

DOREEN CHAPMAN

Born 1971, Jigalong, Australia
Lives and works in South Hedland and
Warralong, Australia
Manyjilyjarra

Untitled, 2023
acrylic on canvas

Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney and the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain with generous assistance from the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body
Courtesy the artist and Spinifex Hill Studio, South Hedland

On the edge of the Sandy Desert in the Pilbara region, is the community of Jigalong. In 1907, Jigalong housed workmen building the rabbit-proof fence; in the 1930s cameleers bred their animals on its red soil; in 1947 it was transformed into a Christian Mission on behalf of the Apostolic Church; and in 1971, three years before the land would be returned to its rightful owners, Jigalong welcomed the birth of Doreen Chapman.

Born deaf and non-verbal, the Manyjilyjarra artist has painted alongside her mother, senior Martumili Artist Mayiwalku (Maywokka) May Chapman, since she was a girl. In vibrant colours Chapman creates her work at pace rendering scenes of native flora and fauna as well as images of contemporary Indigenous life – here, an ATM. Continuing to travel between communities across the Pilbara, Chapman's craft is crucial to her ability to communicate and share the stories which have shaped herself and her community.

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Untitled (camel), 2020
acrylic on canvas

Presentation at the 24th Biennale of Sydney was made possible with generous support from the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain and with generous assistance from the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body
Courtesy the artist and Spinifex Hill Studio, South Hedland

Driving through the Pilbara, one is as likely to see a kangaroo or wedge-tailed eagle as they are a camel. Between 1870 and 1920, some 20,000 camels were imported from the Arabian Peninsula, India, and Afghanistan along with roughly 2,000 handlers known as cameleers, to help traverse Australia's desert regions. Carrying materials, telegraph poles, water, food, communications, and people across the continent, the camels and their cameleers became as intrinsic to the establishment of colonial Australia as the animal now is to the desert landscape.

Today, an estimated one million camels inhabit Australia. For Manyjilyjarra artist Doreen Chapman, they make up part of the tapestry of flowers, birds, trees, and contemporary Indigenous life which she paints. Feral camel management programs are in place nation-wide to limit the negative impact of the foreign species on native biodiversity, but their humped silhouettes remain on the horizon line of Australia's deserts in numbers as ineffable and sprawling as the land itself.

ELYAS ALAVI

Born 1982, Daikundi Province, Afghanistan
Lives and works in Naarm (Melbourne),
Australia
Farsi, Dari, Persian, Hazaragi

Ringling out across national borders, the music of the Afghani rubab instrument has scored the desert of central Australia for generations.

Between 1860 and 1920, Australia relied upon mostly Islamic cameleers primarily from South Asia, as well as Southwest Asia and North Africa. Known as 'Afghan' cameleers, these men came from diverse backgrounds to transport supplies, communication infrastructure, and colonial society between regional outposts. It was these men who built the Overland Telegraph Line, linking Adelaide to Darwin (and subsequently the British Empire), and the Trans-Australian Railway across the Nullarbor. Yet the cameleers were vilified by the media of the time, and suffered discrimination in government policy, being granted only temporary visas and refused naturalisation. As they traversed the nation's interior, their tracks intersected with those that had already been established by First Nations peoples, and so formed an intercultural bond.

The descendants of marriages between cameleers and Indigenous people of Australia now make up a portion of the keepers of the oral history investigated by artist Elyas Alavi in *The Sound of Silence*. Honouring the stories and songs of the cameleers, Alavi memorialises the wisdom and philosophy the cameleers carried in their music and on their camels' backs.

Through archival research and fieldwork, Alavi detects parallels between the restrictive conditions endured by early cameleer communities and the contemporary reality for Afghan and Middle Eastern diasporas throughout Australia. Singing out in the face of the enduring impact of the White Australia Policy, *The Sound of Silence* both delights in and divulges the forgotten legacy of the cameleers.

The Sound of Silence / صدای سکوت, 2024

rubab instruments fabricated by Hossein Shirzad; neon

Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney and Art Jameel

Courtesy the artist

In *The Sound of Silence*, Elyas Alavi has overlaid neon text onto four rubab instruments in a reimagining of the songs and poems that may have accompanied the cameleers on their travels. The excerpts reference four different dialects, acknowledging the diversity of languages spoken by the cameleers, and are translated below:

The camel rider will set off (then you'll rove in desperate search of your beloved)

Saraiki language: Excerpt of an old folk song from the Saraiki Baloch people of Pakistan.

Let's go to the city of Mazar Mulla Mohammad Jaan!

Farsi/Dari language: Excerpt of an old folk song by an unknown female poet from Herat, Afghanistan.

I'm a lover and love is the only thing I know

Pashtu language: Excerpt of a poem by renowned poet Rahman Baba.

I seem to have loved you (in numberless forms, numberless times)

Hindi language: Excerpt of a poem by Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore.

But you are my home, 2024

video, sound, colour

Audio includes music by rubab player Nasim Khoshnavaz and voice of Naria Nour

BLOODING (series), 2023

ink, pencil, artist's own blood, found images on found newspapers, printed Brereton report

Courtesy the artist

BLOODING is inspired by the Brereton Report on war crimes allegedly committed by the Australian Defence Force (ADF). The report found evidence of at least 39 murders of Afghan civilians and prisoners by (or at the instruction of) members of the Australian Special Force, which were subsequently covered up by ADF personnel. These killings began in 2009, with most occurring in 2012 and 2013. The inquiry found that junior soldiers were often required by their superiors to murder prisoners to get their first kill, a practice known as 'bleeding'.

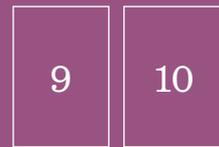
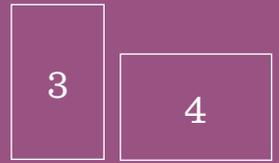
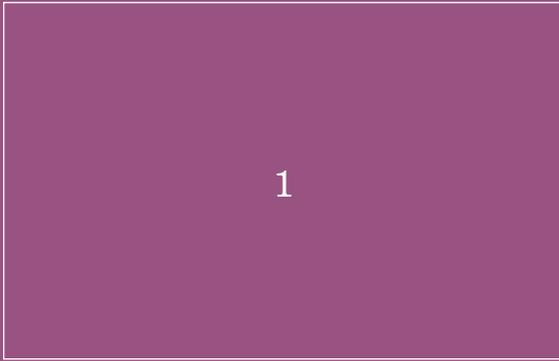
VASL / وصل (series), 2024
photographic print with paper collage

Courtesy the artist

In *VASL*, Alavi juxtaposes photographs documenting landscapes across Afghanistan and the Australian outback. As the curves of the mountains of Afghanistan merge with those of the Australian desert, Alavi highlights the invisible connections between the two locations which both hold significance to the history of the cameleers.

Neshani (Keepsakes) c.1970/2013
beaded necklace; beaded mirror; woven and beaded hat

Neshani are handmade objects often given to a loved one, especially those who are embarking on a long journey. These intricately beaded objects were made in the Daikundi Province of Afghanistan and gifted to Elyas Alavi by family members. They are similar to the objects that accompanied the cameleers on their journeys.



- 1 *By Compass and Quran: History of Australia's Muslim Cameleers*, 2024
video excerpt

Writer/Director: Kuranda Seyit
Producer: Fadle El Harris

- 2 Photographic documentation of the cameleer's everyday activities in Broken Hill, NSW, and Marree, SA from the early 1900s.
Photo: unrecorded maker

Private collection of Amminullah Shamroze

- 3 Photo: unrecorded maker
Private collection of Amminullah Shamroze

- 4 Photo: unrecorded maker
Private collection of Amminullah Shamroze

- 5 Cameleer descendant and musician.
Photo: Elyas Alavi

- 6 Cameleer descendant Aleema Sediq with a qichack musical instrument.
Photo: Pamela Rajkowski

- 7 Only remaining rubab musical instrument brought by cameleers currently held in the Mosque Museum, Broken Hill.
Photo: Elyas Alavi

- 8 Portrait of Kie Shirdel, the cameleer musician and owner of the rubab held in the Mosque Museum, Broken Hill.

Private collection:
Amminullah Shamroze

- 9 Gravestone at the cameleer section of a cemetery in Marree, SA.
Photo: Elyas Alavi

- 10 Notebook belonging to cameleers.
Photo: Elyas Alavi

Collection: Mosque Museum, Broken Hill.

- 11 Annual camel racing known as the Marree Camel Cup in South Australia.
Photo: Elyas Alavi

- 12 Mosque built by cameleers in Adelaide, SA.
Photo: Elyas Alavi

JOHN HINTON

Afghan Cameleers (series), 2022
acrylic on board
Courtesy the artist

JIM HINTON

Cameleers (series), 2023
acrylic on canvas
Courtesy the artist

ALIBABA AWRANG

Sun, 2023

acrylic, gold leaf, Japanese ink on paper

Courtesy the artist

MEGAN COPE

Born 1982, Minjerribah (North Stradbroke
Island), Australia
Lives and works in Meanjin (Brisbane),
Australia
Ngugi/Noonuccal, Quandamooka Country

After the Flood IIII (ongoing series), 2024–
mixed media

Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney and the Fondation Cartier
pour l'art contemporain
Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

People of the Sand and Sea (Yoolooburrabee), the
Quandamooka community have lived in Moreton Bay
across the archipelago of islands including
Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) for more
than 25,000 years.

Disrupting concepts of time and geography,
Quandamooka artist Megan Cope works over
military maps that recall the myth of terra
nullius. Her ongoing series *After the Flood* weaves
social, geographical, and metaphysical stories,
reclaiming landscapes with future tide lines of
5-metre sea-level rise, and replacing colonial titles
with those of her people's Jandai language. Each
map, glowing with crystalline blue tides, returns
cultural layers and memory over landmarks and
places renewed with dual histories and a shared
sense of place.

An act of decolonial cartography, at a time when
entire lands and peoples across the earth are being
reconfigured by climate change, with Quandamooka
Country itself also vulnerable, Cope's work is both a
remembering of the past, a steadfast endurance of
the apocalypse, a reimagining of ocean currents and
future islands.

LEILA EL RAYES

Born 1995, Sydney, Australia
Lives and works in Sydney, Australia

Rippled Water, 2024
canvas, board and nails

Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney
Courtesy the artist

In packing nails tightly into an intricate pattern, Leila el Rayes is inspired by her Palestinian and Egyptian heritage, recalling geometric patterns, art, and tapestries. The nails' figurations transform into tessellating designs, appearing at once staunch and beautiful. Placed individually by hand, each nail is acknowledged by their organic steel origins.

Repurposed and processed into new molecular structures and forms, the work in turn, meditates on the symbiotic cycle and balance between hardship and unity. El Rayes interrogates the complexity of destruction to find moments of intricacy and beauty that defy categorisation, and flow between ideas of fragility and fierceness.

BONITA ELY

Born 1946, Mildura, Australia
Lives and works in Sydney, Australia

Interior Decoration, 2013–

adapted installation: Singer sewing machine, bobby pins; bedroom furniture, mattress springs; photographs; sound

Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

Bonita Ely's *Interior Decoration* maps the intergenerational impact of conflict-induced, posttraumatic stress disorder on soldiers, cultures, displaced people, and families. The work references her father's own 'shellshock', its impact on her childhood home, and the grief that radiated from the profound violence of war.

PTSD typically leads to emotional numbing (and hence to relationship problems), recurrent nightmares, substance abuse (traditionally, alcoholism), and most frighteningly, delusional outbursts of violence.

(Joshua S. Goldstein, 2001)

Ely's father was a machine gunner deployed in the British Mandate of Palestine, Papua New Guinea, and Borneo. Reflecting on the unprovoked domestic violence that destabilised her usually peaceful Soldier Settlement home on the Murray River, Ely creates a watchtower and trench from her parents' deconstructed bedroom furniture. The trench includes her mother's treasured yet smoke-stained print of Albert Namatjira's *Gums, Central Australia*. Her Singer sewing machine – its click-clacking, a trigger for her father's aggression – is fused with contorted bobby pins and reimagined as a machine gun.

Ely's field of war is encircled by a series of photographs alongside the names of Jewish people deported from Kassel, Germany by Nazis. The traumatic imagery depicts slavery, displacement, and invasion, including Ely's own documentation of the detritus of war following her father's tours of duty in Mandatory Palestine and Papua New Guinea.

In this ring of torment, the objects that make up a home are transformed into a battleground that ricochets through generations. This psychological architecture can be seen as a metaphor for PTSD – the military is domesticated, the domestic militarised.

KÖKEN ERGUN

**Born 1976, Istanbul, Türkiye
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany and
Istanbul, Türkiye**

HEROES, DEAD, TOURISM, 2024

multi-channel video installation, duration variable

Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney with generous assistance from Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen and SAHA Association
Courtesy the artist

The first presentation of this project was commissioned by the Australian War Memorial, Canberra; Protocinema, Istanbul; and Artspace, Sydney in 2018

Each year, in a modern-day pilgrimage, thousands of Turkish, Australian, and New Zealander tourists descend upon Gallipoli (Çanakkale), the site of one of the First World War's most significant battles, where guides tailor their tours to specific audiences. *HEROES, DEAD, TOURISM* follows more than 30 tour groups as they wander through Gallipoli's graveyards, visit its memorials, and watch re-enactments of the events of 1915–16; a kind of war-tourism. Both intimate and sceptical, the work investigates how the site is shaped in the distinct national consciousness of those who fought over it.

On the craggy peninsula where nations became violently entangled, history isn't shared; two versions of events, two truths, perhaps two lies, were rolled out, involving soldiers from each side. Despite a devastating defeat by the Ottomans, it was at Gallipoli that the 'Anzac Spirit' first emerged as evidence of a unique Australian identity distinct from that of the British Empire. In modern day Türkiye, the defeat of foreign invaders – even at the price of tens of thousands of lives – led by Mustafa Kemal (later Atatürk), the founder of the modern republic, constitutes one of its most powerful myths. In any case, for each side, this was a triumph, and for each it was they who were up against impossible odds.

Investigating the war-tourism industry, artist Köken Ergun seeks to unveil the disparate legacies of Gallipoli for the warring nations. In the same way that loved ones carve names into the solid rock of gravestones, forgetting that wind, weather, and time will buffet them into a blur, Ergun watches tourists reinscribe their mythologies through ritual and routine, forgetting that each war has two sides, and every battle is fought twice.

NIKAU HINDIN

Born 1991, Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland),
Aotearoa New Zealand
Lives and works in Tāmaki Makaurau
Te Rarawa/Ngāpuhi

*Te Wheiao II, In-Between Light
and Darkness, 2022*

Rehua Pouwhakarae, 2022

Haumi, 2022

*Ngā Maungakura, The Red
Mountains, 2022*

Rehua, 2022

*Manu Taketake, Native Bird,
2022*

Arorangi, 2022

Reu, 2022

Pekerangi, Outer Palisade, 2022

Manu Taketake, 2022

Kōtuku, White Heron, 2022

Roimata Toroa, 2022

Kōtiritiri, Shooting Star, 2022

Whiria, 2022

*Ngā Ara ki Hawaiki, Pathways to
our Ancestral Homeland, 2022*

Rehua, Antares, 2022

*Manu Taua (e ono ngā whetū),
Flight as Fight (six stars), 2022*

red and yellow ochre, black
carbon ink on barkcloth, flax
cordage, rattan core, supplejack,
kākāho, Austroderia toetoe,
mountain daisy tassels, clay
beads

Te Wheiao I, 2022

Kōnekeneke, 2022

Pātiki (Flounder), 2022

Presentation at the 24th
Biennale of Sydney was made
possible with generous support
from the Fondation Cartier pour
l'art contemporain and Creative
New Zealand
Courtesy the artist

Ngā ahi Tīpua, 2022

*Manu Taua (e toru ngā whetū),
Flight as Fight (three stars), 2022*

It is a balance of time, water, and energy that allows Māori artist Nikau Hindin to produce the aute (bark cloth) she paints with the maps, calendars, and motifs of her culture. Unlike other bark lineages across Te Moana Nui a Kiwa (The Great Ocean), the Māori bark cloth technique that Hindin employs was last practised in Aotearoa more than a century ago, when the paper mulberry tree that is the main source of bark was almost made extinct.

Documenting the seasons and cycles of Aotearoa New Zealand, the knowledge that Hindin embeds within her work, from star maps to kites, is derived from a wellspring of Indigenous wisdom that has survived for millennia. Often painted with the red Kokowai ochre borrowed from the veins of Papatūānuku (Earth Mother), every work allows Hindin to engage in a practice of cultural rejuvenation.

For each piece that Hindin creates charting seas, skies, seasons, and stories, it is clear that for her the right direction is always in the footsteps of those who have walked before her.

WENDY HUBERT

Born 1954, Red Hill Station on Guruma Country,
Australia

Lives and works in Yindjibarndi Country,
Ieramagadu and Whadjuk Country, Australia
Yindjibarndi

Afghans Bought the Palms, 2021
acrylic on canvas

Courtesy the artist and Juluwarlu Art Group, Roebourne

If you were to find yourself on the red coast of Western Australia in the small town of Roebourne on the North-West Coastal Highway, and then drove nearly two hours inland, you would arrive at the heartland of the Yindjibarndi people. Crossing wide stretches of desert and rocky outcrops, what is now Millstream Chichester National Park might appear like a mirage. Characterised by lush gorges, crystal pools, and springs ringed by desert peas, Northern bluebells, and wattle, the region is bejewelled with unexpected palm trees.

Introduced in the 1800s by Muslim cameleers who traversed the desert, these date palms were planted to provide food and mark waterholes, both of which were crucial to survival in the scorching heat of the Pilbara. For Yindjibarndi Elder, cultural custodian, artist, and linguist Wendy Hubert, these date palms make up part of the cultural history and landscape she is dedicated to preserving and sharing with young people in her community.

Symbols of the cameleers' attempts to carve out a place for themselves in a nation whose administration was less forgiving than the stark environment they travelled through, the palms are a testament to the endurance of the South Asian men who planted them, and to the generosity of the First Nations artist who paints them.

MAUROOF JAMEEL

Born 1960, Malé, Maldives
Lives and works in Malé, Maldives

HAMSHA HUSSAIN

Born 1992, Malé, Maldives
Lives and works in Malé

Hirigaa, 2024
slideshow

Courtesy the artists

MOHAMED IMRAN

Born 1984, Maldives
Lives and works in Maldives

Entwined, 2023
autoclaved aerated concrete block

Orb of intricacy, 2023
autoclaved aerated concrete block with epoxy

Courtesy of Gadheemee Collection, Maldives

Hewn from the reefs that ring the atolls and islands of the Maldives, 26 coral stone (hirigaa) mosques and compounds dot the crystalline shorelines of a nation that may well be under water by 2050. Architecturally unique, the buildings' interiors feature intricate timber and lacquer work alongside the hirigaa bricks and carving. Integrating Maldivian artforms and construction techniques, each structure speaks to the Indian Ocean rich in visual, material, and cultural exchange.

Still used for community worship to this day, the coral mosques embody a history of coral stone construction that extends as far back as 300 BCE, when the local people practised Buddhism. Informed by the carving techniques used as far as the Swahili Coast of East Africa, the aesthetics and crafts of the Buddhist period were adapted in the transition to Islam in roughly 1153 CE. In this way, each mosque represents a cultural metamorphosis wherein local materials informed centuries of creative and spiritual innovation.

In the face of ecological calamity, the mosques are symbolic of millennia of cultural transformation, documented here for posterity. With time, each of these buildings may well be drowned by the sea they were carved out of, ground into sand and washed onto shores as yet, unimagined.

KUBRA KHADEMI

Born 1989, Afghanistan
Lives and works in Paris, France

The birth giving #4, 2021
mixed media

Sans titre (Hole #4), 2022
gouache on paper

Sans titre (Hole #1), 2022
gouache on paper

Courtesy the artist and Galerie
Eric Mouchet, Paris

Sans titre (Hole #2), 2022
gouache on paper

Having grown up in a society where women's lives have been separated so neatly from those of men, Afghanistani artist Kubra Khademi sees women's spaces as poetic, liberated worlds trapped within a broader, more brutal one. "If you were to arrive in an Afghan village," the artist explains, "you would think that the women are so repressed there, but you would be wrong."

Describing the ease and humour of the discussions between her mother, aunties, and their friends when talking about sex, Khademi's works are a spirited retaliation against the patriarchal order, adorned with the lyrical and lurid poetry of the 13th-century Sufi mystic and Islamic scholar Rumi. Erasing men from her gouache works, as they are in the crude and coded conversations held between Afghanistani women, Khademi understands this oral tradition as creating a kind of feminine universe rich in metaphor, satire, and sexuality.

Each figure and naked bottom are unashamedly full-frontal, explicitly mocking the imagined piety and sacredness of women, whom men claim to revere yet continually disregard. Khademi, now based in Paris, is free from the constraints of her youth, and yet inspired by the wisdom of those still held by them, her work appearing both divine and profane.

AGNIESZKA KURANT

Born 1978, Lodz, Poland
Lives and works in New York, United States of
America

Post-Fordite 6, 2020
fossilised automotive paint,
epoxy resin, powdered stone,
steel

Courtesy the artist
Collection Hartwig Art
Foundation. Promised gift to the
Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel
Ergdoed / Rijkscollectie

Post-Fordite 7, 2022
fossilised automotive paint,
epoxy resin, powdered stone,
steel

Courtesy the artist

For some time, it may have felt to those who invested in America's vehicle manufacturing boom that they had stumbled upon a gold mine. Throughout the early 20th century, entire cities survived off the wealth that flowed in and out of the automotive industry.

For Detroit in the United States, it was its lifeblood. It was there that Henry Ford's car-production lines were conceived; each new vehicle trundling down the line, given wheels, roofs, engines, and a spray of hardy paint. A spray that often missed, leaving layers of bright paint congealed in the manufacturing bay that would be baked along with cars as they cured. A baking which could occur over 100 times, creating solid, rainbow rocks.

Known as Fordite or Detroit agate, these quasi-geological forms were cast aside until the decline of the automotive industry saw former, now unemployed, factory workers and scavengers descend upon the abandoned factories. Soon, Fordite was picked over, cut, and polished as if it were an actual gemstone, then circulated online where it began to accrue value. Agnieszka Kurant combines multiple pieces of Fordite from many defunct factories around the globe with epoxy resin, to make it appear like both a geological and archaeological discovery. For Kurant, the fossilised paint is an embodiment of more than a century of amalgamated human labour.

The work offers a speculation on how value is translated and transgressed through data capitalism, wherein the entire humanity is exploited as a factory of both digital and carbon footprints. *Post-Fordite 6* and *Post-Fordite 7* are windows into what will be left behind when the last remaining great industries collapse, and the gold mines revealed to be nothing more than holes in the earth.

IDAS LOSIN

Born 1976, Hualien City, Taiwan
Lives and works in New Taipei City, Taiwan
Truku/Atayal

Traveller, 2024
acrylic paint

Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney with generous support from the Taiwan Ministry of Culture and Cultural Division, Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Sydney
Courtesy the artist

There are more than 6,000 recorded languages in the world and roughly 1,000 of them belong to the same Austronesian language group. Originating in Taiwan and carried across the ocean via trade, travel, and colonisation, Austronesian languages have had millennia to extend as far as Indonesia, Hawai'i, Aotearoa New Zealand, Samoa, Madagascar, and Rapa Nui/Easter Island. Following this path, artist Idas Losin, who belongs to the Truku and Atayal Indigenous people of Taiwan, celebrates the largely ignored contributions made by her home country to a truly global dialogue.

In a project which has taken her to the furthest-flung locations where Austronesian languages are spoken, Idas has reconnected with her personal and cultural history in an inverted colonial expedition. Painting her impressions – in a subversion of the trope of the European male colonial voyager – this new mural combines works made by Idas in Rapa Nui to create a singular, fluid landscape. Here, worlds that seem far apart collide, connected by threads of language and culture which unspool from the artist's Indigenous identity and traverse oceans as if they were a current.

CHRISTOPHER PEASE

Born 1969, Boorloo (Perth), Whadjuk Noongar
Country, Australia

Lives and works in Dunsborough (Quedjinup),
Wardandi Country, Australia
Minang, Wardandi, Bibbulmun

Balga Resin #3, 2023

canvas, hessian and balga resin

Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney

Courtesy the artist and Gallerysmith, Melbourne

Balga trees have been an important resource in Australia's First Nations economy. The fronds were used to thatch shelters for the Noongar people of Western Australia, the pulp pulled from its trunk healed upset stomachs, its tall flower burned for hours as a torch, and when it began to decay, the tree would offer up a feast of delicious bardi grubs as a final parting gift. For lifetimes the Noongar people have used the tree's resin as a glue to bind together hunting weapons or walking sticks, tan leather, and waterproof cloaks. Christopher Pease uses balga resin to render rich and glistening works of art.

A Minang/Wardandi/Bibbulmun man, Pease's work usually combines Western-style figurative oil painting with traditional Indigenous storytelling to interrogate contemporary life and the loss of Indigenous land and culture. In this work, relying instead on the metaphorical resonance of the balga, Pease melts the resin onto a hessian surface to create an abstracted landscape the colour of blood and soil, which also evokes and subverts European art history tropes. Shifting with the light, the canvas is at once a memorial to, and celebration of, the adaptability and endurance of Indigenous knowledge and economies over millennia.

AGNIESZKA POLSKA

Born 1985, Lublin, Poland
Lives and works in Berlin, Germany

Film by Agnieszka Polska	Costume Designers: Aga Klepacka and Maciek Chorłży	Sound Design: Igor Kłaczyński
Produced by Freunde der Nationalgalerie	Make-up Artist: Aleksandra Dutkiewicz	Music Score: Igor Kłaczyński, based on "White Hill – Maromi's Theme" by Susumu Hirasawa
Production Designer: Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock	Hair Stylist: Kacper Raczkowski	Studio Sound: Thomas Wallmann
Production Manager: Dagmara Konsek	Set Manager: Janusz Dąbkiewicz	Animation: Agnieszka Polska
Messenger: Bartosz Bielenia	Steadicam Operator: Marcin Guzak	Character Animation and Lip Sync: Nathan Gray
Demon: Caroline Faber	Drone Operator: Vadim d'Erceville	Colour correction: Gregor Pfüller
Serafin: Olin Gutowski	Lighting Gaffer: Pawel Szastak	The correspondence of Mikołaj Serafin belongs to the collection of National Library in Wrocław, and was published by Societas Vistulana as "Korespondencja żupnika krakowskiego Mikolaja Serafina z lat 1437-1459', Kraków 2006, ed. Waldemar Bukowski, Tomasz Półciennik, Anna Skolimowska
Peasants: Daniel Milnes, Lutz Driever, Sven Beckstette, Rafał Nowak, Jacek Alichniewicz, Sebastian Zygowski, Mariusz Kazimierski	Lighting Assistant: Michał Michalski	
Director of Photography: Michał Dymek	Stuntwoman: Ewa Polska	
Focus Puller: Piotr Kwiatkowski	Horse Trainer: Aleksandra Ring	
Camera Assistant: Michał Cholewiński	Forest Ranger: Paweł Dobies	
Location Sound: Jan Moszumański	Special thanks to: Wieliczka Salt Mine, Grzegorz Gust, and the Szubin Forestry Management, Ethnographic Museum in Toruń, Fire Brigade of Nakło by Noteć	
Sound Assistant: Jakub Rożej		

The Demon's Brain, 2018

4-channel video installation with stereo sound

7:24 mins

Courtesy the artist and Georg Kargl Gallery, Vienna

A messenger boy rides from the salt mines of 15th-century Poland, when he is confronted by a disembodied demon in the woods. Espousing Christian theology, contemporary concerns regarding resource consumption, environmental destruction, and data capital, Agnieszka Polska's demon tasks the boy with preventing the apocalyptic-sounding future viewers know will transpire. There is an unbroken link between this story of exploitation in the European mainlands – set in the century that saw the beginnings of European colonisation of the world – and the later centuries of accelerating capitalism based on extractivism and subjugation of distant lands.

Drawing parallels between the collapse of the historical salt mining industry and the machinations of modern capitalism, *The Demon's Brain* grapples with the question of individual responsibility in the information age. While demons are traditionally seen as malevolent spirits, in computer science 'daemon' refers to background processes that invisibly manipulate user experiences. Much how AI, a kind of daemon, is commonly perceived as an inhuman invention, Polska argues it is only an extension of existing social structures and divisions of labour.

UNRECORDED MAKER

Pallay textile, Jalq'a

Bolivia, mid-20th Century

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the silver mining Spanish colonial city of Potosi in today's Bolivia was one of the largest cities in the world. It had a significant impact on the world economy through the Manila galleon and beyond, while enslaving up to half of the male Indigenous population of Peru and Bolivia. This gigantic underground extractivism and inhuman oppression unsurprisingly informed depictions of hell. In textile designs known as pallay, from the Quechua speaking Jalq'a community in the vicinity of Potosi, spirits and incarnate souls populate a dark space akin to what ancient Incas knew as ukhupacha, the underworld or earth's interior. This word was chosen by the Catholic Church to name the concept of European hell. The pallays are also populated by a devil spirit, the supay or saqra, which is purposefully represented as distinct from the Christian devils. They are depicted in various colonial images, including in the Potosi school of painting, which played a significant propaganda role in allowing the extractivist social set up to continue for centuries.

UNRECORDED MAKER

Otomi bark

Mexico, early 21st Century

Among the many crimes of Spanish colonisation of Mesoamerica was the systematic destruction of most Mayan and Aztec codices. These objects made from tree bark (amate) paper were repositories of vast systems of knowledge, now largely lost. So threatened were the Spaniards by the Indigenous worlds they were subjugating, that even the process of amate paper making was forbidden. The technology however survived, in secret and often bestowed with magical qualities, by communities such as the Otomi who began producing cut-out amate objects. They often represented benign spirits as well as the devil, always shown as shoed – like the European colonisers – while the positive spirits appear barefooted, akin to the Indigenous people. Today, more commercial versions of these cut-out spirits are available for purchase, such as the one displayed here, and continue to hint at Spanish colonisation's broad impact on Indigenous society.

UNRECORDED MAKER

Muslin sari

Bengal, Undivided India, 19th Century

Under British colonialism, the Bengali and wider Indian textile industries rapidly declined due to import policies that favoured industrially manufactured textiles from Britain. Muslin was one of the most coveted fabrics in Europe in the 18th and 19th centuries and thus widely depicted in the academic portraiture common in that region at the time. It was decimated by British economic policy to the point of the biological extinction of the muslin cotton subspecies in the second half of the 19th century. This muslin sari produced in the last years of this fibre's existence, depicts a long row of British soldiers on its borders, entrapping the cloth's broad and delicate field.

SIMON SOON

Born 1983, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Lives and works in Kuala Lumpur

King Kalakaua's Hawaiian Travels/Melayu Pono'I, 2017–18
four carved Gemelina wooden panels

Courtesy the artist

Remembered endearingly as the 'Merri Monarch', Hawai'i's King Kalakaua is credited with reviving many Hawaiian customs including Hula, in a reign defined by both cultural rejuvenation and devastation.

After the British took control of Fiji in 1874, the remaining independent island groups in the Pacific – Tonga, Hawai'i, and Sāmoa – were at risk of European or US annexation. As depicted by Simon Soon in *Melayu Pono'I*, King Kalakaua embarked on an international trip with the goal to secure the independence of his kingdom and its global position.

The King, in the words of the US consul, was "inflamed by the idea of gathering all the cognate races of the Islands of the Pacific into a great Polynesian Confederacy". Meeting with the consul-general of China in San Francisco, then with the monarchs of Japan, Siam, and Johor, the King sought to garner support for his anti-colonial confederacy.

Yet, much how a drowning man's final breath may be his biggest, the confederacy never came to be, despite the King's daring. In 1887 he would agree to a new constitution which led to the American annexation of the Kingdom of Hawai'i in 1898. Known as the Bayonet Constitution, he signed it at gunpoint.

Collaborating with a Filipino illustrator and craftsman in the bas-relief language that memorialised many nation-building projects throughout Southeast Asia, Soon's *Melayu Pono'I* connects Kalakaua's aspirations with the first political uprising in Asia, the Philippine Revolution, simultaneously propelling folk and craft history into the realm of national consciousness.

JOEL SHERWOOD SPRING

Born 1992, Gadigal Country, Sydney, Australia
Lives and works in Gadigal Country
Wiradjuri

DIGGERMODE, 2022

two-channel video installation

23 mins

Commissioned by ACMI

Presentation at the 24th Biennale of Sydney was made possible with generous assistance from Fondation Opale, as part of a collaboration to support Emerging Artists

Courtesy the artist

In *DIGGERMODE*, Wiradjuri artist Joel Sherwood Spring interrogates “how we might engage with materials differently if we think about their provenance and where they come from, where they’re extracted from, and what that means going forward”. As Indigenous lands across Australia are being mined, burnt and drained for resources, what happens to the deep archive of cultural knowledge embedded in the bedrock, floodplains, coastlines, spirits and bodies of First Nations people?

Against a background of AI-generated landscapes, mimicking the work of Arrernte painter Albert Namatjira ravaged by mining operations, Sherwood Spring asks another AI questions such as ‘Who’s your Mob?’ to test whether the archive of cultural material held online, in the cloud or museum collections, can accurately falsify Indigenous identities.

Famous sci-fi writer Phillip K. Dick once wondered if androids dreamt of electric sheep, in what is considered a ground-breaking rumination on what it is to be human. In *DIGGERMODE*, Sherwood Spring asks whether the rare-earth minerals in your phone remember Country.

UDEIDO COLLECTIVE

Established 2018, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
Based in West Papua, Indonesia

The Koreri Transformation, 2024
mixed media

Collection of Konfir Kabo

Presentation at the 24th Biennale of Sydney was made possible with generous support from the Australia-Indonesia Institute and generous assistance from Project Eleven

Courtesy the artists

Legend has it that long ago, a man named Manarmakeri went boar hunting on the island of Biak (modern Papua) when he was struck by a vision of a blissful village that held the secret to immortal life. In the days that followed, Manarmakeri observed that the people of his own village didn't conduct themselves like those in the vision. Before long, he left, vowing to return when his people had found a better way of life and he could take them with him to the undying village, known as Koreri.

The call for Papuan independence that gained momentum in the late 1930s and early 1940s came to be known as the Koreri Movement. The movement was non-violent, seeking only to preserve cultural traditions and self-determination in a unified Papua, akin to the sacred space Manarmakeri promised.

In *The Koreri Transformation*, Udeido Collective, established in 2018 by artists across the region, memorialise the spiritual and political ideals of Koreri in the face of the neo-colonial expansion and environmental destruction that plague Papua. Taking their name from ude, a leaf commonly used on the island to treat wounds, the collective aims to heal and reconstruct the collective memory of the Papuan people.

WILLIAM YANG

Born 1943, Mareeba, Australia
Lives and works in Sydney, Australia

*Mother Driving, My Uncle's
Murder Series, 2008*

*My Mothers Signature, My
Uncle's Murder series, 2008*

*Fang Yuen and Aunt Bessie, My
Uncle's Murder series, 2008*

No Chinese Flag, 2008

*Fang Yuen and Business Partners,
My Uncle's Murder series, 2008*

inkjet print—Epson
UltraChrome K3™ inks on
Innova Softex 315 gsm paper

*In Cane Fields, My Uncle's
Murder series, 2008*

Presentation at the 24th
Biennale of Sydney was made
possible with generous
assistance from Simon Chan AM
Art Atrium
Courtesy the artist

*Police Sketch of the Murder, My
Uncle's Murder series, 2008*

*Blood Spattered Documents, My
Uncle's Murder series, 2008*

“To write a good story,” William Yang tells the young artists who come to him for advice, “you have to bleed a little.” Indeed, across a career defined by unshrinking documentation of Australian culture, Yang has created an exceptionally vulnerable body of work.

Yang was born near Cairns in Queensland, a state that owes much to the contributions of the Chinese immigrants who made it their home following the gold rush. By the 1920s, despite having established the banana and sugarcane industries that supported the region, the White Australia Policy decimated the economic and cultural freedoms of the Chinese community in Queensland.

In the series ‘My Uncle’s Murder’, Yang tells the story of William Fang Yuen’s murder in 1922 at the hands of a White plantation manager. Using archival material and photographs, Yang memorialises not only the steep price of agricultural progress in modern Australia, but those whose blood paid for it. In one portrait, the artist stands in the place where his uncle died, staring defiantly down the lens, balancing the pain and pride innate to the diasporic experience.

YANGAMINI

Sprung from 2022 Tiyari, hot and humid season
of Tiwi Islands

Connected through Tiwi, Gulumirrgin, Warlpiri,
Kunwinjku, Yolŋu, Wardaman, Karajarri,
Gurindji, Burarra, and other extracted lands
and seas

Mapurtiti Nonga (Evil Ass Dreaming), 2024
mixed media

Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney and the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain with generous assistance from the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body
Courtesy the artists

On the morning of 2 November 2023, a ship owned by the Santos oil and gas company set out from Darwin to begin laying 263 kilometres of pipes beneath the Timor Sea. As it crossed the breakwater, news arrived that Australia's Federal Court had granted an emergency injunction, sought by the Tiwi Islands' Traditional Owners, to pause construction of the pipeline. Despite the countless testimonies regarding the region's spiritual importance to the Tiwi people, and evidence that the pipeline would disturb over 150 sites of paleogeographic interest and archaeological potential, the cessation is unlikely to be a lasting victory.

In development since 2004, Santos's Barossa Project is the latest in a long line of exploitative schemes and colonial projects undertaken in Tiwi. For Yangamini, a guerrilla collective of Tiwi sistagirls, the spread of this corruption is akin to the myth of Mapurtiti Nonga, the Evil Ass Spirit. When Mapurtiti Nonga talks, "bad gas comes from the ring hole of its mouth. Mouth like a bum hole ... this gas gets passed through the belly out the ass of one human ... onto the next. This is how Evil Ass dreaming infects our people both mentally and physically."

Yangamini have created a series of large-scale butt-plugs crafted out of local and traditional materials to metaphorically block the spread of the spirit's toxicity and rail against the literal gas projects that are threatening to tear holes in their pristine waters. On-screen interviews with Elders and the Yangamini Collective detail the impacts of the gas projects and their intertwined legacy of policymaking.

Remarkably playful, Yangamini challenges missionary sexual oppression, racialised governance, rhetorical sustainability, and mining extractions in the settler Northern Territory with the same strength and dignity that they defend the lands and waters that are rightfully theirs.

***This label was written prior to news on 15 January 2024 that the Federal Court had dismissed a legal challenge made by a group of Tiwi Islanders regarding the construction of Santos' \$5.8bn Barossa project.

DHOPIYA YUNUPIŃU

Born 1950, Miwatj (North East Arnhem Land),
Australia

Lives and works in Miwatj (North East Arnhem
Land)

Gumatj clan, YolŃu nation

Galiku, 2023

Galiku, 2023

Galiku, 2023

earth pigment on terracotta
ceramic

Courtesy the artist,
Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney, and
Buku-LarrŃggay Mulka Centre,
Yirrkala

The lands of the YolŃu people stretch over the northeast region of the Northern Territory from land to sea, each stringy bark, water goanna and movement of the tide rich with stories told in languages older than entire nation states; stories which, prior to the British colonisation of Australia, had been shared with others. Between rock and bark paintings, pottery shards and the tamarind trees that dot the coastline, First Nations people were involved in trade relations with the Bugis and Makassar merchants who would travel from today's Indonesia to the territory in search of trepang (sea cucumber).

In poems and songs, the stories of the economic, religious, and family relations between the YolŃu and Southeast Asian peoples have endured for centuries, with YolŃu languages still retaining hundreds of Makassar and Bugis words including rrupiya (money), bandirra (flag), buthulu (bottle), lipalipa (canoe) and ban'kulu (axe), or Arabic words borrowed via the traders such as Walitha'walitha (a spiritual being Allah Ta'ala, a name for God).

For Dhopiya YunupiŃu, the songlines that tell of visiting trepang fishers are ripe for inspiration. Employing traditional cross-hatching (miny'tji, in North East Arnhem Land), she depicts agricultural, familial and trade scenes that illuminate a history little known to the wider Australian community.

In the wake of colonisation, which has seen the YolŃu community threatened by Methodist missions, Japanese invasion, military occupation, and mining operations, the days of complex and more respectful Indonesian trade are difficult to conceive. Yet, in the Bugis dialect the word for 'farewell', djapana, is the same as the YolŃu word for sunset – that which will rise again.

JÚLIA CÔTA

Born 1935, Barcelos, Portugal
Lives and works in Barcelos

Diaba (she Devil), 2023

Diaba (she Devil), 2024

ceramic

Courtesy the artist

PRAZERES CÔTA

Born, 1962 Barcelos, Portugal
Lives and works in Barcelos

Devil, 2023

Devil, 2023

ceramic

Courtesy the artist

Behind the ancient stone buildings, across the river and past the city gardens of Barcelos, Portugal, a narrow street is named for Júlia Côtá, the 88-year-old ceramic artist who has lived and worked there since she was nine.

The granddaughter of João Domingos Côtá da Rocha, known as the father of the Galo de Barcelos (Rooster of Barcelos), Côtá is herself considered one of the greatest living practitioners of traditional Portuguese clay art (Figurado de Barcelos). Côtá's dolls, as she calls them, collapse male, female and animal forms to create vibrant mythological creatures familiar from popular and folk Portuguese culture, with its roots in pre-Christian Europe.

In Côtá's imagining, Diablo (the Devil), a principal character of the Portuguese Carnival, is effeminate and shapely, adorned with the glimmering ornaments distinct to the Minho region of Portugal. On their undersides, the artist has signed her initials, two letters shown to her by a collector as, like many women of her generation, Côtá was not taught to read or write. Despite this, over seven decades of artmaking, she has created entire worlds wherein the boundaries between myth and culture as well as genders blur.

ALBERT NAMATJIRA

Born 1902, Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory, Australia
Died 1959, Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory
Western Aranda people, Northern Territory

River Red gum - Salam, 1950s
reproduction, watercolour on paper

Gift of Douglas and Barbara Mullins 2006
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
© Namatjira Legacy Trust/Copyright Agency 20061P4

Arrernte man Albert Namatjira was not the first Indigenous artist to paint in a European style, but his landscape works have endured as icons synonymous with the Australian outback. Having been taught by fellow artist Rex Battarbee, Namatjira's skill with watercolour was taken as evidence to support the 'success' of racist assimilation policies which defined colonial Australia from the 1940s onwards. In 1957, Namatjira became the first Aboriginal person to be granted conditional Australian citizenship, a supposed honour revoked as soon as 1958 when he was charged with supplying alcohol to Indigenous people and sentenced to 6 months of labour. He would serve only two and die shortly after.

There was a time when Namatjira's work was considered a submission to European pictorial styles and by extension, European dominion over Indigenous lands. Today his work is understood as a powerful and coded representation of generations of Indigenous knowledge, sacred sites, and his own connection with Arrernte Country for which he was a traditional custodian.

Hidden in plain sight the *River Red gum* is carved with the word 'Salam...'. Likely a fragment of the Muslim greeting 'As-salamu alaykum' this discreet detail hints at cameleers having passed by. Powerfully evoking the hidden yet ubiquitous Muslim presence at the very core of Australia, the red and ochre world of Namatjira's paintings, spotted with white Ghost gums, palm ringed gullies, rocky outcrops, and dusky mountain ranges present what many understand to be Australia's 'dead centre' as an intricate, interconnected and beating heart.

CANDICE LIN

Born 1979, Concord, United States of America
Lives and works in Los Angeles, United States
of America

Untitled, 2024

ceramic with manganese glaze, wood, fibreglass, resin, manganese and ochre pigments, preserved sea cucumbers, silk, bamboo, paper, water, pumps, plastic tubing, wire, miscellaneous hardware

Co-commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney and Monash University Museum of Art | MUMA, Melbourne with generous support from Terra Foundation for American Art
Courtesy the artist and François Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles

Despite a dominant narrative that casts First Nations Australians as disconnected from the wider world, for several centuries they were part of an extensive trading system. Trepang (sea cucumber) is known to have been exchanged between the First Nations people of coastal North Australia and late Ming, early Qing China via the Makassar (Indonesian) trade network. Small Makasan boats called prau (or perahu) are depicted in early Indigenous Australian drawings made from manganese, an ore mined dangerously from Indigenous land to this day.

Interrogating the boundary between cultural exchange and exploitation, Candice Lin has used manganese-gold-glazed ceramics to map the region between Australia and Asia, surrounded by a slick, black moat made of manganese and resin, reminiscent of an oil spill and traditional Chinese winding canal tables. While the fragments of a ceramic disc spin like a fractured record, an accompanying audio tells the story of a sea cucumber whose sexuality is morphed by an imagined 'manganese spill'. At once discordant and melodic, Lin's work depicts cultures and identities drifting apart and flowing together, both as fluid and as enduring as the ocean, and equally susceptible to corruption.