

YARN

1 Jul - 16 Sep 2023

CRAFT

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**Curated by
Jahkarli Felicitas Romanis**

**Carissa Gurwalwal
Corben Mudjandi
Leanne Namarnyilk
Kim Ah Sam
Brad Webb
Nicholas Currie
Tarryn Love**



Acknowledgement

We acknowledge and extend deep respects to the custodians of the land on which Craft Victoria sits, the Wurundjeri Woi-Wurrung people of the Eastern Kulin Nations. We recognise their Elders past and present and their ongoing care for Country and community.

We also acknowledge each of the artists and the different nations, mobs and families which they are part of.

Always was, Always will be, Aboriginal Land.

YARN

Storytelling is central to Aboriginal culture. It is rooted in Country, family, and spirit. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been storytellers for millennia, passing knowledge from one generation to the next.

Presented as part of NAIDOC week, YARN connects to this year's theme, 'For Our Elders.'

Elders are the advocates, trailblazers, knowledge holders, guides and pillars of our communities. They have fought for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, ensuring the survival of the longest-living culture in the world. They are the reason we are able to thrive and be proud of who we are.

YARN brings together the work of seven Indigenous makers. Woven within each artist's practice are the stories, lived experiences, knowledges and relational connections to Country. This exhibition draws on important oral histories and the significance of knowledge sharing through conversation and listening. Each artist is an agent of their voice, speaking to the gravity of arts practice as a form of storytelling.



**Since the beginning we have been
yarning.**

Since the beginning we have been yarning.

Yarning to keep story and culture alive.
Yarning to centre our being.
Yarning to survive.
Yarning to thrive.
Yarning with Country.
Yarning with family.
Yarning with each other.
Yarning as cultural practice.
Yarning as relief.
Yarning as relating.
Yarning when they first came.
Yarning when they took us.
Yarning when they killed us.
Yarning when our own words were forbidden
from being spoken.
Yarning with our Ancestors.
Yarning with our young people.
Yarning with our old people.
Yarning with our Elders.
Yarning to teach.
Yarning to learn.

Yarning to listen.
Yarning to share.
Yarning to heal.
Yarning as love.
Yarning as care.

When there is nothing left, we will still be
yarning.

/Jahkarli Felicitas Romanis





/ **Carissa Gurwalwal**

Buluhkaduru

Yawk Yawk (Freshwater Mermaid)
acrylic on wood
127 × 5cm

Yawk Yawk is the Kunwinjku term used for young women. It is also used to describe special female water spirits that have fish tails. Sometimes Yawk Yawk are referred to as 'mermaids' and are said to live in trees and water in special places in Western Arnhem Land. They are the spirit guardians of particular waterholes. Yawk Yawk first begin as tadpole-like forms, before growing fish tails. They spend most of their time in the water but when fully-grown they are able to change their tails into legs and walk on land to forage for food. They have Namarnkol (barramundi) as pets and Ngalyod (Rainbow Serpent) serve as their protector. At the end of the wet season Yawk Yawk transform

into dragonflies, which signifies to the Bininj (Aboriginal people) that the rains have finished.

Carissa Gurwalwal is a Bununggu artist based in Gunbalanya, Arnhem Land. She is from the Kune Kunwinjku language group and is the daughter of renowned weaver Barbara Guwalwal. Although new to painting, her work is attracting the attention of collectors and galleries nationally and internationally. Gurwalwal's interpretation of Wak Wak (Black Crow) is exact and striking. It is reminiscent of the work of her late aunt Ngalbangardi Gunjarwwanga, who continues to be an inspiration for Gurwalwal and her artwork. Gurwalwal works full-time at West Arnhem Shire's Aged Care Facility.



/ **Corben Mudjandi**

Mirarr

untitled (detail), 2022
inkjet print on Ilford cotton rag
110 × 110cm (framed)

“I was out bush hunting with my family and saw this goanna looking at us. It was so big we took it home and were able to feed a whole house, everyone was very happy about it. We got lucky! Goanna is a main food source for my people. I took this photo on my Yaschica 124g twin lens camera and the person holding the goanna is my cousin Ralphy.” – Corben Mudjandi

Corben Mudjandi is a Mirarr Traditional Owner of Jabiru and parts of Kakadu and West Arnhem Land. Working predominantly with film photography, his practice explores being on Country, hanging with family, hunting and being in nature. Recent works speak to a feeling of loneliness while he lives and works 30 kilometres away from family in the township of Jabiru.

In 2022 Mudjandi had his first solo exhibition at Brunswick Street Gallery, Naarm/Melbourne and in 2023 he was announced as a finalist in the Churchie Emerging Art Prize at the Institute of Modern Art (IMA), Meanjin/Brisbane. In June 2023 Mudjandi exhibited a new body of work in Sicily, Italy at the FARM Pavilion for the The Biennial of the Cities of the world. Mudjandi has photographed for clothing brand North and currently works for Gundjeihmi Aboriginal Corporation as a labourer and as a board director. Mudjandi’s family played a significant role in the resistance movement to uranium mining on Mirarr Country during the 1970s and 1980s.



/ **Leanne Namarnyilk**

Nabang

Namarnkol (Barramundi)
Pandanus (Pandanus Spiralis) and Bush Cane
(Flagellaria Indica) with natural dyes
180 x 45 x 30cm

“Namarnkol, the Barramundi, is a very important fish for us Bininj (Aboriginal people). Barramundi are found in the ocean, in floodwaters, and in freshwater billabongs, rivers and creeks. In the old days, people used to spear them with djalakirradj (three-pronged fish spears) and walabi (traditional triangular nets). Nowadays, we catch them with fishing lines and modern nets. Barramundi are most easily caught from the end of the monsoon (March -April) until the humid ‘build up’ season (October-November). There are Barramundi Dreaming sites in lots of clan Countries, where the Ancestral Barramundi placed itself as a Dreaming. Men and women will say ‘my Dreaming is Barramundi, it placed itself in my Country.’” – Leanne Namarnyilk

Leanne Namarnyilk is the niece of renowned and celebrated artist Jimmy Kalariya Namarnyilk. The strong innovative and artistic strength lies within her and her sister’s family. Namarnyilk and her sisters learnt how to weave from her mother, growing up between her mother’s Country in Korlobidahdah and father’s Country of Nabang. Her innovation has lead her and her sisters to weave incredible 3D fibre artworks, usually of different fish found in billabongs around Kakadu and West Arnhem Land.



“Since the begininng we have been yarnning.”

– Jahkarli Felicitas Romanis





/Kim Ah Sam

Kuku Yalanji/Kalkadoon

not knowing what you know, 2022
repurposed rope, raffia, feathers, and bamboo
sizes variable
(the individual works range from
20 × 30 cm – 70 × 84 cm)

not knowing what you know is a recording of Kim Ah Sam's journey of self-discovery. The series includes five woven masks, each representative of a new awakening Ah Sam experienced when she first journeyed to Kalkadoon – her father's Country.

"The concept of my five woven sculptures represents my cultural identity through the stages of my life; each woven piece is my conscious journey of growing up and finding who I am as an Indigenous woman and my identity. I had a sense of belonging, a feeling that I had already been there, an overwhelming sense of emotion and belonging to my cultural identity."
– Kim Ah Sam

Kim Ah Sam is a Kuku Yalanji/Kalkadoon artist working across drypoint, etching, weaving and paper making. Her creative practice is a means to connect with her spiritual and cultural identity and embodies storytelling and knowledge-sharing. Ah Sam grew up in Brisbane with little knowledge of her father's Country and the cultural traditions of the Kalkadoon people. For Ah Sam, the practice of weaving offers a process of cultural healing and a therapeutic way to address feelings of disconnection and reconnection to Country.



/Brad Webb

Bundjalung/Dunghutti

The Power of Mirroring I, 2023
oil on canvas
1.53 × 1.89 cm

The Power of Mirroring II, 2023
oil on canvas
1.53 × 1.89cm

“*The Power of Mirroring* is drawn from lived experience and an acute observation of the lack of representation of Aboriginal people in all forms of media. Growing up I began to notice how Aboriginal people were presented, and represented through the media. Often it was in a negative and stereotypical way, depicting the vulnerabilities of alcoholism violence and poverty.

The media space has always been dominated by white privilege, and media ownership has been controlled by white people who have the power in this space. They control the narrative of what is presented and represented on a daily basis. Seeing yourself is empowering as it validates and reinforces one’s identity. However, this is a rare experience for Aboriginal people and others of diverse minorities.” – Brad Webb

Brad Webb is a Bundjalung/Dunghutti man from northern New South Wales, currently based in Naarm/Melbourne. Webb primarily works in painting but experiments with combining visual painting and digital imaging reproduction as a way of giving new meaning and expression to his works.

In 2021 Webb completed his Masters by Research which explored how colonisation and transgenerational trauma has created a lost generation. Webb’s research investigated the complex trauma of the Stolen Generation and its impact across future generations. In 2021 he commenced his PhD with Monash University. He is an artist and researcher with the Wominjeka Djeembana Indigenous Research Lab, within the Monash Design and Architecture Faculty. Webb’s PhD research questions how colonial frameworks determine Aboriginal representation and cultural heritage, examining key institutions and their role in representing and presenting Indigeneity to contemporary society. Webb holds a Bachelor of Arts and Honours Degree in Creative Arts Visual Practice, completed in 2013 at Deakin University.

Images courtesy the artist.



/Nicholas Currie

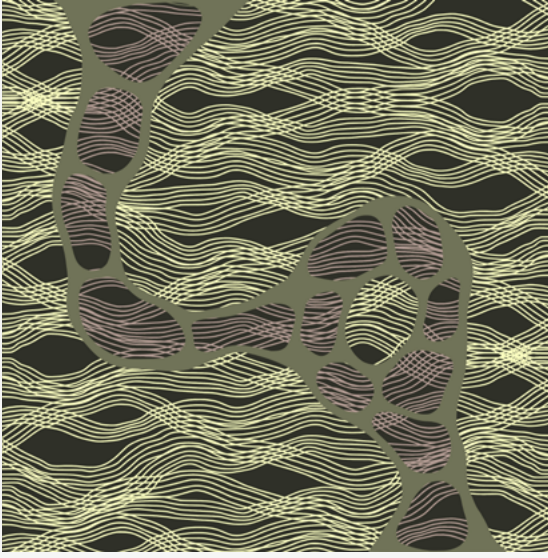
Yugambeh

big yarns, big paintings (live, laugh, love), 2023
oil and ink on linen
150 × 150cm

backwards painting, 2023
oil and ink on stretched canvas
50 × 55cm

“For myself, the connection to community is an important continuation to culture. The body of work produced for this show is derived from yarning while working and creating these paintings. The conversation points are diverse in context – tough yarns, funny yarns and even important yarns were had while painting with brushes, walking and pushing material onto the material. More medium is on the back of the material than the front as most yarns hold more than what is at face value. The action of making is shared and within the conversation, the expression and physical are all intertwined.”
– Nicholas Currie

Nicholas Currie is a descendant of the Mulunjali Clan of the Yugambeh people of Brisbane and Beaudesert with connection to Kuku Yalanji people of North Queensland. Currie is known for his diverse artistic and curatorial practice both in subject and medium, from work on canvas, to murals and art installations, exploring themes of social, cultural, and personal identity. His visual vocabulary links to themes of Indigeneity, emotional responses and larger community values.



/Tarryn Love

Gunditjmara Keerray Woorroong

woalay wolay keetawanta – futurity, 2021

canvas print,
90 × 90cm

alam meen – Ancestors, 2021

canvas print,
90 × 90cm

My alam meen – my Ancestors. Each one wrapped in their koorramook – possum skin. Their stories karraparr – marked on their cloaks. karraparr in my pang ngoorteen weeng – my memories.

wathkanhan – behind me
moortkapan – in front of me

pakarr – between
poorree – beyond

yakaykathoong – this side
kaneenoong – other side
leekanyoong – within

teen – here

koontapool wayapawanh – Meeting the Whale,
2020

New Zealand Possum Skin, pyrography, linen
thread,
130 × 60cm

koontapool wayapawanh – Meeting the Whale,
courtesy the Warrnambool Art Gallery Collection.
Purchased with the assistance of the Isobel and
David Jones Family Foundation and the Cumorah
Foundation Pty Ltd.

Tarryn Love is a proud Gunditjmara Keerray
Woorroong woman, born and raised on
Wadawurrung Country. She is a koorroyarr,
teenyeen ngapang, tyeentyeeyt ngapangyarr and
wanoong ngeerrang - granddaughter, youngest
daughter, youngest sister and Aunty. Love is an
emerging artist and curator. Her practice exists
in the space of creative cultural expression and
she creates under the collective of Koorroyarr
(granddaughter), honouring her positionality as
a Gunditjmara woman. Love's work represents
the distinctiveness of Gunditjmara ways of
Knowing, Being and Doing that is not one way
but constantly happening and changing. Her
work explores identity in the here and now while
centring language and carrying on the work of
remembering, reclamation, regeneration, and
revitalisation.





/Jahkarli Felicitas Romanis Curator

Pitta Pitta

Jahkarli Felicitas Romanis is a proud Pitta Pitta woman, emerging artist, researcher and curator based on Kulin Land. After completing an Honours in Photography degree at RMIT in 2020, she commenced a PhD at Monash in 2021 through the Wominjeka Djeembana Indigenous Research Lab. Her work is inextricably intertwined with her identity as a Pitta Pitta woman and explores the complexities of her lived experience and the continuing negative impacts of colonisation in what is now known as Australia.

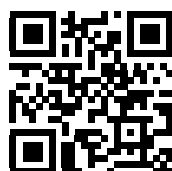
Romanis' practice aims to subvert and disrupt colonial ways of thinking and image making. She utilises her research and artwork as tools for investigating biases encoded within imaging technologies. Her PhD research and arts practice examines the role of maps in her connection to Country, interrogating western systems of mapping and their portrayal of place.

YARN is proudly presented as part of NAIDOC Week 2023.



FOR OUR ELDERS
2-9 JULY 2023

Scan the QR code to listen to a curatorial talk and walk-through of the exhibition



YARN: Spoken Word Event

Thursday 13 July, 6-7pm
Craft, Watson Place (off Flinders Lane)
Naarm/Melbourne

Join us in the gallery for a spoken word event with Tristen Harwood, Maya Hodge, Tarryn Love, Laniyuk and Jahkarli Felicitas Romanis.

Acknowledging yarning as practice, and as an important part of knowledge sharing and oral histories, this event highlights the power of the spoken word. Placing emphasis on the relationality between artwork and conversation, it's an evening of yarns – blak words, from blak mouths!

/CRAFT

Craft Victoria is supported by the Victorian Government through Creative Victoria. Craft Victoria is assisted by the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian, State and Territory Governments. Craft Victoria is also assisted by the Australian Government through the Australia Council, its arts funding and advisory body.

Craft Victoria respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the place now called Victoria, and all First Peoples living and working on this land. We celebrate the history and creativity of the world's oldest living culture and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

CRAFT VICTORIA
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HOURS
Tuesday to Friday: 11am–5pm
Saturday: 11am–4pm
(excluding public holidays)
or by appointment

CREATIVE VICTORIA



Australian Government
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