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Urban Dreams

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Saltwater 2009
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Cover image by Bernie Fischer

Steven Russell, Autumn Currents, 2009, woodcut, 61 x 45.5cm
Since 1995 the Pallingang 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.

Pallingang 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.

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

Pallingang 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.

Pallingang 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 Pallingang 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 exploiting 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 a 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 constituted 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, Lesanne Monts, 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 on the South Coast. 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 (Gomilo) 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’ whilst 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. Matt 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 this 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).

“Gerbino 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

A final programming push from the Gallery resulted in some substantial field research and networking ranging geographically from La Perouse to Eden; and the first Pallingjang Saltwater exhibition of Aboriginal artists of the Illawarra 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 “R2E” 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 interstate, interstate and internationally and provided inspiration, revelation and education to a great many people from the Illawarra, 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, 6 September 2009
3. Naomi Horridge, September 2009
4. Tess Alias, email correspondence, 6 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, 2009, 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 Mountain print suite 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 kinship and how the consequent violent actions of one towards the other created the skyline of what Captain Cook re-named Purn House Mountain. Dithol and Little Dithol formed part of the imposing escarpments and mountains of the Great Dividing Range; these along with the rugged pallingiang coast line, sculpted by the tempestuous southern ocean, frame the South Coast. This country takes in the traditional homeland of the Tharawal (Gharawal), Wodi Wodi, Wandaland, Walangga and Dyringina of the Yuin, and Jenityah, and in recent times 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 en route between Sydney and Hobart, and later Melbourne, as the city was establishing, 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 1799 alone - while ancient cedar and eucalypt forests were also targeted and laid to waste as sawmills were established. Pastoralism was initiated in 1815 with Charles Throsby’s farm in Wolliangong, 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 uninvited advances were made, communities took arms and defended their country, resulting in many known and unknown violent clashes and reprisals. Thrustly, perhaps ironically, protested against the blanket hunting ban and uninvited violence toward the local community (specifically the people working on his property) stating that “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…” However, conflict was inevitable and traditional Aboriginal cultural practices were pushed to the limits as the issuing of land grants moved southwards, 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 1831 on the whaler Cornelius O’Brien having his “several” boats manned “chiefly by native lads”. The cosmopolitan combination of traditional culture and the community’s newly applied skills is illustrated in the revered work of Mickey of Ulladulla (c. 1830’s-1891). These unique 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 (1902-c. 1970), locally known as Uncle Bookel, a whaler, lumberjack and renowned fisherman from Two...
Foil Bay, At Wreck Bay, Thomas painted his own unique experiences and lifestyle, more than half a century after Ulladulla. From his home, high on the sand dunes, he would look down over Summer Cloud Bay recalling and documenting the passing whaling and clipper ships, then travel into Huskisson to sell his works to an appreciative local audience. Ulladulla’s street art and documentary tradition can be seen as the tip of a seashell, spiralling outward to encompass successive South Coast artists, many highlighted in this and past Pallingjang exhibitions. The importance of the works featured in this exhibition lies in the element of storytelling, they are personal windows into the unique cultural life of the South Coast, as acknowledged by Julie Freeman, “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 the stories that reflect a very special idea of the South Coast.”

Capturing the region’s stories defines the Pallingjang project. Since its inception in 1997, under the ongoing auspices of Wollongong City Gallery, Pallingjang has sponsored a new style of an artist’s collective, drawing the region’s diverse artists together from up and down the coast. Working beyond the parameters of an exhibition, Pallingjang artists have engaged in a number of print making workshops in 2009. For many it has been the first time they have been given the opportunity to work with this medium. The introduction of print making has had an enormous impact on Indigenous art making communities throughout Australia, including the urban setting of the Eora Centre, the remote print making studio at Yirrkala in east Arnhem Land, the numerous workshops conducted throughout the desert and the established movement of Torres Strait Islander print makers on the islands and in Cairns. Print making for some Indigenous artists is primary practice, however for many it has become a way of translating their existing practice (predominantly painting) to a new medium and having successful results feed back into their primary practice.

The minimal painting style that identifies the established practice of Julie Freeman lends itself to the reduction of print making. Her traditional knowledge of sacred sites and ancestral grounds is represented with clean and concentrated imagery, a skill gained from years of experience and an intimate connection with these places and her heritage. This is exemplified in Freeman’s latest suite of dual-toned prints depicting culturally significant South Coast mountains. Similarly, the work of Mally Smart accesses this knowledge, with subjects such as Wurraw, or the black cockatoo, illustrated as a reminder to the traditional custodians of the country and their ongoing presence and connection.

Working within the genre of reduction, Jodie Stewart’s embossed woodcut with chine collé, Wandering Babies 2009, like many of her paintings, and cultural land management. The element of the embossed relief forces us to re-engage with her subject. Akin to a “should know about and learn about is their culture. Because it’s still alive and always will be alive. It’ll never die.”

Jones himself). This homage to Ulladulla and the use of his imagery to re-imagine is testament to his legacy and its permutations within contemporary culture. In constructing these new “future” spaces Jones is reminding us of our past, our present and what changes in our reality. 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 read their country; the flowering black-wattle signalised when the blackfish were running, when the sea turned rough with the north-east wind it was time to harvest mullet. Adopting age-old fishing techniques used on canoes, South Coasters soon were catching fishing boats and working nets to establish a thriving fishing industry, like that at Wreck Bay from the late 1800s to the 1970s. Although fishing and hunting has always been about survival, it became an imperative, supplementing the meagre rations and supplies issued by the Aboriginal Protection Board under the assimilation policy. The collaborative printmaking by sisters Lorraine Brown and zalegue Thomas addresses this ancestral connection to fish and traditional fishing skills that has been passed down for generations, as also is disputed under Australian law. Around the country, sea rights are increasingly being recognised as an integral part of land rights, following the recent landmark High Court ruing where the sea, the Blue Mud Bay region, the first time in Australia’s history that sea rights have been issued. This ancestral connection and ongoing Indigenous responsibility to country, both land and sea, is celebrated in Kevin Butler’s painting Ochre dolphin - Earth by sea.

In the woodcut prints by Steven Russell’s prints (and paintings) feature the distinctive imagery of running mullet hedged against the shores, skills he inherited from his fisherman grandfather Herbert Timbery. Regge Ryan’s woodcut with chine collé of “dicker spot” cusps on the rich local country, showing the important meeting sites where crab is hunted for bait amongst the mangrove. The importance of family kinship and memory, which preserves knowledge of fishing sites and other age-old cultural activities, is illustrated in the works of both Ula Lawrence and Loretta Parry. Lawrence creates images of growing up in her family’s country near Tamworth, employing age-old hand-stands, like those found on rock art walls throughout Australia to evoke the past. Parsley uses the ancestral figure of the emu, in Emu dance signifying the family unity and the important role each parent has within the nurturing of families. They work collectively, female emus lay the eggs, and are relevic of inculcating and rearing their young by the male. Parsley’s strong graphic background elements show her successful application and engagement with this medium.

Georgina Parsons, known locally as Aunty Coop, recognises the ancestral sea eagles as her personal totem, ‘and she the great Murray artist Penie Mundawalawala (c. 1936-2002). Her recent woodcut print Lost Bugain features the sea eagle that had gone over her country. Parsons carries the knowledge told to her by her grandfather Dan Parsons, who like so many of his generation worked as a whaler at Two Foil Bay. She describes this sea eagle as “one of the only things in our upbringing of stories, folklore and family stories from my memory. Together they help define who I am. It’s important that these stories are told, keep us in touch with our Aboriginal culture and help pass on this heritage to newer 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
diptych floral print by Beryl Brierley. The old fashioned flowers and paper daisies Brierley creates appear pressed and flattened, reminding us of old memories from the pages of a photo album. Brierley’s family lived at the Wollagga 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 or threads to create a whole sense of self. Her work, like that of her peer Regina Pilawuk Wilson OAM, 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 it 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 aboriginal and cultural activity of the South Coast. Cultural activity in the region is growing and ever-present. In 2006 Blamanga 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 continuation 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, p56-562

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 Wurundjeri-Woiwoi 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 about my culture and connection to country, and I 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 is threatened by an ever-increasing divide. I have dedicated my life to improving Aboriginal knowledge systems and continue to work hard on these issues.

As a curator I enjoy assisting others branch out and explore different artistic mediums and styles. I have been involved in all aspects of the Pallingjang project and feel privileged to be a part of an exciting project. I am honored to be a part of this exciting project, which is 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

Clive Freeman
Indigenous Curator, Wollongong/Nowra area

Val Law, Woven Stories, 2009, Aquatint, 32.5 x 34.5cm
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 Tyers 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 Nan. 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 Brown and Narelle Thomas have worked on a vast number of community events including the Southside Festival Lake Walk event, the Shellharbour Kid’s 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 Woolungah, Belmore Basin Wollongong (with Michael Keighney), Shellharbour War memorial and Romanti Chavez Park pathway, Ribbonwood Centre Dapto wall (rainbow serpent painted and mosaic mural), Balmoral Basin outdoor cafe (Blue Dreaming mural), Cringilla Park Community Bread Oven (Bush Tuckerer mural), Kembla Park (Community 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 Park; and at a variety of cafes and for special events.

Clive Freeman
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 ‘Native 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; Pailungu Saltwater exhibitions (1997, 1999, 2002), Wollongong City Gallery and national tour, Federation v Eternity (2001), Boomali Aboriginal Artists co-op Amundale (Winsa War Cry Aboriginal expo 2001 (2002), 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 NAIDOC 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.
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Tessa Allas
Dictionary of Australian Artists Online
www.daao.org.au/legal/au
www.daao.org.au/main/read/1306
with additional text by Clive Freeman
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 descent. His mother’s family are Eastwood’s and Crawford’s from Brawarinta in North Western NSW. For over a decade now, Wollongong has been his home. Garry’s uncle, the well-known artist and cartoonist, Danny Eastwood, guided him from an early age but he did not begin seriously to create work until he started working as a community arts worker and screen printer with the Mount Druitt-based community arts organisation Garage Graphics, in the late 1980s.

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 Wollongong in the mid 1990’s 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 Pallingang 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 late 19th Century South Coast Aboriginal artist Micoley of Ulladulla, the question is posed: in the face of historic and ongoing social and cultural dispossession and displacement, how do we legimately forge new and authentic forms of cultural connectedness in Country we know not to be ours by right?*

Garry’s artwork 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 Works on Paper section of the National Indigenous Heritage Art Award in Canberra with his work Trendy 1. In 2002 his work Bound 1, 2, 3 and 4 was included in Wollongong City Gallery’s Pallingang Saltwater I and was subsequently acquired by the Gallery. In 2007 he was a finalist in the Parliament of NSW Indigenous Art Prize with his work Drawn and Quartered.

Tess Allas

Garry Jones, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 cm
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 works have been included in all Pallingjang exhibitions and have been purchased by Wollongong City Gallery and the University of Wollongong. She is an exhibiting artist-member of the Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative.

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 completed an undergraduate course in Creative Arts at the University of Wollongong, majoring in Visual Arts in 2004 and was included in the Faculty of Creative Arts Dean’s Merit List in 2003. In 2006 she completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Vocational and Workplace Learning at the University of Technology, Sydney.

Clive Freeman
Reggie Ryan

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 the South Coast in his work. 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 creating 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 Boolarng Nangamai Aboriginal Art & Culture Studio, Gerringong, Lady Denman Huskisson Aboriginal Art Shop and the Aboriginal Medical Centre in Nowra.

Reggie Ryan, Shark, 2009, etching, chine collé, 24.5 x 33cm

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 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 travelled to Papunya in the Northern Territory to conduct a printmaking workshop. 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 recognised Pallingjang as a way to engage with Indigenous artists from other regions, specifically the South Coast.

The project kicked off in January 2009 with an induction weekend at the picturesque and artistically charged Riversdale 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 the project had 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 project. This pre-existing knowledge and the development of the project’s skill development and cohesion of the artists’ skills development.

An integral element of the project has been the pre-existing relationships that the artists have with each other. This was part of the pre-existing relationships that the artists have with each other. This was part of the project’s development and cohesion of the artists’ skills development. The project’s development and cohesion of the artists’ skills development.

Julie Freeman, Mirumbooka, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 101.5cm

South Coast Artists Curator

Jessica Bulger

Julie Freeman, Mirumbooka, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 101.5cm
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 worked with and is 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 work.

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
Master Printmaker
Tom Goulder
I was born in Goondiwindi Queensland and I am a descendant of the Kamilaroi Nation. I now reside in the Illawarra where I have lived and worked for 23 years. In 2005 I became a founding artist of Boolang Boolang Aboriginal Art and Cultural Studio (SNAACS) where I currently work as an Aboriginal Arts Development Officer. In 2007 I become a Director of the Boolang Boolang Aboriginal Corporation. Through these positions I enjoy working with the community to help strengthen Aboriginal culture.

I have been a practising artist since 1995 and have completed my Advanced Diploma in Visual Arts. I have exhibited locally, nationally and internationally, and work in a variety of mediums including painting, printmaking, weaving and paper works. I gain inspiration from the essence of the environment and my peoples’ culture and long history. I express my life experiences, memories and strong connection with the land, and the ocean through my work. I am currently working on a series of prints with Duckprint Fine Art Studios to exhibit with SNAACS artists in Spain 2010.

During the Pallingjang project I have been able to share my experience gained as a practising artist whilst gaining new valuable experiences in the role of a curator.

During the lead-up to the Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 exhibition I was given the opportunity to work with Jessica Bulger, a curator on this project. I also worked in collaboration with South Coast Aboriginal artists, providing support and guidance. Through this experience I gained inspiration and knowledge from them. Each of the artists demonstrated a variety of styles, strength, and use of colour and medium to express their ideas in the production of their artworks. The artists that I was privileged to work with were Julie Freeman, Phyllis Stewart, Steven Russell, Mally Smart, Jodie Stewart and Lila Lawrence.

The experience of being in a close working relationship with the artists has been instrumental in giving me important insights into the character and personal inspiration of each individual artist. This in turn helped me to evaluate my own feelings about my work and motivations, and the connection my work has to my personality, culture and the environment. The profound feeling of connectedness to my arts community has been a highly important motivational experience for me. I have also made lasting and constructive friendships with the South Coast Saltwater people.

Deb Callaghan
Trainee Indigenous Curator, Wollongong and South Coast area
Julie Freeman was born in Sydney in 1957. She comes from a long line of La Perouse artists, shellworkers, storytellers 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.
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, “Turtles in the Stream” and “Change of Pace” 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. Her work has been shown at the National Gallery of Australia, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Campbelltown Art Gallery. In 2006, she graduated from her Advanced Diploma in Visual Arts at West Wollongong TAFE.

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 and exhibitions. In 2006, as a member of Boolarng Nangamai, her work was included in their NAIDOC exhibition at Wollongong City Gallery and another exhibition titled “Art, Cultural Affairs and the Illawarra Elders Social Club”.

Lila is an active and valued elder in the Illawarra community; she is regularly involved with the Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation, Wollongong and the United Koori Elders Social Club.

In 2006, as a member of Boolarng Nangamai, Lila’s work was included in their NAIDOC exhibition at Wollongong City Gallery and another exhibition titled “Art, Cultural Affairs and the Illawarra Elders Social Club.”

Lila’s artwork is 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 Dharrwala 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 Timbery’s 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 2000-2003 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 Pallingang 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
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 has been highly refined, translated from the skill to highly refined photography and printmaking. Mally has been involved in all Pallingjang exhibitions to date and has work in the permanent collection at Wollongong City Gallery. She is also represented in private collections in Australia and overseas.

Jessica Bulger

Mally Smart
Pituri, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 60cm

Mally Smart
Nowra (Black Cockatoo), 2009, woodcut, 75.5 x 56cm
Jodie Stewart, born in Kiama in 1964, is a Dharawal woman. Her totem is the Umbarra (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 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 the Southern area. She is also associated with Artists in the Black and Viscopy. Jodie has participated in the Hedges Island Festival and the Big Bang, and Jodie Stewart has participated in the Like A Body Festival, and has displayed her work at the City Gallery, Sydney and at the 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 Arts and Culture Studio in Gerringong 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 utilizes 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 recognized 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 Monaro Regional Environment Sculpture Project at the Mt Keira Summit. In conjunction with Boolarng Nangamai Phyllis has also exhibited in Paris, France.

Deb Callaghan
Born in Bega, in 1965, I have lived on the South Coast most of my life. My mother’s family are the Walbanga people from the Eurobodalla and the Ngarigo people from the Oberon region. My family lived at Moruya in the Snowy Mountains area for many years before being displaced by the construction of the Snowy Hydroelectric Scheme. My family 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 known as the AC/DC Lane). In 1985 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 backyard t-shirt industry in 1986 and was supplying shops in Sydney and Melbourne. I met Bronwyn Bancroft when visiting her shop at Roselle one day. 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 my 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 shelters, and other projects.

I travelled to New Zealand in 1996 on a cultural exchange and spent two weeks at Whanganui with Moiré artist, weavers and carvers. On my return, I met and married a non-Aboriginal person, who I worked with for over 13 years, supporting me throughout this time. I travelled to Taiwan in 1999 and participated in a basket making course at the National Institute of Aborigines and Indigenous Students. In 2001 I commenced a Basket Weaving course at Illawarra TAFE College, with the support of my family and the local council. I continue to work in the South Coast today and have a studio for my work at Bungendore, near Queanbeyan, where I have been living for the past 13 years.

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. Art is an essential part of our cultural heritage and history and should be celebrated and supported to ensure its survival and legacy.
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 hosted 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 apart of a 2006 NGA new acquisitions exhibition. Right now 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 arts 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 Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 and have pulled together to support each other through many challenges. Beryl Brierley, Georgina Parnios, Loretta Parsley and Alice McKenzie have not surprised me as far as their ability to produce artworks of a high standard and authenticity.

The opportunity to be a mentor in this project was a chance to bring together and demonstrate my years of experience and skills as an Aboriginal artist, art workers, teacher and cultural caretaker.

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

Cheryl Davison
Indigenous Curator, Far South Coast area

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

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 Emile Brierley. Together they had five children - four sons and one daughter. Beryl and Emile’s three sons are fishermen who have fished around the Eurobodalla all their lives.

In 2002 Beryl joined an Aboriginal art course at Moruya TAFE and it was there she discovered an interest in painting. Beryl’s paintings depict her life and the stories told to her by her father. She also draws on familiar landscapes and characters from the South Coast, Eurobodalla area. Beryl paints for her own pleasure and is happy to be a part of the Pallingang 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 uncles 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-90s and was encouraged by her daughters to attend 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 Parramatta Saltwater 2009 print 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 her heritage and says that as an artist, her cultural heritage is expressed through her art.

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 Craft Cooperative 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 Pallingjang Saltwater 2009 has allowed Loretta to enhance her developing skills and to appreciate other forms of art, particularly printmaking.

Loretta’s contemporary, spiritual work portrays a strong bond with her culture and heritage, expressed through the use of traditional symbols and motifs.

Cheryl Davison

Loretta Parsley

Emu Dance, 2009, woodcut, chine collé, 52 x 32.5cm

Loretta Parsley

Mother Earth, 2009, acrylic on paper, 57 x 76cm
Georgina Parsons was born at Hanging Rock, Batemans Bay on 26 November 1939, in what she described as the Bush Hospital. Georgina was one of nine children, with one sister and seven brothers. Her father George Parsons was born in the bush at Eden, on the southern side of Twofold Bay behind where the chip mill is today. 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. Georgina’s family lived with him and helped him haul fish onto the beaches River. Georgina would walk 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 can remember her and her brothers drawing in the sand. Georgina would draw things she saw at the beach and in the surrounding bush. She says “there was always paintings and drawing in my life” - from the time she woke up in the camp in the morning there were always new things to learn and draw.

Georgina paints stories based on the experiences of her own life and her family and ancestors. She has painted stories about the Killer whales; these stories are in relation to her grandfather Dan Parsons, who was a whaler at Twofold Bay, Eden on the Far South Coast of NSW. Georgina also paints her personal totem which is the Sea Eagle.

Georgina is an important elder in the community she lives in, and has done extensive work in the local schools and libraries story-telling to children about South Coast culture. She is a significant member of the Walbanga clan and hopes that what she has shown and taught others about her culture will be passed on to the next generation.

Cheryl Davison

Georgina Parsons, Lost Bugain, woodcut, 60 x 39.5cm

Georgina Parsons, Dreaming, 2009, acrylic on canvas, 52.5 x 82.5cm
Project Manager
Louise Brand

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- 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:
- Steven Russell: www.daao.org.au/main/read/5533

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