

LOOKING AT PAINTING

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ARTISTS: NELL, CARMEN GLYNN-BRAUN, HAYLEY MEGAN FRENCH,
JODY GRAHAM, ROCHELLE HALEY, KIRTIKA KAIN, CLAUDIA
NICHOLSON, JUDY WATSON AND MS N YUNUPINGU

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18 OCT 2021 -
23 JAN 2022

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Published by Casula
Powerhouse Arts Centre,
June 2021

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PRELUDE

Innovative painting is built into the architecture of Casula Powerhouse Arts Centre. The 'Koori Floor' is a public artwork covering 357 square metres of the Centre's Turbine Hall. It was designed by Judy Watson and launched in 1994 to coincide with the transformation of this building from a disused 1950s power station into the Arts Centre we know it as today. The floor was designed based on a watercolour that Watson especially created for this purpose.

The 'Koori Floor' artwork is predominantly orange, red and yellow in colour, it features seven glass light pools, silver swirls, a bronze fishing spear, a witchetty grub and a river, all embedded into the concrete along with the words 'gandangarra', 'tharawal', and 'dharuk'. The reason the floor has such a unique colouring effect is because it translates the inherent nature of the original watercolour where colour blends and bleeds together. To transform her plan into a public artwork, Watson engaged a range of artists and a large team of tradespeople and specialists who brought together their crafts skills to realise Watson's original watercolour through processes and materials relevant for creating a usable and lasting floor. The intention of the floor is to map and acknowledge an Aboriginal presence on this site predating European settlement and the construction and operation of the power station. When we stand on this floor, the industrial building acknowledges that you are on what was, is, and always will be Aboriginal land.

While the artists in *LOOKING AT PAINTING* are not directly responding to the 'Koori Floor,' this artwork is a useful starting point that acknowledges how Casula Powerhouse is a space informed by boundary-pushing art.

We would like to acknowledge the Cabrogal Clan of the Darug Nation who are the traditional custodians of the land that now resides within Liverpool City Council's boundaries. We acknowledge that this land was also accessed by peoples of the Dhurawal and Darug Nations.

Cover image: Nyapanyapa Yunupingu, *untitled*, 2018, 5861-18, paint pen on clear acetate, 86 x 82 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

INTRODUCTION

LOOKING AT PAINTING features contemporary artists who push the boundaries of the painting form. It features a mix of emerging, mid-career and established artists from different geographic and cultural backgrounds. While they each have a unique story to tell, they are unified by an approach to innovative mark-making with painterly materials. The exhibition presents their works together to showcase the range and potential of painting today. We encourage audiences to consider how the material, process or installation elements of these painterly artworks inform how they are experienced and how this reinforces the themes and ideas that the artists are exploring.

The nine artists featured in this exhibition present recent works which give audiences new perspective on how paintings are made, experienced and understood. The artists include Nell, Carmen Glynn-Braun, Hayley Megan French, Jody Graham, Rochelle Haley, Kirtika Kain, Claudia Nicholson, Judy Watson and Nyapanyapa Yunupingu.

Nell presents a multi-panel and multi-layered work which contemplates the nature of relationships. 'Relationships' uses phrases and iconography across layers of paint and material to invoke the feeling of trying to understand something amongst complex layers of words and ideas.

'Intricacies of Identity' by Carmen

Glynn-Braun is composed of five large rectangular hanging paint panels, not supported by any canvas or backing. The panels are mixtures of paint and make-up foundation that recall skin tones of First Nations women to acknowledge colonial devastation.

Hayley Megan French, who grew up in Western Sydney and has lived locally in Old Guildford since 2018, walks around suburbs where she feels a connection and captures them using a polaroid camera. Back in her studio she paints layers over the polaroids using a palette reflecting nostalgic colours of the suburb. It is a process that acknowledges how the memory of a place is filtered through many stages of the mind. For this exhibition, the artist presents work that subjects Guildford, Kununurra and Toowoomba.

Jody Graham takes long walks through the bush, hiking for up to 15 kilometres. 'After the Rain' is an ongoing series of paintings on paper capturing the look of trees after the rain. To create these paintings, she submerges paper in water in the bush, but she also goes a step further by utilising natural and discarded materials found on her walks. Jody exhibits these 'Mark Making Tools' alongside her paintings as an acknowledgement of how the process of making is just as much a part of the artwork as the paintings themselves.

Rochelle Haley presents two works,

'Double Veil' and 'Double Column,' featuring a large scale wall mural and sculptural elements responding to the Hopper Gallery's unique architecture. She has used shape, light, shadow, movement, lines, rhythm and striking colour to expand the physical experience of a painting, and to encourage the audience to consider their own physical movements as a part of how these paintings come into view.

Rope, reed, rocks, hair, tar and gold are materials used by Kirtika Kain in the creation of her paintings. The caste system in India forms the basis of Kain's practice, having been born in Delhi into the Dalit, previously known as the 'untouchables', class. The materials that she uses directly recall and draw attention to the lives and experiences shaped by caste.

Claudia Nicholson presents a series of ink and watercolours paintings, which are the outcomes of recent experimentations with airbrushing. Airbrush is a technique often used in illustrative works but is less so used for the kind of detailed watercolour works Claudia often makes. By combining the different techniques of watercolour and airbrush, Claudia has achieved a unique dimension and dreaminess in her paintings of figures in an exquisite landscape.

Judy Watson is an artist who is inspired to use paint in a way influenced by

her training as a printmaker. The paintings are often initiated by laying the un-stretched canvas on the floor and letting the initial wash of paint reveal marks of what was underneath. She then builds on this print through mark-making. The paintings remain un-stretched, with frayed edges, and hang in the gallery with a unique physicality.

In the early 2010s Ms N Yunupingu pushed her practice to new dimensions through the introduction of clear acetate and paint markers. She had previously built a formidable reputation for bark painting, but due to a shortage of her preferred bark, began using these new materials. As she continued to use markers on acetate, she embraced mark-making in new ways and worked with a range of collaborators working in digital and moving image spaces.

For *LOOKING AT PAINTING*, we are proud to show new and pre-existing works by these nine artists who each have strong ties to Sydney. The texts that make-up this booklet feature extended statements on each of the exhibiting artists, which unpack their approaches to painting and how material, process and/or installation are used in their work to communicate their themes and ideas.

We thank our lenders for enabling us to showcase these innovative artists.

– Ellen Hewitt & Luke Létourneau



NELL

Born in 1975 in Maitland, NSW

For *LOOKING AT PAINTING*, I am presenting a layered and multi-panel artwork titled 'Relationships.'

I made 'Relationships,' about a year ago when most of the world, and most of Australia was in some form of lockdown. I was thinking about all kinds of relationships; personal relationships, family relationships, friendships, relationships with places and spaces. I was thinking about the infinite causes and conditions that arise to make any given relationship exist. And yet, how just one thing can change and then everything changes.

I was also thinking about my role in a particular relationship and trying to understand both its history and its ending. You can see from the title of one of my 2010 paintings 'from mother to daughter – all relationships are endless' that the never-ending nature of relationships has informed my work for many years.

'Relationships' is a large piece of fabric with a print remixing four of my text paintings from 2010. The print was produced in collaboration with the Sydney fashion label 'Romance Was Born', for their 2011 collection titled *The Oracle*. This print has since been used

for wallpaper, T-shirts, and tote bags. The text on the print is a collage of the books of the Old Testament, a long list of musical genres painted in related fonts, with an interconnected web of words pertaining to relationships and people's roles in them.

Sitting on top of this fabric are two framed paintings. While the surface of the framed paintings is quite different from the printed surface, the paintings don't stand out from the fabric. This feeling of consistency comes from the black and white palette and the motifs that occur on both surfaces. As I was examining my role in a particular relationship, both of these paintings start with 'I KNOW'. The large 'I' is very affirmative and takes its aesthetic and conceptual antecedent from Colin McCahon's, the New Zealand modernist painter, rendering of the words 'I AM'. The word 'KNOW' indicates understanding, the 'why' is an examination of the causes and conditions that held the relationship in place and the events that contributed to its ending.

The painting on the left, 'I KNOW why I StAYED' is a dark painting, and yet there are hints of energetic movement.

A golden lightning bolt flashes at the upper right corner, and there is a bubbling of colour dripping upwards from the bottom of the canvas. These anti-gravitational drips are in contrast to the dripping white paint that falls downward from the text above. There's a tension in that. The painting on the right, 'I KNOW why i LEFT', also has a dark ground, but is fizzing with energetic starbursts, a kind of energy that can no longer be contained. I used green dots in the painting to symbolise the fertility of change and growth. They are cut from my most favourite painting pants and affixed to the work. The number 5 loosely references the 5 wounds of Christ.

There is a set of golden eyes above the word 'KNOW' in this painting, a play on 'I' and 'eye' and also to symbolise seeing clearly.

There is one more element in 'Relationships'. A small painting of a ghost, hung above and to the side of the piece of fabric. The ghost hovers above the earthly concerns illustrated in the world below and stands in like an angel in a Renaissance painting. Benevolently and empathetically watching over the unfolding scene below. And yet, removed from it.

Nell is a significant Australian contemporary artist who has been working for over 20 years. Recent projects include *Know My Name: Australian Women Artists 1900 to Now*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and *NE/LL* which toured across regional galleries in Australia, 2018. Recent major public commissions include 'Made in the Light - Happy Cloud', Maitland Regional Art Gallery and 'Happy Rain' installed at South Eveleigh, Sydney (Carriageworks in partnership with Mirvac Office & Industrial).

Nell is represented by STATION, Melbourne and Sydney.

HEADSHOT CREDIT: CHERINE FAHD X CARRIAGEWORKS // EYES OPEN EYES CLOSED AND SOMETHING IN-BETWEEN



CARMEN GLYNN-BRAUN

**Born in 1987 in Alice Springs, Northern Territory.
From the Arrernte, Kaytetye, Ammatyerre and Eastern
Arrernte Nations, Central Australia.**

I am an artist stemming from the Arrernte, Kaytetye, and Ammatyerre nations across Central Australia, for *LOOKING AT PAINTING* I am presenting an installation painting titled 'Intricacies of Identity.'

'Intricacies of Identity' removes the white backing of the canvas entirely and instead pushes the paint pigment to the forefront. Through the creation of the hanging paint skin panels, I separate the colour from the white canvas and in doing so, take ownership over the narrative of First Nations colonial experience and point to the lasting contemporary issues.

'Intricacies of Identity' is composed of five large rectangular hanging panels, not supported by any canvas or backing but are in and of themselves paint works. I invert the materiality of painting and employ the medium of paint as the object.

Each panel is made up with makeup, facial foundation in particular, to colour the acrylic paint. I've chosen to use makeup as a pigment, not just because it can be very successful both aesthetically and practically as painting medium, but because makeup is used to either enhance or alter our

appearance, especially for flesh.

As soon as the mixture is the right consistency, I pour and spread this paint onto acrylic sheets and once fully dried, carefully peel the paint skin panels away, forming an independent sheet.

In 'Intricacies of Identity,' the paint skin panels hang in a gradient of lightest to darkest. Their exposed backs are covered in an illustrious gold. Hung together, the gold pattern painted on the skins flows through and onto each connecting piece. The paint skin panels centre on skin tones of First Nations women and are an expansion of my practice that explores the colonial classification of First Nations people into 'half cast' and 'quarter cast'.

First Nations women's narratives and experiences of colonial brutality have not only been ignored but often distorted by settlers. In response, this artwork sheds light on First Nations women's experience with the brutal Assimilation Policy introduced in 1937, which was enforced by the Australian government in order to obliterate Indigenous bloodlines through the process of 'breeding out' the colour and Indigeneity over the span of

generations. In order to achieve a colonial ideal of 'white Australia', children were stolen from their mothers, some of whom were never to reconnect. Many of the young girls who were stolen from their families were enslaved to indentured servitude, as endured lives as 'domestic' slaves to settlers.

Each sheet of flesh coloured paint skins reflects the various shades of skin tones belonging to First Nation's Australia at present day, the visual residue of the devastation of the Assimilation Policy and subsequent Stolen Generations. The skins are hung alongside each other and form a defiant line, in solidarity they stand as evidential to the continued survival and resilience of Aboriginal people. The illustrated pattern on each skin paint panel connects one to the next, making each single panel part of a greater whole. The unity acts as a defiant rejection of colonial devastation and acknowledges the impenetrable continuation of generational knowledge and keeping together.

Carmen Glynn-Braun is an emerging Indigenous Australian artist stemming from the Southern Arrernte, Kaytetye, and Ammatyerre nations across Central Australia. She has been included in several exhibitions including *Dyarra Murrumba Guwing - The Sun Setting Red*, Gallery Lane Cove, 2020 and *Here to Empower, First Draft*, 2020. She has also won several awards and is the recipient of the Australian Museum Emerging Indigenous Artist Fellowship for 2019.

HEADSHOT CREDIT: ZAN WIMBERLEY



HAYLEY MEGAN FRENCH

Born in 1987 in Eastwood, NSW

'The Pipeline' is an ongoing suburban painting project documenting and memorialising three distinct suburbs that I live and work in across Australia.

Beginning in 2018 when I moved into the Western Sydney suburb of Old Guildford, I have been documenting my neighbourhood to create and reinforce a sense of home. This documentation began by taking Polaroid photographs of my home and backyard. Stepping out into the neighbourhood I was drawn to the water pipeline that runs three houses down, from Prospect Reservoir east to Potts Hill. An engineering feat of the Upper Nepean Scheme, this overland pipeline is significant to the collective past and present of this neighbourhood. Pipelines which once saved Sydney from drought were built over unceded Darug land fiercely defended by Pemulwuy and his clan. Wild dogs have been replaced by street cats. The smell of Arabic food fills the air. Stories continue to accumulate along pipeline walking paths with sightlines to connect us to a vast suburban landscape.

These Polaroids are my neighbourhood notes, taken while walking the overland

pipeline and the streets of Guildford. The Polaroids are then painted-over using acrylic paint from a 4-colour palette. The colour palette was chosen from the light blues and greens of post-war fibro housing prominent in the area, the red brick of the Arabic Gospel church next door and the yellowing of the grass in the Western Sydney heat.

In 2019 this project expanded to include two suburbs with which I feel a strong connection: Kununurra in Western Australia and Toowoomba in Queensland, each with a distinct colour palette. Polaroids from these suburbs are also included in LOOKING AT PAINTING. Repeating this process has facilitated a deeper learning of the past and present histories of these suburbs and a growing engagement with their futures through a lens of suburbanism and localism. Walking, photographing, and painting these suburbs is retraining my senses to better see, listen and engage poetically with how we live.

The photographs for this project have been taken on Darug land in Old Guildford and Guildford, NSW, Miriwoong country in

Goonoonoorrang/Kununurra, WA, and the land of the Giabal and Jarowair people in Toowoomba, QLD. The development of 'The Pipeline' project has been supported by residencies with The Border Line and Alexandra Lawson Gallery.

Hayley Megan French lives and works on Bidjigal land, Guildford, in Sydney's west. She has been exhibiting regularly across Australia for 10 years and has been awarded many prizes. Most recently in 2020 she was a finalist in the Blacktown City Art Prize, The Leo Kelly Blacktown Arts Centre; the Fisher's Ghost Art Award, Campbelltown Arts Centre and the Mosman Art Prize.

Hayley Megan French is represented by Galerie pompom, Sydney and Alexandra Lawson Gallery, Toowoomba.

HEADSHOT CREDIT: JACQUIE MANNING



JODY GRAHAM

Born in 1968 in Auburn, NSW

I am presenting two bodies of work for *LOOKING AT PAINTING*, 'Mark Making Tools' and 'After the Rain.' These two works show the connection between the process of what I do and the actual results of that process.

I am constantly seeking new ways to explore how to make marks. To do this, I often abandon traditional drawing and paint techniques to better connect to this fundamental need to make marks. I started creating mark-making tools at BigCi Bilpin (BilPin International ground for Creative initiatives, Blue Mountains, NSW) in 2016 to develop a creative workshop. I have been making these objects ever since and they have transformed over time, becoming sculptural and less ephemeral.

Walking is an important aspect of my practice and I walk several times a week (sometimes for distances as long as 10-15 kilometres) looking for interesting things to make marks with, especially in nature. I like collecting discarded bones, broken brooms, bits of nature, rocks, twisted branches, old doll parts, and any other treasures that come into my path. When I find unusual or broken and busted items, I really enjoy thinking about how it got to

where I found it and the life the object had beforehand. This is especially interesting to me, just as much as transforming it and extending its life.

Part of the reason I search for and make mark-making tools is because I like making my own things and avoiding consumerist culture, but also collecting random bits and pieces brings me comfort; they are like precious souvenirs to me. I have to carry all sorts of weird stuff I collect when walking. Including dead animals.

The presentation aspect that comes after the gathering of materials is also important to me. Sometimes I bind my marking tools, and it feels like I am mending, restoring or constructing together odd matches; like a dolls head on a pitchfork or a magpie claw on a mop handle, a bit like Frankenstein! I have even learnt to make natural string from grasses to make handles for my tools. I arrange them on the wall or the floor in a pleasing way, reminiscent of a well organised shed that has tools which are hanging up in an order the user understands.

'After the Rain' was inspired by looking at trees after it had been raining, especially the colour and texture, when

I was collecting materials to make mark-making tools. The Australian bush comes alive after the rain, birds and insects flutter about, trees glisten with a wet sheen – and I have tried to capture that in 'After the Rain.' I made my own plant and sap dyes to create these works and used my mark-making tools to create the markings. Many of the pieces were even soaked in mud puddles.

I used paper as the support in 'After the Rain' because I like its absorbent qualities and the way it feels when I draw on it while it is in mud puddles. The ease and pleasure that comes from working this way makes me feel linked to nature and connected to my work.

In both these bodies of works and in my overarching practice I aim to eliminate ego, or a sense of self-consciousness. I try to let go of the natural desire to be a 'good' drawer or painter and instead focus on my authentic connection to nature and my love for making. Doing this has helped me develop approaches to art making which are more attainable and enjoyable. I believe this way of thinking creates organic experiences that create better results and produces works that are real and done with the heart and body rather than the analytical mind.

Jody Graham has had over ten solo exhibitions and exhibits frequently in group exhibitions. She won the open Greenway Art Prize in 2017 (and the local prize again in 2020) and has been a finalist in many major art prizes, including the 66th Blake Prize, 'Sculptures at Scenic World' in Katoomba, and at the Muswellbrook, Paddington, and NSW Parliament's Plein Air painting prizes.

Jody Graham is represented by Nanda/Hobbs Gallery, Sydney.

HEADSHOT CREDIT: DANIEL KUKEC



ROCHELLE HALEY

Born in 1981 in Canberra, ACT

For *LOOKING AT PAINTING* you are presenting two works, 'Double Veil' and 'Double Column,' which incorporate wall painting and airy fringe suspended sculptures. Can you tell us about these works?

Both the works are responsive to the architectural context of the Hopper Gallery and Casula Powerhouse itself. In 'Double Column,' I'm replicating the size and scale of the existing columns in the gallery, which are very idiosyncratic to that space. They attracted me because architectural features like this in a gallery are quite unusual. Even though they are part of the infrastructure, they're the type of thing that turn invisible inside the white cube space.

'Double Column' is made from polyester fringing which is inherently quite insubstantial. You can put your hand through these columns or gather them up with your fingers; they're very light and they move with the ambient wind in the space. This contrasts with the original columns which are obviously made of strong materials which are weight bearing and are structurally sound.

Because I'm so interested in the relationship between architecture and

painting, I have also been thinking about the way that architectural features interact with implied light, and how light can be painted across the space. The painted mural in 'Double Column' implies a kind of projected colour shadow behind the columns. The colour shadow explores the way that paint works when applied in layers of translucency. Doing so gives the space a sense of atmosphere and a kind of painterly expression despite the fact I'm not painting on canvas or producing traditional painting objects.

Your process incorporating architecture is very interesting, especially within the context of Casula Powerhouse which as a building still reveals much of its original industrial features. Can you speak to how you approached this space?

I consider the architecture of the installation space to be part of the medium of the work itself. I think about the scale of the work and relationships between the built space and the body as it moves through that space.

I'm also really interested in the way ambient aspects impact the space. For example, the sunlight or the wind coming through or other elements that

are bit more atmospheric. How do they impact the experience of being in that space? I was really interested to think about how I could imply that there was natural light inside the Hopper Gallery, even though it doesn't actually exist.

Sight lines are important to me too. Thinking about how you would walk through a space, how different things can catch your eye and what lines up in perspective. As the artist, you can set up little alignments or moments of recognition when things come together spatially in a way that you couldn't experience if you just looked at the work from one still static point of view.

What has led you to think about painting in this way?

I'm trained in painting and drawing - I think that's important to mention because while at the moment I'm working primarily in a larger scale involving installation elements and performance, I really see myself as a painter at heart. This is partly because most of my concerns have to do with the fundamental components of what makes a painting in the first place. I see those fundamentals as the relationship

between surface and space, the impact of colour on senses and the way we experience the atmospheric and sensory nature of colour.

While I do move through a lot of different mediums and disciplines, I really see most of my central concerns revolving around what painting is and the interaction between painting and the body through movement.

What would you like people to take away from these artworks?

I'd love for people to think about extending their understanding of what constitutes painting and expand how they can approach and think about painting as a medium and a discipline. There is a conceptual layer, but these works also explore how light feels, that it can in fact feel a certain way and can give a sense of warmth and a sense of colour at different times of day. Ultimately, I want to achieve both an experiential experience as well as well a conceptual one.

This text was written and condensed by the Casula Powerhouse Curatorial team through interviews conducted with the artist, 2021.

In 2020 Rochelle Haley was selected as an Artspace One Year Studio Artist and her major commission *EVER SUN* was presented by Performance Space in Carriageworks for Liveworks 2020. Haley has staged 12 solo exhibitions and has participated in over 47 group shows at leading national venues. She also lectures in painting and drawing at UNSW Art & Design, where she completed a PhD in 2009 and is involved in several international research projects concerned with art.

HEADSHOT CREDIT: ZAN WIMBERLEY



KIRTIKA KAIN

Born in 1990 in New Delhi, India

For *LOOKING AT PAINTING* I have included three artworks that are called 'Idolatry,' 'The Solar Line XXIV' and 'The Solar Line XXVII.'

'Idolatry' is the largest artwork that I am presenting in this exhibition. As you are standing before it you will see traces of rope, reed, rocks, hair and gold. Parts of the earth and the body are imbedded in beeswax and charcoal. Although the work is as black as the night sky, it reminds me of compressed layers of rock and this is similar to how the work was created. Over a few days I gathered materials including rope and plaster soaked in tar and layered them in bands. I then poured wax into my mould. When the wax set it formed the tablet that you see before you. It reminds me of an excavation of the earth or a cross section of rock. Based on the materials, you can imagine how fragile this piece is and hence the fault lines have formed in it.

The materials I use are certainly quite unconventional for a painting. I choose them because they capture a texture that I have in my mind's eye. And although I will describe it and tell you what inspired it, it is important that you know that the work is really for you

and ultimately it is your experience of it that truly matters.

The work was inspired by a book titled *Jina Amucha*, which was translated from Marathi (the official language and co-official language in the Maharashtra and Goa states of Western India) to *Prison We Broke* in 2008. It describes the conditions of a caste group in India that was formally called the 'untouchables', today recognised as Dalits. The writer Babytai Kamble describes some of the most harrowing living conditions in abject poverty that she experienced in her childhood but without any hint of sentimentality. I found her writing raw and visceral and I wanted to capture the experience of these words through materials.

Caste forms the basis for my practice, as I myself was born in India into the Dalit caste, yet I grew up here in Sydney. I am interested in conditioned ideas of value and the self, and my art is where I can explore these questions and create an alternative to the stigma and invisibility of caste. I hope that through this work you can consider the stories that you have inherited, how ancient they are and how you hold them in your own body. What do they look like

to you and if you had to put them in a painting or find materials that convey that feeling, what would they be?

Kirtika Kain (b. 1990) has been exhibiting since 2016. In 2019, she completed consecutive studio residencies in New Delhi, supported by Art Incubator and the Dyason Bequest, and at the British School at Rome. She was recently a finalist in the 2020 Create NSW Emerging Artist Fellowship at Artspace and is currently a recipient of the Parramatta Artist Studios program.

Kirtika Kain is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

HEADSHOT CREDIT: COURTESY OF CJ PICTURE. PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF LIU.



CLAUDIA NICHOLSON

Born in 1987 in Bogota, Colombia

Chicanx academic, Cherrie Moraga, writes about the role of memory in the construction of diasporic identities and proposes that remembering offers a radical restructuring of our lives. Colonisation has produced a separation from personal and collective memories, and in turn, causes a rupturing of and denial of inherited knowledges, embodied knowledges, and language. What Moraga proposes is that diasporic people have 'the right to remember' – that working to undo this erosion of knowledge is a de-colonial process of resistance. The liquid and fragmented nature of my dreams resembles this ongoing process of remembering.

'Dream Map' blurs the distinctions between memories and dreams. The imagery and composition of the paintings piece together the vivid imagery of my dreams with photographs from my personal archive. Working with an airbrush enables me to create a sense of motion and gesture that relates to the transitional space of my dreams. My paintings collapse the distinctions between psychic and geographic places. These 'Dream Maps' are enacting my right to remember.

What painterly materials and methods have you employed to create this work?

'Dream Map' is predominantly made from ink and watercolour applied with airbrush and paintbrush. The landscape and figures were loosely based on reference images which have come from a collection of personal photographs. I started piecing them together based on what felt right and in a way that reflected certain landscapes that are in my dreams.

In my practice, I'm very interested in landscape and the politics of painting landscapes. I want to think about the relationship between painting and colonisation. In this work, by the act of making and doing I am trying to understand my place within landscapes.

My previous works reference landscape watercolour paintings from the National Library of Colombia. Painted in the 1800's, these works were commissioned by the Colombian government to map natural resources and to create an image for a unified, national identity.

In 'Dream Map' I've shifted to use my own Archive. I wanted to piece together landscapes that are significant to me with the landscapes of my dreams. Many of the figures depicted are based on myself and my family. I was trying to turn my focus inwards.

This is one of the first times you've experimented with airbrushing in this way, why have you moved in this direction?

Dreams can be so hard to capture and talk about. At the end of last year I was inspired by the ideas of Cherrie Moraga, who discusses remembering and the right to remember and the sort of slipperiness of dreams. In dreams, there is a process of remembering that is going on – places can be familiar but there is a shifting and changing with time and space. The airbrushing tool lends itself to a softness that is hard to hold onto, it can be light and not really

defined, which is similar to the way dreams are. That's one of the reasons I wanted to bring the airbrush into it. The introduction of the airbrush also meant that formally I was moving at a faster pace. This is something I really wanted to do to move away from a controlled illustrative way of working into something that was more open and a little more abstract.

The use of painterly materials in 'Dream Map' is the beginning of a new way of working which is really exciting for me. I'm looking forward to moving even further away from figurative depictions using this method in the future.

This text includes the artist's 'Dream Map' statement followed by a short text that was written and condensed by the Casula Powerhouse Curatorial team through interviews conducted with the artist, 2021.

Claudia Nicholson lives and works on Gadigal land. In 2017 Claudia was awarded the NSW Emerging Visual Arts Fellowship and in 2019 she was commissioned by Museum of Contemporary Art (Sydney) and Vivid Sydney as part of Vivid Sydney Festival. She presented new commissioned work, *By Your Side*, at the Art Gallery of NSW and was commissioned by the National Gallery of Australia to develop Art Trail, an art education resource for young people. Recent exhibitions include 'Dream Sequence', Urban Theatre Projects (online) 2020, 'Belonging', Art Gallery of NSW, 2019. Her work is held in the collection of the Art Gallery of NSW.

HEADSHOT CREDIT: HANNAH CHAPMAN.



JUDY WATSON

Born in 1959 in Mundubbera, QLD.

Watson's matrilineal family is from Waanyi country in Northwest Queensland

Two artworks by Judy Watson are included in this exhibition: 'waterspout,' 1995 (held in Casula Powerhouse's permanent collection) and 'spine with cutting tool,' 2020.

Can you tell us a bit about 'waterspout'?

'waterspout,' 1995 was made when I was in France completing a scholarship.

At the time I had a very strong dream: we were on a beach and there was a waterspout coming across the water. It was in the shape of a tall, rectangular column and it came towards us. We scattered, and then it tore up the beach and through a house behind it. After it had passed, we could see the deep trench that it cut into the sand and there was a large conch shell and a large baler shell there in the trench.

At the time, I didn't have the internet but I did have a fax machine and I contacted a friend working at Cambridge Museum and I asked her, 'have you come across any conch shells or baler shells?' she was looking at things from the Torres Straight and

other places. And she said, 'funny you should say that! I was actually looking at them now.' She faxed some photographs and I have worked with these images ever since. That's interesting to me, when you'll dream something and then you try to act on it as an artist.

Baler shells have had many uses; they have a beautiful well within them and so they can be used to bail water out of canoes, as a receptacle or cup. It was even used to hold ochre, for painting with. Ochre is a really important natural resource. It has always been seen as a very important material for transformation. In fact, an archaeologist/anthropologist Ernest Chantre talks about ochre being 'the red sting of history'. Because at the beginning of every civilisation you'll find ochre in burials, in painting, that red thread of history that holds together years of human beings or civilisation or occupation.

The spiral forms within 'waterspout' indicate movement. The blue especially represents the movement of water. Elsewhere it's quite still. It's very mesmerising.

Now could you speak on 'spine with cutting tool'?

'spine with cutting tool' has a distinct spine form in it. The spine in this case is actually from a bunya leaf from the bunya pine, which are part of Gondwana land. Gondwana pine is ancient, from the dinosaur era. I think the fact that we've got these ancient plant forms still here is really important.

It feeds back to that whole idea of Waanyi people who are 'running water people'. The reason is because we have water running through our country, such as the water basins in the Barkly Tableland, and some of that water comes from ancient places deep within the earth.

The spine also has to do with my grandmother, Grace Isaacson, and her mother, Mabel Daley, and my grandmother's siblings, Baby Daisy and Little Brother Patti. They ran away from Riversleigh Station (Queensland) in the middle of the night. They did this because of many issues on the Station. My grandmother says it was in the middle of the night that they cleared out, and they had to follow rivers and creeks. She remembers her mother, Mabel Daley, catching fish, and she would hold them by the tail and sling them behind her and they would fall down her back. And my grandmother would say "she giveth us the flesh off her backbone" – as in, she gave us the best that she had.

The spine is a symbol or an iconic form that I use to talk about that resilience of family, language and culture of these women. And of course not just Aboriginal women – I am referring to all women protecting their families.

You've used an interesting mix of materials and processes in these works, fabric, pigments, pastels and indigo for materials for example and you've always spoken about print-making processes as being very important to you. Why do you choose these and why are they so important to you?

Both of the works have washes of colour in the background. I trained originally as a print-maker and I learnt to make prints onto limestone blocks. That's where I learnt to make the wash effect you can see in these works. I didn't use the limestone to make these works, but this technique is what inspired me to replicate it in a different way using fabrics and different materials. It's a similar way of making.

In terms of the mark-making over the top, that's when I'm bringing a particular form out and in the case of 'spine with cutting tool', it's the shadow of the bunya leaf. It could be the internal spine of a person or an animal. Almost like a spirit, living in the water, who knows – people can interpret it how they want.

What would you like people to take away from these artworks?

I would encourage people to ask questions. How does it make them feel? What is the content?

As soon as you walk outside of Casula Powerhouse and go along the river, open your senses, and listen to the song of birds, the wind in the trees, look at the sparkle of light on the water, look at the beautiful gardens that have been created there! And think about where you are and be open to it so the country can feed your soul.

This text was written and condensed by the Casula Powerhouse Curatorial team through interviews conducted with the artist, 2021.

Judy Watson is an important Aboriginal Australian artist who has been working all over Australia and internationally for over 20 years. Notably, in 1997, she represented Australia at the Venice Biennale, along with Emily Kam Ngwaray and Yvonne Koolmatrie. Today her artworks are collected and exhibited in national art galleries around the globe.

Judy Watson is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

HEADSHOT CREDIT: PHOTOGRAPHY BY RACHEL SEE. COURTESY OF THE ARTIST AND MILANI GALLERY, BRISBANE.

MS N YUNUPINGU

Born 1945 in Yirrkala region/Yolgnu people of Arnhem Land (Gumatj Clan). Passed Away in 2021.

Ms N Yunupingu is part of the Yirritja Moiety from the Gumatj Clan, located in Biranybirany. She works from the remote community of Yirrkala in East Arnhem Land, Northern Territory. She is a multi-award-winning artist, who has been recognised as being at the forefront of contemporary art for well over 10 years.

Ms. N Yunupingu is known for her striking mark-making made with paint across a wide range of mediums and supports including bark, pole, canvas, paper and board as well as additional explorations through sculpture, print making, installations and screen-based works. In the early part of her career she was known for using mark-making in a figurative way to depict personal experiences from her life. This was considered highly unusual as it did not align with the accepted methods and subjects that Yolnu (her family, community or cultural group in Northern Territory) had been using for many years. Ms. N Yunupingu was using her painting in a revolutionary way. A well-known example of this was in 2008 when she won the Wandjuk Marika 3D Memorial Award (sponsored by Telstra) for 'Incident at Mutpi

(1975)'. The work depicted a near death experience from 1975 when she was attacked by a water buffalo. This artwork consists of a bark painting and a film 'Gatapangawuy dhawu – Buffalo story' that showed the artist's narration of the event. In 2009, Ms. N Yunupingu started something new again. Her mark-making became rhythmic and abstract, they had little or no reference to her life, the Yolnu painting way, or any recognisable narrative at all. These became known as her *mayilimiriw* paintings, which translates as 'meaningless'. Will Stubbs, the coordinator of the Buku-Larrangay Mulka Centre who has been working closely with this artist from the beginning of her career and other Yolngu Elders and artists from 1995 says that,

'each stroke of her brush has no idea what came before it and no concept of what may come next.'

– *the moment eternal: Nyapanyapa Yunupingu*, Museum and Art Gallery of Northern Territory, pg. 133

Ms. N Yunupingu wasn't afraid to use different materials to express herself either. During the summer, bark around

the Buku-Larrangay Mulka Centre becomes too dry to work on. So that she could continue working in the interim, Stubbs gave her a bundle of acetate and paint pens. Over the years she has made 100+ artworks using these materials.

Some of Ms. N Yunupingu's paint on acetate works were created into prints, using a photographic exposure method in some cases and a lithographic limestone in others.

Notably she worked with her collaborators Mulka Project at the Buku-Larrangay Mulka Centre to create 'light paintings' which were presented at the 18th Biennale of Sydney in 2012. In this stunning presentation, the acetates were scanned and input into a specially designed computer program which layered the pieces and lit them from behind with varying intensity.

Ms. N Yunupingu's major retrospective exhibition at the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory was open for viewing last year in 2020, bringing together a collection of significant works that were part of different projects and exhibitions from the last 20 years. Her acetate works feature heavily in this exhibition as one of many innovative approaches she has explored across her illustrious career.

Casula Powerhouse is lucky to show several of her original paint pen works on clear acetate. We have chosen these works for *LOOKING AT PAINTING* to show how experimentation and innovation informs the practice of one of this country's most celebrated painters.

Words by Ellen Hewitt

Ms N Yunupingu, from the Yirrkala region/Yolgnu people of Arnhem Land (Gumatj Clan), has been considered an important Indigenous Australian artist for well over 10 years. Her painting *Garak – night sky* was announced as the winner of the AGNSW's Wynne Prize this year.

Ms. N Yunupingu is represented by Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre, Yirrkala, Arnhem Land and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia.

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Casula Powerhouse promotes and enhances access and engagement to creative arts. From an array of activities and programs, we host panel discussions, public events, open studios, one-off workshops and on-going programs. For any queries, please email ppe@casulapowerhouse.com

Discover and register for the exciting range of workshops and programs for LOOKING AT PAINTING by scanning this QR code:



www.casulapowerhouse.com/visit/casula-powerhouse-exhibitions/2021-exhibitions/looking-at-painting

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