South Coast Artists Trainee Curator

Deb Callaghan

Sitting at sunrise, 2009, acrylic on linen, 61 x 61 cm

Steven Russell, former curator, Wollongong and South Coast area

The project Pallingjang provided me with the opportunity to work with a variety of artists, and this has been instrumental in helping me to understand the richness and diversity of Aboriginal culture. The artists involved in the project have shared their experiences and insights, and this has helped me to develop a deeper understanding of the role of the curator in the context of Indigenous art.
Julie Freeman was born in Sydney in 1957. She comes from a long line of La Perouse artists, shellworkers, story tellers and tool makers on her mother's side. Her father is a Wreck Bay fisherman of the old tradition.

The Simms Ardler family has been a part of the South Coast cultural memory for over 150 years. Her mother sold her family arts at the “Loop” at La Perouse Botany Bay as did her mother, Julie’s Grandmother.

Her mother is Gorawarl, of Kernel Botany Bay born on the reserve at La Perouse. Her father is Jerrawongarla, born on the Coolangatta Mountain (Near Nowra) with his siblings, mother and grandmother. They were removed to the Rosebery Park Aboriginal reserve and soon joined an illegal fishing community at Summercloud Cove Wreck Bay.

She has lived on the Wreck Bay Aboriginal reserve all of her life. She has never been dispossessed of her home and is proud to be part of the whole South Coast Yuin Nation. Julie has an unbroken connection with her country, people and tradition.

Julie gains inspiration from storytelling and expresses her art as another dimension of interpretation. It’s how everything continues through culture and maintains and strengthens connections to Country: “It’s my life, it’s in the blood, it’s family and it’s forever.”

Julie studied Aboriginal Art and Cultural Practices at Nowra TAFE and has exhibited in all past Pallingjang exhibitions, and in Sydney and the Illawarra.

Clive Freeman
Lila Lawrence was born on 2 July, 1940 in Quirindi, NSW, where she attended school. She is a member of the Kamilaroi nation and a respected elder.

Lila is a proficient artist, working in mediums such as painting, screen-printing, and ceramics, and also weaving. This year she has expanded her skills base and ... through her exploration of printmaking, specifically woodcut and etching, at Duckprint Fine Art Studios in Port Kembla.

Lila's artwork deals with animals, particularly freshwater turtles and the landscape of the South Coast as well as her family's country around Tamworth. Her work ... and her hands to allude to fond memories shared with her brother as a youngster playing in the creek near Quirindi.

Lila is accomplished and collected in the mediums of painting, ceramics and weaving, yet she insists humbly that she is still learning. Lila was influenced by her parents and, by her involvement and her work with students in workshops and at West Wollongong TAFE in 1998, she had graduated from her Advanced Diploma in Visual Arts by 2006.

Lila is a co-founding artist member of Boolarng-Nangamai Aboriginal Art and Cultural Studio in Gerringong, on the NSW South Coast. Lila became a Director on the Boolarng Nangamai Aboriginal Corporation Board in 2007.

At Boolarng Nangamai, Lila generously shares her knowledge of Aboriginal Cultural practices with school students, adults and teachers during workshops held at the studio.

In 2006, as a member of Boolarng Nangamai, Lila's NAIDOC exhibition at Wollongong City Gallery was one of the events held to celebrate the Naidoc Week theme ‘Reflections of our history: true resilience’. The exhibition was a part of a series of events held at the Wollongong City Gallery in which Illawarra Aboriginal artists were invited to reflect on their relationship with the environment and to explore the idea of place and identity. Lila has also exhibited at the Karoona Gallery, West Wollongong TAFE in 2004 and at the 2005 and 2006 Royal Easter Show.
Steven Russell is a Bidjigal man of the Dharawal nation, born at La Perouse in 1957.

Steve’s skills are evident in his drawing, painting, weaving and artifact making. He has recently harnessed his attention to detail in printmaking at Duckprint Fine Art Studios, Port Kembla. Steve’s woodcuts in particular exhibit an intrinsic ability for the medium.

Steve is the son of accomplished artist and shell worker Esme Timbery, and the grandson of fisherman Hubert Timbery who was born under the fig tree at Figtree. The Timbergys are a well-known Indigenous family in South Coast history. Steve’s great uncle Joe Timbery was a champion boomerang thrower and Steve’s great great uncle, also named Joe Timbery, was the chief of the Five Islands.

Through his art Steve explores stories related to his time growing up at La Perouse and in the Illawarra region. Steve’s interest in art has been nurtured by his large family network. He is influenced by the prominent figures in his ancestry and their successes serve as encouragement for his own endeavors.

His artwork is driven by a passion to communicate not only his people’s ancestral stories but also his own personal history and relationship with the land surrounding Botany Bay and the South Coast.

Having a natural affinity for the arts, particularly drawing, during his youth was essential in Steve’s artistic development. He went on to study Certificates I, II, III and IV in Aboriginal Art and Cultural Practices from 2000-2004 at West Wollongong TAFE, and completed an Advanced Diploma in Visual Arts in 2005-2006.

Steve is a co-founding artist of Boolaang Nangamai Aboriginal Art and Culture Studio in Gerringong where he has held the position of Chairperson of the Board of Directors of Boolaang Nangamai Aboriginal Corporation. Through the studio he has continued his art practice of painting, drawing and weaving and also draws upon his knowledge and experience in his recent role as a cultural awareness teacher.

Steve has been a prominent figure in the Aboriginal Art community on the South Coast, his most recent achievement being a series of objects made for the permanent Cadigal exhibition at the Museum of Sydney. In recent years, he has exhibited in the University of Wollongong Long Gallery (2003) and at the Wollongong City Gallery in Pallingjang Saltwater I and II (2000 and 2002) as well as appearing in the Parliament of NSW Indigenous Art Prize in 2006 and 2007. He also exhibited in Paris and worked on a prominent public art piece for Urban Art Projects at Bondi Beach in 2007.

Jessica Bulger

Steven Russell, Hauling, 2009, woodcut, 45.5 x 60.6cm

Steven Russell, Fishing at Sunrise, 2009, acrylic on linen, 59.5 x 96cm
Marilyn (Mally) Smart, now residing in picturesque Sanctuary Point, was born in Nowra in 1965 and belongs to the Yuin nation of the South Coast region. Across her career she has experimented with a range of art mediums including painting, printmaking, weaving, sculpture, shell work, wood burning, batiking and jewellery making.

Mally cites her parents and siblings and her partner Tony as a source of inspiration - they are her supporters and critics. Mally's art practice and involvement in the art community reinforces the importance of family relationships and networks in indigenous communities.

Mally's work draws on personal experience and memories living in saltwater country on the South Coast. Her subject matter also includes landscapes and animals, particularly the cockatoo in this exhibition. Her painting is ... translated this skill to highly refined woodcuts, developed recently at Duck Print Fine Art Studio, Port Kembla.

Mally's motivation comes from the enjoyment she finds in producing art, and having an outlet to communicate her personal stories and connection to her family's country. Mally has formal qualifications in Aboriginal Art and Cultural Practices from Nowra TAFE, yet she is also self-taught as a result of many years learning her own knowledge and skills through involvement in the arts on the South Coast.
Jodie Stewart, born in Kiama in 1964 is a Dharawal woman. Her totem is the Umberra (black duck). Her family network spans the Kamilaroi, Dunghutti and Wandandian nations. Jodie currently resides in Gerringong, NSW where she is a practicing artist with strong community involvement.

Her diversity as an artist is evident across the mediums of acrylic painting and artefact making, including recent success with the printmaking techniques of woodcut and etching at Duckprint Fine Art Studios, Port Kembla.

Jodie comes from a large extended family, members of which are spread nationwide, many of whom are artists in their own right. Jodie's artwork is layered with references to her people and stories that have been passed on through many generations.

Thematically, Jodie’s artwork is richly connected to her culture both past and present. Her work reflects on her traditional knowledge such as that of food chains, as well as her own personal memories living on the South Coast. Jodie’s body of work also involves animals of significance to her people, finely rendered in acrylic paint. Printmaking has been a natural extension of these skills for Jodie.

Through her artwork and community involvement, Jodie reinforces the richness of South Coast art and culture. She aims to illustrate the stories that have been passed on to her. She is intent to ‘let people know that we do have a culture and it is still well and alive today’.

Formally, Jodie has received qualifications in Aboriginal Art and Cultural Practices from Bomaderry TAFE, yet is predominantly self-taught due to many years of experimentation in the mediums of painting, printmaking, sculpture and weaving. She has also pursued the study of her people’s History informally.

Jodie is devoted to her community, regularly committing her time to helping Elders with their arts and crafts in the Shoalhaven area. She is also associated with Artists in the Black and Viscopy.

Jodie Stewart has participated in previous Reconciliation exhibitions and her work is in the collection of Wollongong City Gallery. Jodie has also participated in an exhibition at Sydney Parliament House.

Jessica Bulger

Jodie Stewart, Pipi Time at Seven Mile Beach, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 17.5 x 39cm, Collection Sandy Roberts

Jodie Stewart, Releasing the Turtles, 2009, woodcut, 45 x 60.5cm
Phyllis Stewart resides in Gerringong and was born in Berry on 29 October 1954 and belongs to the Dharawal nation. She has many Elders, Family and friends who have worked hard all their lives helping the local Aboriginal communities in Health, Education, the Justice system and other areas of the community. Phyllis has great respect for all people she has associated with.

Throughout Phyllis’ career she has had experience with art mediums including weaving, painting, shell work, print making, jewellery making and sculpture. She is a Master Weaver at Boolarng Nangamai Aboriginal Art Studio where she is involved with sharing her skills with the Aboriginal community and the wider community. Her weaving practice involves using native grasses, vines, bark, and nuts from her traditional lands. Her intricate shell work also utilises materials collected from her home country. Phyllis takes great strength from her family in both culture and memories. For Phyllis passing the importance of traditional life down to younger generations is of great significance. Enriching culture throughout the indigenous community on a large scale is a source of motivation for Phyllis in her art practice.

Her family connections are with Armidale, Sydney, South Coast NSW, Nowra and Wreck Bay. Phyllis’ artwork explores memories and landscapes from these regions whilst showcasing her extensive cultural knowledge. Phyllis has been interested in becoming an artist from a young age. Since studying Art and Cultural Practice, she has mastered many different techniques. She is interested in sharing her family history, her country and cultural knowledge. Her aim is to incorporate them into her artwork through various mediums.

Phyllis began her formal art education in 2000 and by 2003 had completed Certificates II - IV in Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Practice at West Wollongong TAFE. In 2004 and 2005 Phyllis further developed her qualifications by taking on a Diploma and an Advanced Diploma in Visual Arts, also completed at West Wollongong TAFE.

Phyllis has since put her training both formal and informal, into practice as a co-founding artist member of Boolarng Nangamai Aboriginal Arts and Culture Studio in Gerringong where she currently holds the position of Treasurer on the Boolarng Nangamai Corporation. At the studio Phyllis is a teacher of weaving (both Traditional and Contemporary style) as well as a Cultural Awareness Educator and Mentor.

Over many years exhibiting in the NSW South Coast and Sydney regions as well as abroad, Phyllis has established herself as recognised and collected artist. Her work is currently in the permanent collections of Wollongong City Gallery, the Maritime Museum and the Museum of Sydney. Most recently she has participated in exhibitions with the Broken Hill Regional Gallery and Marianne Newman Gallery, Crows Nest (2009). In 2001 her work was included in an exhibition titled, Old Traditions New Ways: South Coast Weavers at the Long Gallery, University of Wollongong. Following that Phyllis was part of Pallingjang Saltwater III at Wollongong City Gallery in 2002, and in 2003 her shell work was exhibited with the Gallery Menagerie exhibition, Wollongong City Gallery. In 2006 Phyllis was a finalist in the Parliament of NSW Art Prize and in 2007 she contributed to The Meringong Environment Sculpture Project at the Mt Keira Summit. In conjunction with Boolarng Nangamai Phyllis has also exhibited in Paris, France.

Deb Callaghan

Phyllis Stewart, Bean Pickin’ Days, 2009, woodcut, 91 x 60.5cm

Phyllis Stewart, High Heel Slippers, 2009, shellwork, 10 x 6 x 6cm - KR
Born in Bega, in 1965, I have lived on the South Coast most of my life. My mother’s families are the Walbanga people from the Eurobodalla and the Ngarigo people in the Snowy Mountains region. My family lived at Wallaga Lake where my grandfather was born. He saw the last traditional ceremony on Wallaga Lake mission in the early parts of the 20th century and died in 1971. My family had then moved to Bomaderry so that we would have better education and opportunities.

In 1982 I completed my school certificate at Nowra High and moved to Sydney to start work at the Chippendale Neighborhood Centre (better know as the Settlement) as a trainee community artist. During my traineeship I completed several art courses at the Tin Sheds, University of Sydney, and commenced a screen-printing course at Ultimo TAFE. When my traineeship finished I returned to Nowra and was employed by Nowra TAFE Aboriginal Education Unit to teach art in pre-vocational courses.

I set up a little back yard t-shirt industry in 1986, and was supplying shops in Sydney and Melbourne. I met Bronwyn Bancroft when visiting her shop at Roseville one day and a couple of weeks later started working for her, painting jewellery and screen-printing. Looking back on those days I now know that Bronwyn was the most influential artist to me at the time. Bronwyn taught me new artistic skills and also prompted me to look at my art and be critical about what I was doing and what purpose my art was serving for the South Coast people and myself.

In 1992 I commenced a fine arts degree at the College of Fine Arts Paddington and was also teaching art part-time at Eora Aboriginal TAFE College. I was only at COFA for a short time and did not complete my studies there, mostly due to not having the support away from my family and at the time thinking it was not relevant to my own Aboriginal arts practice.

I returned to Nowra in 1993 and applied for funding from the Aboriginal arts council to coordinate the Kullilla Aboriginal art exhibition during the International Year of Indigenous People. It was the first of its kind for the South Coast and opened the doors for many Aboriginal artists in the Shoalhaven. Fifteen Aboriginal artists around the Shoalhaven district participated in the show.

World-renowned artist Arthur Boyd had a sneak preview of the show before it was officially opened and invited a group of artists to his studio at Bundanon. These opportunities created meaningful relationships between Aboriginal artists, the broader arts community, art collectors, galleries and the general public. The Shoalhaven district suddenly started to flourish with Aboriginal community arts projects, with the local council and schools, community health, Juvenile Justice and Centrelink commissioning Aboriginal artists to design footpaths, bus sheds, murals and health campaigns for Aboriginal people. I believe that art is a powerful tool that plays a crucial role in building our community’s pride and confidence and reminds us of who we are and where we come from.

I travelled to New Zealand in 1996 on a cultural exchange and spent two weeks at Wanganui, in the Sergeant Gallery with Mori artist, weavers and carvers. On my return to Australia I established the first Fibre and Basket making course within the Illawarra TAFE Institute. I worked with Jim Wallace, a non-Aboriginal person, who was employed to teach Aboriginal art students traditional basket weaving methods in the hope that they would one day be the teachers and this has now become a reality, with many...
Aboriginal people on the South Coast teaching and learning those skills. I was fortunate enough to meet Aboriginal weavers from Gippsland, Victoria, who showed me traditional basket making skills, which I now teach to Aboriginal groups, young and old.

In 1997 I moved to Eden where I continued to teach art and culture to TAFE students. After many years of teaching art skills to Aboriginal students I decided to concentrate on my own work that would reflect on stories from my childhood, dreamtime stories of the South Coast and the Yuin people. I had my first solo exhibition in Bega at the Spiral Gallery in 2000 and gained a great deal of public interest. My work quickly got the attention of private galleries in the area with whom I now have exclusive membership. My fabrics have been collected by the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) and were part of a 2006 NGA new acquisitions exhibition. Right here right now I founded Kari Yalla Aboriginal Artist Cooperative in 2005, the very first Aboriginal arts cooperative on the South Coast, to lift the profile of Aboriginal artists and artists and to give arts development opportunities to regional based Aboriginal artists.

I am currently living in the Eurobodalla where I play an active role in the arts community. I am involved in a range of public art projects and support Aboriginal artists by organising regular exhibitions around the region. I also have my own arts practice and exhibit in private and regional galleries. Mentoring the lower South Coast group has been a great undertaking for me. Each artist comes with immense knowledge and inspiration to the project. They are committed to Pallingang Saltwater 2003 and have pulled together to support each other through many challenges. Beryl Brierley, Georgina Pansons, Loretta Parsley and Alice McKenzie have not surprised me as far as their ability to produce artworks of a high standard and authenticity.

I am privileged to be mentoring the Far South Coast group in the Pallingang project and am looking forward to seeing these artists flourish.

Cheryl Davison
Indigenous Curator, Far South Coast area

Cheryl Davison
Indigenous Curator, Far South Coast area

Loretta Parsley, Universal Dreaming, woodcut, 91 x 49.5cm (working proof)

Alice McKenzie, Turtle Dreaming, 2009, woodcut, 39.5 x 60cm
Beryl Brierley was born at Miller's farm, Central Tilba, in 1932. Beryl came from a family of nine children, with three brothers and five sisters. Beryl's family had lived at Wallaga Lake Mission, her grandfather Robert Andy worked on farms around Tilba Tilba clearing the paddocks and cutting bracken for cow pastures. When Beryl was old enough she would help her father around the farms, milking cows and clearing land.

Beryl’s family camped on the farm properties and she would sit around the campfire listening to her father telling stories about Aboriginal people and culture.

In 1948 Beryl moved to Moruya aged 16, and met her husband Ernie Brierley. Together they had five children - four sons and one daughter. Beryl and Ernie’s three sons are fishermen who have fished around the Eurobodalla all their lives.

In 2002 Beryl joined an Aboriginal art painting course at Moruya TAFE and it was there she discovered an interest in painting. Beryl's paintings depict her life and the lives of her family, and characters from the South Coast, Eurobodalla area. Beryl paints for her own pleasure and is happy to be a part of the Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 project.

Cheryl Davison
Alice McKenzie was born in Woolbrook in the New England Area and is a member of the Narwan nation.

Alice has been painting for more than 30 years and discovered art when she was very young. Alice’s family lived and worked in the bush at Woolbrook, Northern NSW. She remembers her grandfather drawing things in the ashes, things he wanted to teach them like survival in the bush, what animals to catch and where to catch them. Alice's grandfather drew shapes of animals, their paw tracks or where they lived in the trees and burrows. When she was still very young her grandfather moved away from Woolbrook and Alice’s family eventually moved into Guyra township where her father and unhed would paint and draw on paper to sell to people on the street.

Alice first attended school at Burnt Bridge Mission where she had been placed in foster care and remained there until the age of 11. Alice yearned for her family, especially her mother who was then living in Armidale. After being in foster care for many years Alice left Burnt Bridge to travel back to Armidale to find her family. When she found her mother their reunion was short-lived. After spending a year with her mother, a Catholic Priest and nun visited their home one-day and they took Alice away from her family once again. The priest took Alice to live and work at Nazareth House aged care facility in Tamworth. Going into a place like Nazareth House was a very frightening experience for Alice because she had never been in a big place like it before, but she always worked hard and did her duties. One day she ran into an Aboriginal family along the river in Tamworth - they told her where her father was living and so she got into a truck with that family and left Tamworth and Nazareth House to again find her family. She reunited with her sister at Walcha and got a job there to support her sister and children.

Eventually Alice met her husband Ray Kelly, married him, and they raised ten children together. Alice did not take any interest in art until her children had grown up and left home. She moved to Sydney in the mid 90’s and was encouraged by her daughters to attended Eora Aboriginal Art College. It was there she found that she had not forgotten the images and stories that her grandfather had taught her many years before.

Alice's stories tell of happy times and sad times, but her artwork mostly describes the happy times in her life. She is a skilled artist whose work consists of paintings; however through the Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 project Alice has demonstrated great artistic ability when applying her skills to the print medium.

Cheryl Davison
Loretta Parsley was born in Moruya in 1959, the second youngest of nine children, with five brothers and three sisters. Loretta was educated at St Mary’s Convent Moruya High School and later as a primary school teacher at the University of Western Sydney Milperra.

After 29 years in the education system, Loretta and her husband Trevor returned to Loretta’s traditional country. Loretta has always had a strong cultural connection to Walbungja country and has used her Aboriginal heritage to express her art. She paints under the name DAWN which stands for Doing Art With Nature.

Loretta has been painting for six years and is still learning and growing as an artist. She is a member of the Bateman’s Bay and Millhouse Arts and Crafts Group and is well known as an Aboriginal Arts Worker, and has worked for South East Arts Region as an Aboriginal Project Officer. The experience of doing Pallingangen Saltwater 2009 has allowed Loretta to enhance her developing skills and to appreciate other forms of art, particularly printmaking.

Loretta is a contemporary, spiritual artist who paints for a purpose and her art reflects images that are significant to nature. She paints under the name DAWN, which stands for Doing Art With Nature.
Georgina Parsons was born on 26 November 1939, at Hanging Rock, Batemans Bay, in what she described as the Bush Hospital. She was one of nine children. Her mother was Jessie Chapman, who was also born at Hanging Rock, Batemans Bay.

When Georgina was a young girl, she remembered her Uncle, Reggie McLeod, who had a land lease on all of Cullendulla, just north of Batemans Bay. He would travel to Batemans Bay along the beaches and cross the Clyde River on the old punt to attend the Catholic school at Batemans Bay.

When Georgina’s family were camped at the beach, she remembers her and her brothers drawing in the sand. Georgina would draw things she saw at the beach, and her brothers would draw the birds and animals they saw. She would say, “It was a way of life for me at that time.”

Georgina paints stories based on her experiences and those of her family and ancestors. She has painted stories about the Killer whales, which are found at Twofold Bay, Eden, on the Far South Coast of New South Wales. Georgina also paints her personal totem, the Sea Eagle.

Georgina is an important elder in her community and has done extensive work in local schools and libraries, storytelling to children about her culture. She hopes that her stories and paintings will be passed on to the next generation.
Project Team

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voluntary guides.

Map

Project Team

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Project Team
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Amy Dunham - WCG intern

Don Atkinson - Far South Coast artists’ and curators’ assistant

Clarence Slockee - Aboriginal Education Officer, Sydney Botanic Gardens

Iris White - Gudhuga Employment and Training Aboriginal Corporation - Chairperson

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All portrait, art work and landscape photography by Bernie Fischer, unless otherwise stated.

Other photography credits:

LB - Louise Brand
CF - Clive Freeman
TC - Terese Casu
KR - Kelli Ryan (BNAACS)

All artists’ biographies were completed following interviews with the artists by the curators, and with references to the Dictionary of Australian Artists Online. Further information relating to some of the artists can be found at the Dictionary of Australian Artists Online: www.daao.org.au

Kevin Butler
www.daao.org.au/main/read/1306
Gary Jones
Vil Law
www.daao.org.au/main/read/3865
Lisa Lawrence
Steven Russell
Phyllis Stewart
www.daao.org.au/main/read/5931

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Other reference websites include:

www.coomaditchie.org.au
www.bnstudio.com.au