



**MORE
THAN A
TARRANG
(TREE)**

**MEMORY, MATERIAL &
CULTURAL AGENCY**



Boundary Bend where the Murray and Murrumbidgee rivers meet in north-western Victoria, Australia. This is Country where Tati Tati, Wiradjuri, Muti Muti, Wamba Wamba and Latje Latje Aboriginal nations meet, a relationality just like this beautiful tree showing connections of what is above, below and around. Photo: Brian Martin, August 2021.

MORE THAN A TARRANG (TREE): MEMORY, MATERIAL AND CULTURAL AGENCY

By Professor Brian Martin, Kimberley Moulton, Professor Brook Andrew and Dr Jessica Neath

“It is more than an object, it is a living entity that reminds us of our past.”

—N'Arweet Professor Carolyn Briggs AM

Introduction

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Boonwurrung and Wurundjeri peoples of the Kulin Nation on whose lands we work and we extend our acknowledgement and respect to all Traditional Owners on whose lands we have visited as part of this research, from where cultural belongings in the exhibition come from, and the Ancestral Countries of all the contributors including: Bundjalung, Muruwari, Kamilaroi, Wiradjuri, Tati Tati, Muti Muti, Latje Latje, Dja Dja Wurrung, Yorta Yorta, Wemba Wemba, Wurundjeri, Waddawurrung, Waveroo, Dhudhuroa, Gundungurra, Ngunnawal, Birriah, Gurreng Gurreng, Dunghutti, Lardil and Yangkaal.

This exhibition presents the significance of trees in First Peoples cultures of south-eastern Australia and practices of mark making. *Tarrang* is a Boonwurrung word for tree. By speaking to the memory, material practice and cultural agency of First Peoples and our cultural belongings, we can understand how trees are so much more than an object. As Boonwurrung Senior Elder N'arweet Professor Carolyn Briggs AM reminds us, they are living entities which articulate our relationships to Country, to each other, and to the Ancestors. Rather than a (re)presentation, this exhibition *presents* this agency through creative practice.

Colonialism has disrupted our systems of relationality mandating a way of looking that objectifies and denies the knowledge of Country. *More than a Tarrang (tree): Memory, Material and Cultural Agency* brings together cultural belongings from south-eastern Australia in the collections of Museums Victoria, contemporary creative practice from senior and emerging practitioners, and research with First Peoples knowledge holders to honour and reflect on these relational ways of being with trees.

Developing this exhibition has included senior practitioners mentoring younger ones and through the guidance of Elders and Traditional Owners. We have spent time in the collections of Museums Victoria and at collections in Geneva, Basel, Berlin and London. We have been on Country listening to trees, walking along waterways and regenerating knowledge by tracing connections between trees, cultural materials, people, language and place.

Kin on Country

In an Indigenous worldview, trees are reminders that knowledge is alive in Country, they have agency, and exist in a reciprocal relationship with humans and the non-human through a system of relationality – they are kin. As Bundjalung, Kamilaroi and Muruwari practitioner Brian Martin has explained in Bundjalung language there are many different words which speak to this significance of trees including ‘bunggabi’ and ‘ganggil’ which means the shoulder of a person, how your arm connects to your shoulder, and also translates as the branch of a tree joining a trunk. This word has plural meanings, as it also describes the wing of a bird (Andrew and Martin, 2020).

The languages of First Peoples embody this relationality between entities. Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung language activist Lou Bennett and Goenpul, Yuggera and Bundjalung poet Romaine Moreton describe how First Peoples, “are the embodiment of our languages and have been since the beginning” (Bennett and Moreton 2020). The significance of trees for First Peoples is found in this complex relationship between people, place, language and practice.

In the early phases of developing the research for this exhibition, some of us travelled together along the Murray River from Wodonga to Boundary Bend to connect with the old trees along this great waterway. Considered the state border between New South Wales and Victoria, there are many Aboriginal nations that meet on this river including Yorta Yorta, Wemba Wemba, Wadi Wadi, Waveroo, Wiradjuri, and others. Wiradjuri and Ngunnawal artist Brook Andrew has created a new series of photographs for this exhibition, *guulany (solar) 1-6*, which honour the Ancestral memories of these trees. Articulated through experimental methods of photographic solarisation, the trees appear as dynamic forms in dialogue with the knowledge of place.

Old trees are important to healthy ecosystems. They provide habitat for many beings and store carbon,

but they also provide memories of our Ancestors. In this exhibition we present *Yalukit Weelam Tarrang*, an old eucalypt that had fallen and was found by Boonwurrung cultural practitioner David Tournier along the Werribee River. It has two marks – or scars – where bark was removed to make tools such as coolamons, canoes and shields. As David explained to us, “This tree is evidence of our Old People’s occupation and culture, of our culture being practised and being alive.”

From the Museum’s First Peoples collection, we also present a number of tree sections in the Birrarung Gallery showing different kinds of marks, a technology practised across south-eastern Australia and beyond. While these trees are often called scar trees, we prefer to call them culturally modified or marked trees. The term scar tends to evoke a wound or trauma, and therefore a deficit. It does not reflect the careful process of removing bark which is designed to bring minimal harm to the tree.

Using bark to create tools requires learning from Country. Specific trees are used for different purposes, collection is seasonal and in response to the movement of the sun. The tree continues to live and becomes part of a complex demarcation of place. Uncle Charles Moran and Uncle Greg Harrington, Elders of the Bundjalung Nation, and Wiradjuri scholar Norm Sheehan have described such practices as “living in intelligent environments” where knowledge lives in Country rather than being the discovery or invention of man – this is a colonial idea. Whereas, recognising “the agency of all forms of life redirects companionship with the world. Respect is a key and moderating conception for this process” (Moran et al 2018).

The practice of carving trees is also manifest in the matrix of relations between people and place. Also termed dendroglyphs by non-Indigenous people, these carved trees are important grave markers or are created for significant places of ceremony known as Bora in Kamilaroi and Wiradjuri Countries.



Greg Griffiths, Alfred Priestley, Brian Martin, Bradley Webb, still from *Thulu Ugal (song tree)*, 2023.
Image courtesy of the artists.

The visual languages of these carvings are the lessons of the Bora and they speak about cultural responsibility mapped into the movement of rivers across these lands and also of the stars above. Many of these sacred carved trees have been removed from Country and are now held in museum collections across Australia and the world.

Speaking publicly to the meaning and designs of these sacred carved trees is not part of this forum and not appropriate practice. Traditional Owners are regenerating this knowledge, which requires attending to cultural protocols of who can have access. Kamilaroi Traditional Owners Greg Griffiths

and Alfred Priestley, with Bundjalung, Kamilaroi and Muruwari practitioner Brian Martin, have begun reconnecting with a carved tree that was removed from their Country in the early twentieth century. Following a number of trades between collectors and museums, it is now housed in the Museum der Kulturen Basel in Switzerland. In this exhibition we are sharing the stories of this reconnection and re-spiriting, in the video work *Thulu Ugal (song tree)*. This has included travelling to Basel to perform ceremony with the tree (thulu) and marks the start of a repatriation process which will return the tree to Country.

If Only They Could Talk



Tree section being unwrapped in collection storage, Museums Victoria First Peoples Collection, Merri-bek, March 2022. Photo: Brian Martin.



Brook Andrew, detail from *gulany (solar) 3*, 2023.
Image courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne.

The presentation of tree sections on pallets in this exhibition is just one example of the strange history of ‘collecting’ that imbues museums. There are stockpiles of cultural materials belonging to First Peoples in museum collections across the world including here, at Museums Victoria. Commonly registered as ‘unknown’ maker or only known in the context of their collector, little cultural information of their designs or maker is known. Behind the scenes, in the museum storehouses, the extent of these collections is vast and an example of early hysteria around mass collecting. For example, in the storage at the Museum of Ethnography in Berlin there are so many cultural belongings from Australia their cabinets are overflowing. Clubs, walking sticks and boomerangs are “strung up like cured meat” on butcher’s hooks as a space-saving technique (Moulton 2018). The sheer mass of these collections indicates the complete objectification of these materials, and a disconnect from their material presence. “This is the cultural divide,” as Brian reiterated in our yarning, “we would never go somewhere and take something that didn’t belong to us.”

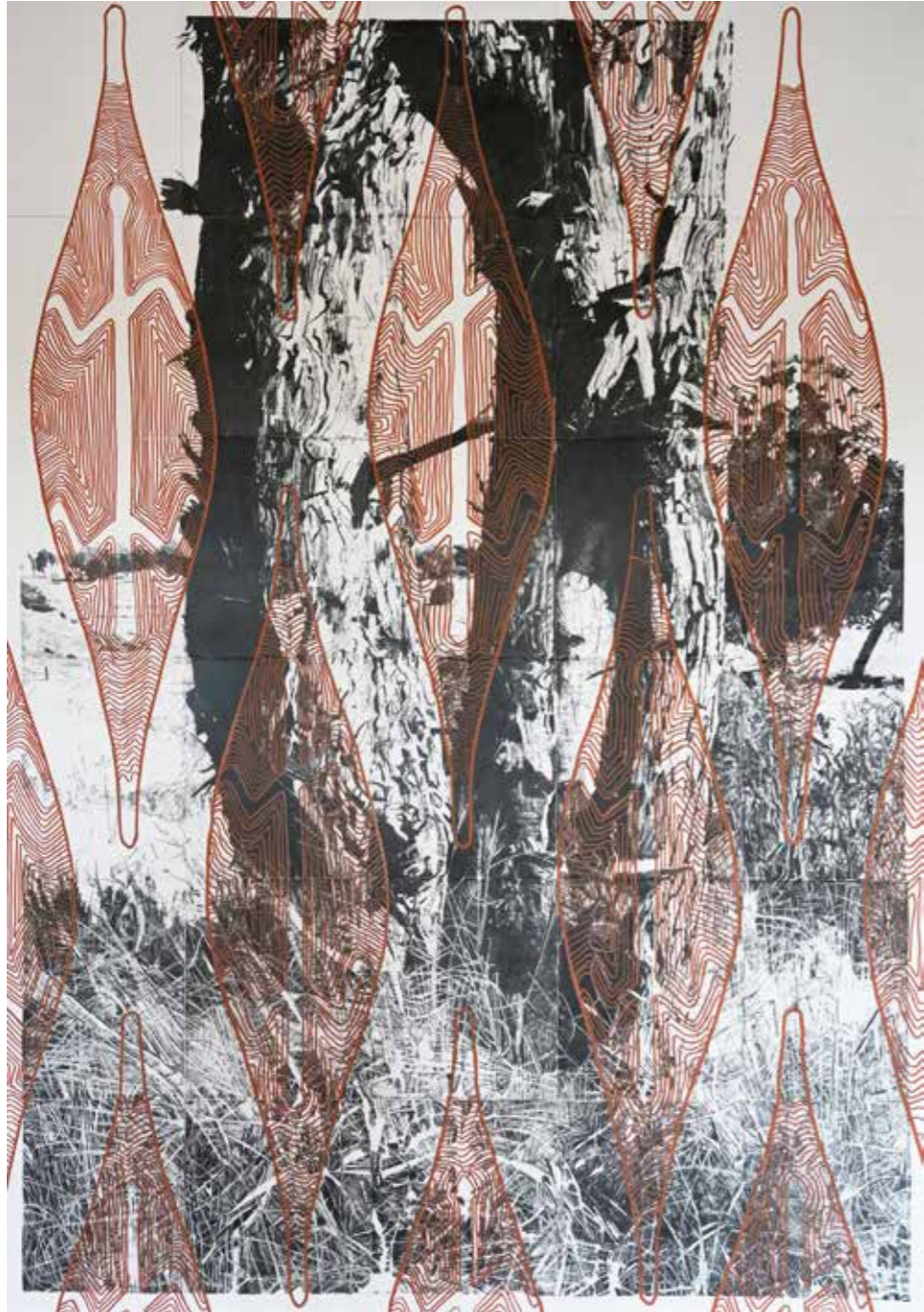
Yorta Yorta, Wurundjeri and Wiradjuri artist Moorina Bonini has created a new installation for this exhibition, *Untitled (ethnographic container)*, which repurposes wooden storage boxes that formerly held the Museum’s collection of stone tools from south-eastern Australia. The materiality of the wooden boxes stacked on the museum floor is made present through the application of mark making by burning across their surfaces. Moorina begins a journey of recovery. Originally these boxes come from a tree, but they have been made to perform in dangerous ways by the Museum as tools for collecting, and it is here that Moorina reconfigures their meaning.

In creating this exhibition, we wanted to include cultural belongings from the collections of the Museum, and we yarned about how we could bring these materials into the exhibition, while needing

to be mindful of the Museum’s role to protect and conserve. So many of these belongings were created for everyday use. They are meant to be touched, sung to, carried and remade. What does it mean to bring these belongings out of the storehouse and place them behind Perspex, or in a vitrine for exhibition? Is it a continuation of the colonial coding? How can our art in the exhibition space challenge that and allow us to hear their voices? We were guided by Yorta Yorta curator Kimberley Moulton who has initiated a number of important cultural programs to regenerate living connections and knowledge of cultural materials including this exhibition.

A series of connections is made throughout the exhibition between cultural belongings and contemporary creative practice. Brian Martin’s series of mixed media works *Baw-li tharra burriin* is a layering of his large-scale drawings of marked trees with painted designs inspired by the patterns and vibrations found on shields. The surface of the works begin to hum, materialising that relationality between trees, cultural belongings, material practice and place. A relationality that is also made present in the print by Lardil and Yangkal artist Maya Hodge, *If I could speak the way you do*. It is a conversation through poetry with an Ancestor dilly bag that Maya connected with in the Museum’s collections. Maya’s words become part of the intricate weave creating a striking new design.

Importantly, our exhibition does not present these belongings as objects, as artefacts of a broken or dead culture that need conserving, which is a convenient myth for white Australia and the Western academy. We prefer to think of them as cultural belongings, Ancestor belongings, or even ngawal murrungamirra, Wiradjuri words meaning Powerful Objects. It is a term Brook Andrew has adopted in his creative practice to imagine the life force of these objects, if only they could talk.



Brian Martin, *Baw-li tharra burriin Kamilaroi 6*, 2023. Image courtesy of the artist.



Moorina Bonini, detail from *Untitled (ethnographic container)*, 2023.
Image courtesy of the artist.

Ways of Looking

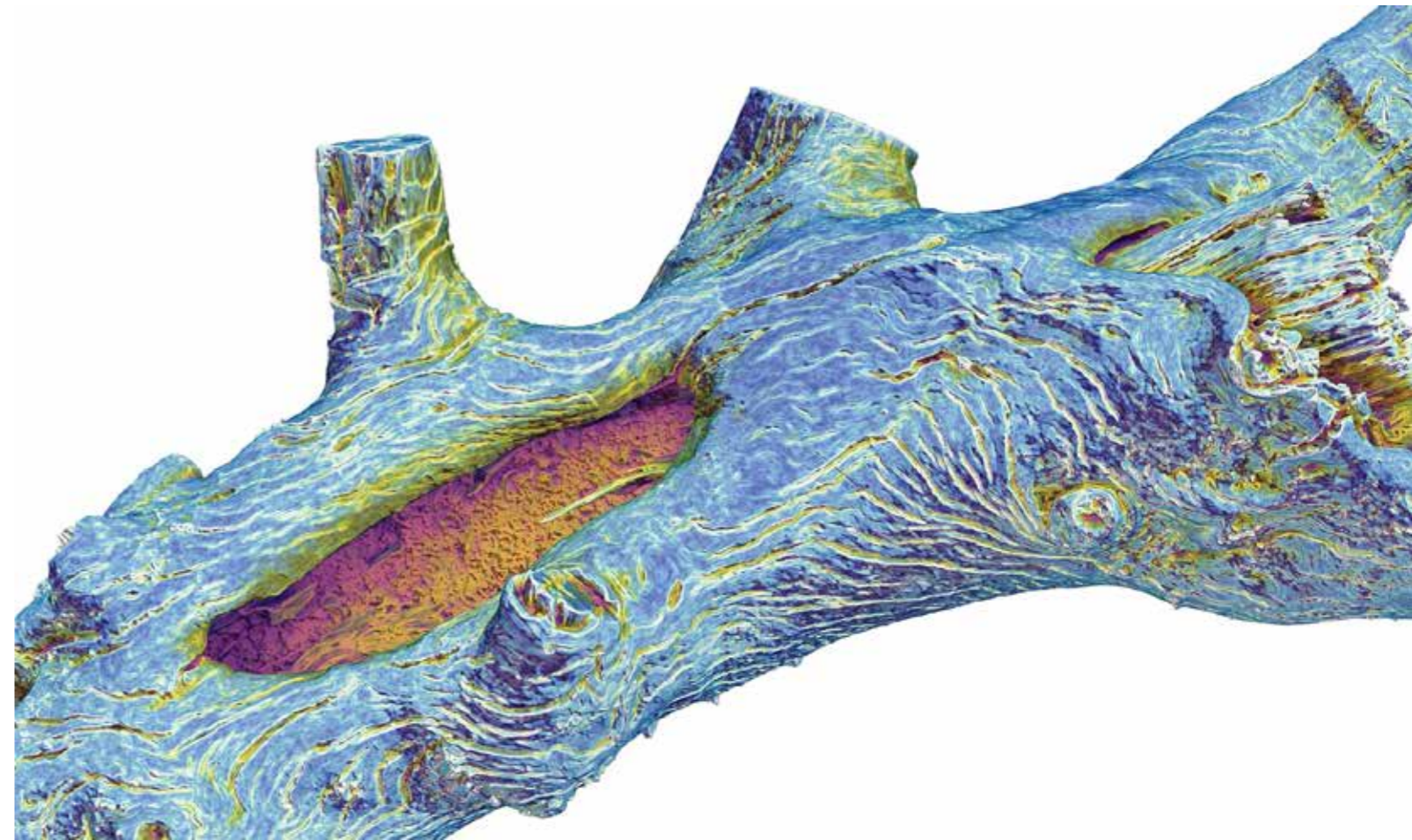
Colonialism has disrupted and attempted to break the knowledge systems embedded in the agency of trees and of Country. This has entailed so much violence in both direct and systemic ways, which is far from over including the disregard for these knowledge systems. Practices of carving trees are no longer prolific and the making of shields and canoes continues but only by a few people in communities. So many of the cultural belongings made by Ancestors that can teach us about making and designing are housed in museum collections, often far from Country, including overseas in Geneva, London, Paris and beyond. Most are kept in storage and require permission to access which is not always granted. What is not broken are Indigenous ways of looking and ways of being with trees and with cultural belongings that sustain a deep relationality with Country.

When we visit cultural belongings in museum collections as First Peoples we are drawn to the materiality of these belongings. Considering what kind of tree is this made from, or where do these grasses come from (e.g. for a weaving) is to begin to make a connection, a return to Country. It is a different way of thinking about provenance to a Western museum way that is concerned with the identity of collectors and the exchange between people and museums. This mode of thinking almost removes the agency of these belongings and gives 'authorship' to the collector. There are many Indigenous systems of connection that are important when accessing cultural belongings, and in bringing these to the fore, we attempt to resituate how museums should interact and think about these materials.

Recognising the pattern making across different material practices is also important in how cultural belongings are interconnected. This is about how trees connect to not only wooden material but in practice to basket weaving, and the production of possum cloaks. We see the relationship between the mark marking on a shield design, the patterns made by tempering wood in production of a club or shovel, and the loops and tucks that generate intricate patterns in a basket weave. There is movement in this mark making which speaks to the design elements found in nature. For example, the grain lines in an old tree create a pattern that similarly wavers and vibrates. They are song.

Moreton and Bennett describe rematriation as a process of recovery, "where a return to Country is the restoration of a spiritual life" (Bennett and Moreton 2020). An example they provide is walking on Country and speaking Dja Dja Wurrung, focusing on the sounds of the spoken language, and not how it has been written in the colonial archives. They explain that the "sound of our languages are the vibrations that are true to each place and marks them as unique." Like the sounds of spoken language, mark making also creates movement and vibrations which are specific to an experience with Country. It is about creating an embodied and relational way of looking, an invitation to listen to Country – the place where the mark making comes from and the place where you are.

Key to the creative practice of Brian Martin is this agency of mark making. Brian calls his large-scale charcoal drawings of trees methexical countryscapes. They are not representations of trees but embodiments of Country where each mark is a



N'arweet Carolyn Briggs, David Tournier, Brian Martin, Stanislav Roudavski, Alex Holland and Julian Rutten, detail from *Kummargi Gadhaba Yulendj Tarrang*, 2023. Image courtesy of the artists.



Tommy McCrae, Hunting scene with woman and child, 1890.
Museums Victoria First Peoples Collection.

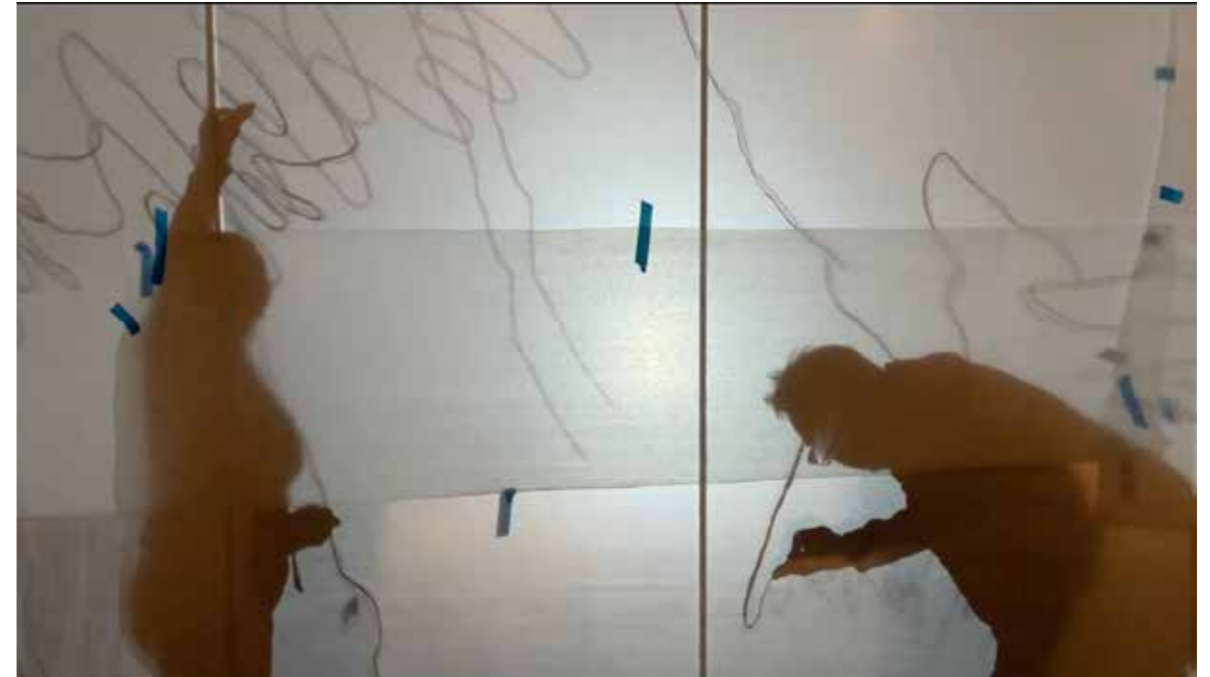
material manifestation bringing into existence the immaterial world. The layering of mark making in his new series of works *Baw-li tharra burriin* takes this practice further. In these works, the repeated patterning generates vibrational effects creating an experience for the viewer that is both visual and auditory.

Such effects are also present in the artworks by Elder Tommy McCrae (1836-1901) who was born near the Goulburn River in the upper Murray region of Victoria. Works included in the exhibition illustrate the cultural significance of trees for First Peoples with depictions of hunting and other scenes, but also evidence a strong practice of mark making with the immediacy afforded by ink on paper and the use of patterning which make the drawings sing.

Imagining the song of trees has guided the new score by Lardil and Yangkal artist Maya Hodge titled *thungal (tree) score*. Inspired by

conversations with trees on Gundungurra Country and the intricate traces left by larvae moths on gum trees, Maya connects with recordings of her Great Grandmother to write a new musical score which is a stunning mediation on trees and Ancestors. The exhibition includes both the soundscape from the score and its visual manifestation as mark making on the window in the Birrarung Gallery.

Mark making and these embodied ways of looking have also informed the project *Kummargi Gadhaba Yulendj Tarrang*. These words in Boonwurrung roughly translate as “the knowledge of these trees is rising up.” N’arweet Carolyn Briggs and David Tournier together with Brian Martin have collaborated with Deep Design Lab to 3D scan *Yalukit Weelam Tarrang* using methods of laser and geometric analysis. In our yarning, the possibilities afforded by these technologies is talked about as another way to continue practices of mark making – where it is not a representation



Maya Hodge, work in progress *thungal (tree) score [visual composition]*, 2023. Photo: Jessica Neath.

or replica but can be a new iteration of a tarrang (tree). These technologies are also opening up new conversations about the life force and memories of old or fallen trees, as well as new ways to think about conservation and repatriation of cultural heritage. It is about how we can look at Country from a different positioning.

First Peoples mark making tells stories, with maps of Country and river systems, and designs relating to totem, significant sites and kinship relationships. With a diversity of mediums and methods across south-eastern Australia, mark making continues in contemporary practices of drawing, painting, photography, sculpture, the digital sphere and beyond. Mark making embodies relationality with Country through memory, material and cultural agency, and in this exhibition, we substantiate: *More than a Tarrang*.

Restoring the Spirit: Access, Agency and Beyond the Colonial Centre

Kimberley Moulton, Senior Curator South Eastern First Peoples Collection , Museums Victoria.

To speak of the ideological apparatus underlying museum practices is to speak of the relation amongst power, representation and cultural identity; of how history is written and communicated, of whose history is voiced, and whose is silenced. (Corrin 2004)

The link between Country and coloniser, information in museums and who writes history details the position of the settler colonial narrative that has its focus on extraction, division and empire building. This works in opposition to First Peoples relationality where, as shared through our exhibition *More than a Tarrang (Tree): Memory, Material and Cultural Agency*, knowledge, cultural material and community exist in reciprocal and respectful relationships of interconnectedness. Remnants of the colonial consciousness can be seen in collections across the world. The extension of the violence and trauma from their history is manifest through the physical presence of cultural belongings in museums with minimal community access and the little cultural information that sits with them. In this context the intent of the empire is perpetuated if the only voice presented is that of the collector or institution. Dislocated from Country and people, these cultural belongings are trapped in the 'ethno present' and their agency beyond the historic past continues to be denied.

Pakana curator and scholar Zoe Rimmer speaks to this ethnographic legacy and her cultural material from Lutruwita (Tasmania) in museums stating, "For institutions that hold our cultural heritage captive, they are isolated objects that tell a story of encounter, and thus are appropriated into colonial history" (Rimmer 2023). A solution to this temporal colonial paradigm and to restore the spirit of community with collections is access and connection. In this process we can inscribe a new story and acknowledge what has been taken

through a current and relevant community position. First Peoples contemporary art and practice can offer a restitution of sorts to this space.

With much of the early First Peoples collections, the Country where they are from, the maker, their story and cultural narratives were unrecorded by collectors. This speaks to the early practice of dislocating cultural belongings from people and their systems of knowledge. In museums without community access, collections sit in this holding pattern of coloniality. Often registered as 'unknown' maker or only known in the context of broad state based regionality, their story is that of the collector or institution which ignores the ongoing connection they have to living communities. This exhibition considers how we can regenerate the spirit of collections and positions cultural material held at Museums Victoria in dialogue with Indigenised ways of seeing and contemporary art. Through considering trees on Country and in collections, as well as the many systems of knowledge and cultural practices they embody, we can renew story for these Ancestor belongings. The contemporary art works in this exhibition both critique these colonial legacies and go beyond the colonial centre to focus on the continuum of connection and existence that reaches back to Country and community.

The cultural belongings in this exhibition speak to the mark making of our Ancestors and the installation approach is a critical observation on the collecting methodologies of the Museum's past. Museums Victoria was established in 1854 and is one of the oldest collecting institutions in Australia.

Like all museums, the history of collecting First Peoples culture was at the heart of its establishment. Cultural material or 'artefacts' were taken, traded, brought and exchanged through to the 1970s and Ancestors were taken from their graves in active collection and through donation from early settlers, farmers, anthropologists and amateur collectors. You do not have to scratch the surface far to come across traumatic histories within the memory of the institution and it is the role of First Peoples curators, collection managers and community to reconcile with these histories on a daily basis.

I recently encountered a letter in the archive from 1902 from the then director of the Museum, Walter Baldwin Spencer, who wrote to then chief police commissioner Thomas O'Callaghan requesting that he send the letter out to "all of the police in the colony" to acquire "Aboriginal skulls, body parts and wooden implements." Presumably some of these continue to exist in the Museum's collection. These histories are ugly and hard to reckon with. However, in recent history, there has been a shift with First Peoples agency in the Museum developing through employment and leadership and the acknowledgement of the violent history and the continued trauma this causes First Peoples communities with active repatriation being a priority. But the question remains, if there is no access to the many thousands of cultural belongings in museums nor growth in First Peoples representation within these institutions, how can we de-centre the colonial narrative and as Zoe reflects, shift them out of the appropriated settler state of being?

In this exhibition we offer a step in reconciling these histories, to centre the voices of community that continue to connect with cultural materials and that practice culture in their own ways. We offer an Indigenised way of looking at collections through the lens of mark making, the deep roots to Country both metaphorically and literally with tarrang (trees) and take a critical consideration of museological practice. There are three sub themes that act as pillars to the show: *Kin on Country* considers trees and belongings as kin, *Ways of Looking* reflects on First Peoples knowledge and ways of seeing, and *If Only They Could Talk* reflects on memory and critical analysis of museum practices.

In the Birrarung Gallery there is a large selection of what is commonly known as 'scar trees' but in the context of our work, we refer to them as marked trees or as Professor Brian Martin relates, culturally modified trees. These trees were cut from Country in the 1900s by an early settler who travelled through north-western Victoria as a draughtsman and had an interest in 'preserving' First Peoples materials. These trees carry the marks of shields and coolamon dishes. There are many marked trees still on Country, thousands of them along riverways, highways and even in the heart of Melbourne. This display, on the pallets they are kept on in storage, is a small example of the expansive collection of tree segments that the Museum holds; this selection is being seen for the first time in 123 years.

Situated throughout the gallery are cultural materials that reflect the intricate designs of our Ancestors. There are shields, digging sticks and clubs from



Kimberley Moulton (Yorta Yorta) at the Museum of Ethnography Geneva with nineteenth century Victorian Murray River Club, after connecting to the belonging, a long neck turtle was apparent, a totem of the Yorta Yorta People, May 2022. Photo: Brian Martin.

the mid 1800s, works on paper and reproductions of early illustrations that give us an insight into the world of the Ancestors. In the First Peoples touring gallery we have works by Elder Tommy McRae (1836-1901), who was born near the Goulburn River in the upper Murray region of Victoria. His works in the exhibition detail life with his people, hunting for possum, ceremony and family life. Created around the 1890s the drawings connect to trees and the interrelated space of everyday use and cultural maintenance.

The exhibition also reflects on the cultural practice of possum cloak making and the significance of trees in this process. We see a hafted axe used to pry bark off trees with an example of a peg that would have pinned the possum skins out on the wood to tan. There are visual links made to the works of Tommy McRae with scenes of climbing trees to hunt possum

and floating bark canoes. Between the drawings is a fighting shield in conversation with the subjects in Tommy's drawing who are holding their shields in ceremony. This shield shares with us the refined mark making of the Ancestor who made it, with the red and white ochre and clay tightly packed between the fine lines.

In this section we also see reproductions of illustrations by William Blandowski and Gustav Mutzel printed in 1862 with language used at the time to describe First Peoples as 'Natives'. It is not a word that the community accept as appropriate today. These works show us, although through the interpretation of non-Indigenous people, a look into our not-so-distant past to understand the use of tarrang (tree) and the interrelated cultural practices that were happening. We see this in dialogue with a drawing from Professor Brian Martin which shows a

tarrang with the remnants of foot holes in it. Again, a reminder of the people that were here before, and their working with tarrang on Country, not just as a resource but cared for as Kin.

Across from this story we see the significance of women's story in this space. The way in which gender is represented and understood in nineteenth century collections has been driven by the data associated with the cultural material from a predominately non-Indigenous male perspective that are shaped by layers of misogyny and racism. Women and gender have often been written out or not included and within a Western binary, the interest of these early collectors was focused on what they perceived to be male roles, objects and knowledges. They were also not privy to the complex dynamics of gender and these roles within First Peoples society.

There are many belongings that are defined as 'weapons' which associate them to men's use and purely for fighting or defence, but many women and other community members would have made and used them. Digging sticks registered as 'club' or 'men's weaponry' are common, sitting in collections for over a hundred years misplaced and wrongly identified. This is one example of how we must consider a two-worlds approach and unlearn what is told to us through 'ethno-histories' and museum collections. We see in the display of women's story digging sticks and clubs that would have been made and used by women, for hunting, fighting and punishment. There are cultural belongings that speak to a deeper dynamic of the links to mark making between wooden materials and weaving practice, depictions of shared iconography and figurative carvings. And in the third Tommy McRae work, a woman with spear carrying possum and a child with a toy boomerang. This story is re-thinking the spear as a men's object and highlighting the role cultural material had in teaching children.

In the painting *Native Fight on the Lower Goulburn River in 1842* we see a vibrant scene of early life in the region. Marked canoe trees flank the scene with strong women in the foreground, digging sticks in hand perhaps in combat or in a game of technique and strength. We see small huts by the trees with bark cut for the shelters, canoes on the river and the relationality between Country and people. This work was by non-Indigenous woman Caroline Le Souëf, who was one of the first settlers of the region. It was uncommon for a woman in the early colony to be

working as an artist. This work tells us much about history and the sovereign strength that First Peoples women embody beyond the patriarchy that exists within collections.

The contemporary works shared by the artists in this exhibition manifest tangible the connection still held for Country and with cultural belongings. Esteemed Elder N'arweet Professor Carolyn Briggs AM, Moorina Bonini and Maya Hodge hold the space of important female voices, connecting to the Ancestor sisters and Aunties who are present in these cultural belongings and stories.

It is significant to develop an exhibition where community can have sustained access to collections. Through this approach to access and agency with cultural material and responding to these histories we are rewriting ourselves out of the colonial grasp of museums and collections. Belongings are more than a tree, our culture is more than the historic past, we are living now, and we are re-directing our futures beyond the colonial centre of institutions.

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Biographies

Professor Brook Andrew is a Wiradjuri, Ngunnawal artist and curator. His interdisciplinary practice is driven by the collisions of intertwined narratives, often emerging from the mess of the “Colonial Wuba (hole)”. Brook recently premiered his work of theatre *GABAN (strange)* at *YOY!! Care, Repair, Heal*, the Gropius Bau, Berlin and within the Grand Court Galleries of the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. The narrative of *GABAN* is led by ngawal murrungamirra, Wiradjuri words meaning Powerful Objects, imagining the voice of objects held in museum collections. Current and upcoming exhibitions include *No Feeling Is Final. The Skopje Solidarity Collection*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna; Liverpool Biennial; and the 22nd Biennial Sesc_Videobrasil. As a curator, Brook was the artistic director of the First Nations and artist-led *NIRIN: the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020)*, an international advisor for the Sámi Pavilion at the 59th Venice Biennale (2022), and a co-curator of *YOY!! Care, Repair, Heal* at the Gropius Bau (2022). Brook is Enterprise Professor in Interdisciplinary Practice and Director of Reimagining Museums and Collections at the University of Melbourne. He is represented by Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne; Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney; and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris and Brussels.

Moorina Bonini is a proud descendant of the Yorta Yorta Dhulunyagen family clan of Ulupna and the Yorta Yorta, Wurundjeri and Wiradjuri Briggs/McCrae family. Moorina is an artist whose works are informed by her experiences as an Aboriginal and Italian woman. Her practice attempts to disrupt and critique the eurocentric foundations that centralise Indigenous categorisation within western institutions. By unsettling the narrative placed upon Aboriginal people as a result of colonisation of Aboriginal Australia, Bonini’s practice is based within Indigenous Knowledge systems and brings this to the fore. Moorina holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts from RMIT University and a Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honours) from the Victorian College of the Arts. Moorina is currently a research candidate at Monash University where she is undertaking a PhD within the Wominjeka Djeembana Indigenous research lab. Her work has been exhibited in various shows

across Australia and also internationally. Galleries and Institutions include ACMI, The Shed (New York), Sydney Festival, and National Gallery of Victoria.

N’arweet Professor Carolyn Briggs AM is a senior Boonwurrung Elder. A descendant of the First Peoples of Melbourne, the Yaluk-ut Weelam clan of the Boonwurrung, she is the great-granddaughter of Louisa Briggs, a Boonwurrung woman born near Melbourne in the 1830s. She has been involved in developing and supporting opportunities for Indigenous youth and Boonwurrung culture for over 50 years and was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia in 2019 for her significant service to the Indigenous community. Author of *Journey Cycles of the Boon Wurrung: Stories with Boonwurrung Language* (2008, 2014), N’arweet currently leads a number of research projects including the ARC-funded project “Repairing Memory & Place: an Indigenous-led approach to urban water design”, and the Children’s Sensorium presented by RMIT’s Contemporary Art and Social Transformation (CAST) Research Group. She is Elder in Research at RMIT University and an Adjunct Professor in Wominjeka Djembana Indigenous research lab at Monash Art Design and Architecture.

Deep Design Lab is an interdisciplinary research group that focuses on creating better worlds for all living beings. It operates at the intersection of architecture, ecology, technology, and ethics, using evidence-based design experiments to construct innovative theories. These experiments take many forms, including physical prototypes, computational modelling, and storytelling. By emphasizing perspectives that go beyond human needs, the lab explores a wide range of topics, from stories about giant plants to prosthetic nest for owls and novel building surfaces that can support mosses and lichens.

The members contributing to this exhibition are: **Dr Stanislav Roudavski**, an artist, architect and researcher at the University of Melbourne; **Alexander Holland**, an architect, designer, data scientist, and researcher at the University of Melbourne; and **Julian Rutten**, a mechanical

engineer, landscape architect and researcher at Swinburne University.

Greg Griffiths (given English name) **Bulingha Murri Ganuur** (given name, skin name, totemic name) Born in Gunnedah, I am a proud Guyinbaraay man of the Gomeroi people, my homeland and my tribal nation. Last of the dirt floors, my early years I lived in a tin shack with a dirt floor. I consider myself a son of land rights. I watched my father work in the Aboriginal movement until it was my time to pick up the baton and work for my people. I have been a Cultural Practitioner for approximately 40 years. My culture and language are my true passions. Learning about our lore and customs through cultural practice. Singing and dancing about our connection to the land and ecology, the flora and fauna, the landscape and all content of it. The scope of our culture and its connection to all peoples. The sky world, the big Warrumbool in the night sky. We are all sons and daughters of creation and our responsibility is to be humble in the learning of it. This is who I aspire to be.

Maya Hodge is a proud Lardil and Yangkaal Mildura-raised emerging writer and curator based on Wurundjeri Country. Her multidisciplinary practice explores the power of uplifting First Nations storytelling and autonomy through writing, curatorial and creative project-based work. Maya is passionate about empowering young blackfullas that their voices matter to disrupt colonial narratives. Maya is a freelance writer, consultant, curator and contributor across multiple art projects, publications and programs. She is a co-contributor to the publication *Black Wattle* and, last year, co-curated the exhibition, *Collective Movements*. Maya is a founding member of Ensemble Dutala and a member of this mob collective. Her writing is published by arts and cultural platforms with the premise of shining a light on the unparalleled craft of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander creative practices.

Professor Brian Martin, Bundjalung, Kamilaroi and Muruwari, is the Director of Wominjeka Djeembana Indigenous research lab, Monash Art Design and

Architecture. In 2022, Brian was awarded a three-year appointment to the Australian Research Council’s College of Experts where he plays a key role in identifying research excellence, assessing funding applications and providing strategic advice to the ARC. He leads numerous research projects from the Australian Research Council, Creative Victoria, Australia Council for the Arts, Eucalypt Australia and various others. Brian is represented by William Mora Galleries and has been a practising artist for thirty years, exhibiting both nationally and internationally specifically in the media of painting and drawing. His research and practice focus on refiguring creative practice and culture from an Indigenous ideological perspective based on a reciprocal relationship to “Country”. Brian was the inaugural Associate Dean Indigenous at Monash Art Design and Architecture and is also Honorary Professor of Eminence at Centurion University of Technology and Management in Odisha, India, Board Director National Theatre Melbourne, and Board Member for Shepparton Art Museum and the Melbourne Art Foundation.

Kimberley Moulton is a Yorta Yorta woman, writer, curator and PhD candidate at Wominjeka Djeembana Indigenous research lab. She is currently Senior Curator South Eastern First Peoples Collection, Museums Victoria and an Artistic Associate for RISING, the Victorian State international arts festival. Kimberley works with knowledge, histories and futures at the intersection of First Peoples historical and contemporary art and the archive. In 2021 she was a co-curator for the inaugural Indigenous Triennial (2021) at Winnipeg Art Gallery (WAG-Qaumajuq), *Naadohbi: To Draw Water*, a curatorial collaboration between Museums Victoria, Pataka Art + Museum New Zealand and WAG-Qaumajuq. Recently she curated the exhibition *Shadow Spirit* for RISING atop of Flinders Street Station and featuring the work of thirty of the most exciting First Peoples artists and collectives from across Australia. She is on the board of directors at the Shepparton Art Museum (Deputy Chair), The Adam Briggs Foundation and The International Association of Art Critics (AICA) Australia.

Dr Jessica Neath is an Australian art historian of settler descent living and working on Boonwurrung Country. She began supporting research development at Wominjeka Djeembana Indigenous research lab, Monash Art Design and Architecture, in 2019 and is Research Fellow on the Australian Research Council Special Research Initiative “More than a guulany (tree): Aboriginal Knowledge Systems” (2021-2024) led by Professors Brian Martin and Brook Garru Andrew. She was awarded her PhD in art history at Monash University in 2015 and has published writing in *The Journal of Australian Studies*, *Arena Magazine*, *eyeline*, *The History of Photography*, *Landscape Architecture Australia*, *Fashion Theory*, *Australian Historical Studies* and for *PHOTO 2022*.

Alfred Priestley is a Kamilaroi man from northwest New South Wales and Director of Gomeroy Dreaming. Born in Moree, he grew up at Stanley Village, one of the two Aboriginal Missions in Moree, and spent most of his childhood on the Mehi and Gwydir Rivers playing, swimming, hunting and fishing. His family are very cultural and are always talking about Kamilaroi and the songs of Kamilaroi. From age thirteen he began working on the cotton farms in the area doing cotton chipping, crop harvesting, fencing, irrigation, and tractor driving and he has worked in various other jobs over the years. Alfred has travelled in Australia and overseas teaching Kamilaroi culture in song, dance and art to schools, universities, Theme Parks and other venues. He has also provided heritage consultation to government, education and business. Alfred is most passionate about his culture and other people's culture, protecting Country and painting. Through his company Gomeroy Dreaming he is providing opportunities to Kamilaroi people with training, development, careers, jobs, and business.

Simon Rose is a Birriah, Gurreng Gurreng filmmaker who has directed work for community, with Indigenous artists such as Peta Clancy, Brook Andrew, Maree Clarke, and across broadcast and corporate sectors. Simon is currently the director of tGAP (The Great Aboriginal People), an Indigenous screen production service based in Naarm.

David Tournier is a Boonwurrung cultural advisor and practitioner. He was born on Wemba Wemba Country and raised surrounded by strong cultural influences and traditions. Passionate about promoting and preserving his heritage the sharing of his knowledge and practising culture, David consults and collaborates with archaeologists, schools and universities, environmental and government agencies and local councils, and advises on the management of tangible and intangible Aboriginal cultural heritage. He is a current board member of the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative.

Bradley Webb is a Bundjalung and Dunghutti man from northern New South Wales, Lecturer in Fine Art and PhD candidate with the Wominjeka Djeembana Indigenous research lab, Monash Art Design and Architecture. After completing a Bachelor of Arts and Honours Degree in Creative Arts Visual Practice in 2013 at Deakin University, Bradley completed his Masters by Research, ‘How has colonisation and Trans-Generational Trauma Created A Lost Generation?’ in 2021 at Monash University with a project that considered the complex trauma of the Stolen Generation and its impact across future generations. Bradley primarily works in painting but experiments in combining visual painting and digital imaging reproduction to give new meaning and expression to his works. In August 2021, Bradley commenced his PhD at Monash University examining ‘How do colonial frameworks determine Aboriginal representation and cultural heritage?’

List of works

Brook Andrew

guulany (solar) 1-6, 2023. Black and white fibre prints, each 69cm x 79cm.

Moorina Bonini

Untitled (ethnographic container), 2023. Wooden museum boxes, burnt marks, sand, branches, woven jute-twine rope, dimensions variable.

‘*Found*’, 2018. Wooden framed prints, acrylic paint, dimensions variable.

(un)held + (re)stored = stolen, 2021. Photograph printed on aluminium, 100cm x 100cm.

N’arweet Carolyn Briggs, David Tournier, Brian Martin, Stanislav Roudavski, Alex Holland and Julian Rutten

Kummargi Gadhaba Yulendj Tarrang, 2023. Laser and structured light scanning, computational analysis of spatial form, data visualization.

Greg Griffiths, Alfred Priestley, Brian Martin and Bradley Webb

Thulu Ugal (song tree), 2023. Video, approx. 12 minutes. With Beatrice Voirol and Ursula Regehr, Museum der Kulturen Basel, Switzerland. Filmed by Simon Rose, Martina Pan and Omar Lemke. Assistance from Martino Meier. Edited by Brian Martin and Simon Rose.

Maya Hodge

If I could speak the way you do, 2023. Digital print.

thungal (tree) score, 2023. Soundscape. Composer, violinist and vocals: Maya Hodge. Sound engineer, collaborator: Pataphysics.

thungal (tree) score [visual composition], 2023. Posca marker, dimensions variable. Drawn by Maya Hodge, Brian Martin, Bradley Webb and Moorina Bonini.

Brian Martin

Baw-li tharra burriin Kamilaroi #2, 2023. Mixed media on canvas, 210cm x 150cm.
Baw-li tharra burriin Kamilaroi #3, 2023. Mixed media on canvas, 210cm x 150cm.
Baw-li tharra burriin Kamilaroi #6, 2023. Mixed media on canvas, 210cm x 150cm.
Baw-li tharra burriin Kamilaroi #7, 2023. Mixed media on canvas, 210cm x 150cm.
Baw-li tharra burriin Boon Wurrung #1, 2023. Mixed media on canvas, 210cm x 150cm.
Baw-li tharra burriin Wadda Wurrung #1, 2023. Mixed media on canvas, 210cm x 150cm.

Culturally Modified Thulu: Methexical Countryscape Kamilaroi #1, 2022. Charcoal on paper, 210cm x 150cm.
Culturally Modified Thulu: Methexical Countryscape Boon Wurrung #1, 2023. Charcoal on paper, 210cm x 150cm.
Culturally Modified Thulu: Methexical Countryscape Kamilaroi #6, 2022. Charcoal on paper, 210cm x 150cm.
Culturally Modified Thulu: Methexical Countryscape Wadda Wurrung #1, 2023. Charcoal on paper, 210cm x 150cm.

Yalukit Weelam Tarrang

Culturally modified grey-box eucalyptus, approx. 500cm x 105cm x 95cm, 407kg.

Boon Wurrung Tree, 2021. Video, 6:14. Film made by Fancy Films for Wominjeka Djeembana Indigenous research lab and Monash University Museum of Art.

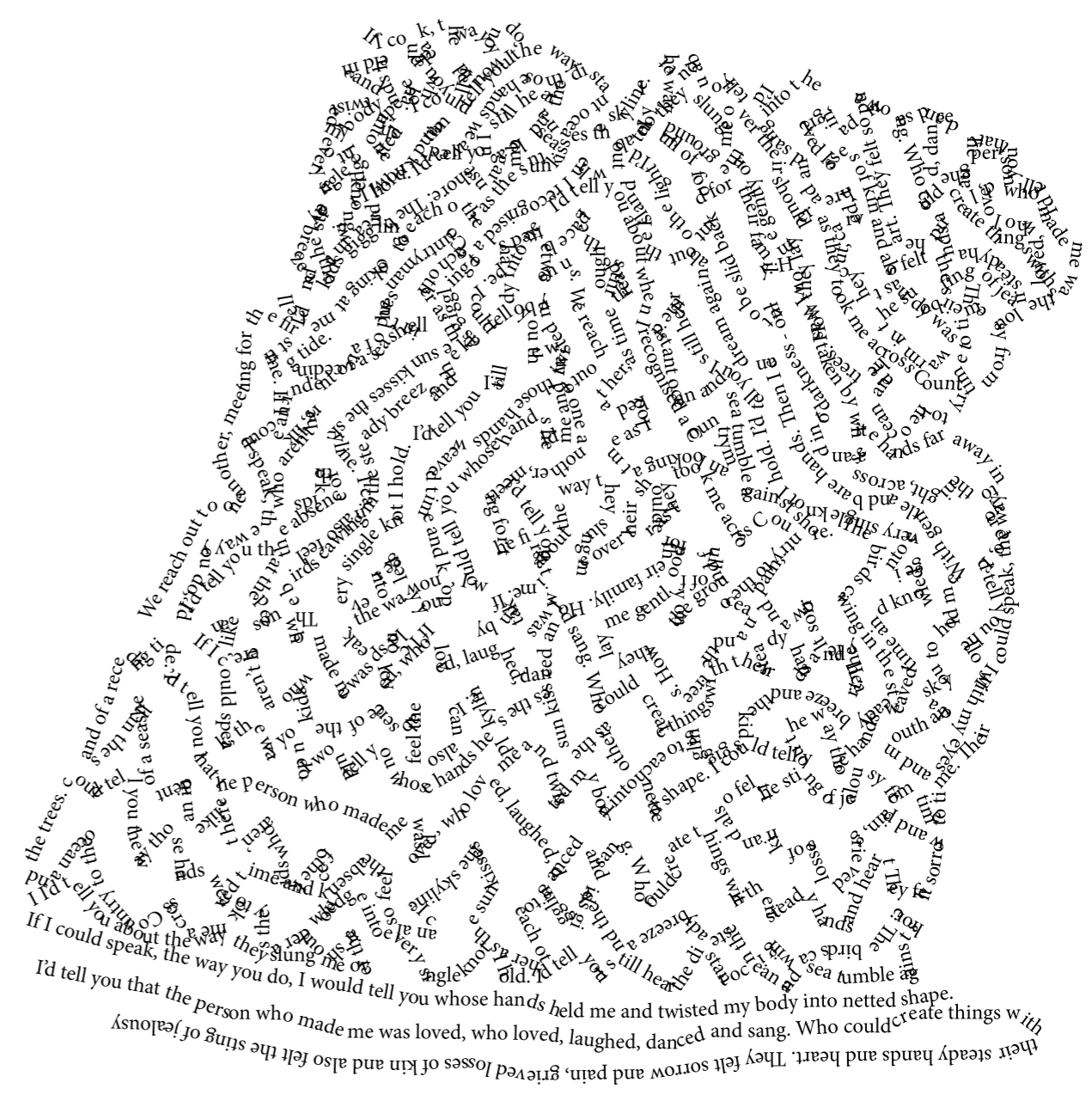
Museums Victoria First Peoples Collection in exhibition

- X 1048.1, Shield, cast, Kamilaroi, Namoi River, Northeast Riverine, New South Wales, Australia, 1973 (from original pre 1878)
- X 1061, Shield, locality unrecorded, New South Wales, Australia, pre 1892
- X 1361, Club, Boonwurrung, locality unrecorded, Victoria, Australia, pre 1890
- X 1364, Club, Boonwurrung, Westernport, Port Phillip, Victoria, Australia, pre 1890
- X 1821, Spearthrower, locality unrecorded, Victoria, Australia, pre 1890
- X 1849, Shield, locality unrecorded, Victoria, Australia, pre 1890
- X 1863, Spear, locality unrecorded, Victoria, Australia, pre 1890
- X 8871, Digging implement, Mordialloc Creek, Port Phillip, Victoria, Australia, pre 1902
- X 12351, Marked tree, Antwerp, Northwest (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, pre 1903
- X 12352, Shield, Antwerp, Northwest (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, pre 1903 (from Tree X 12351)
- X 15129, Digging stick, locality unrecorded, Victoria, Australia, pre 1903
- X 27382, Painting, Goulburn River, Northeast, Victoria, Australia, 1895 by Caroline Le Souëf
- X 28983, Marked tree, Nyah, Northwest (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, pre 1922
- X 29489, Marked tree, Bolton, Northwest (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, pre 1923
- X 29490, Marked tree, Bolton, Northwest (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, pre 1923
- X 29491, Marked tree, Bolton, Northwest (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, pre 1923
- X 29494, Marked tree, Bolton, Northwest (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, pre 1923
- X 29495, Marked tree, Bolton, Northwest (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, pre 1923
- X 29496, Marked tree, Bolton, Northwest (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, pre 1923
- X 37038, Coolamon, Ouyen, Northwest (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, pre 1929
- X 43500, Boomerang, Royal Park, Port Phillip, Victoria, Australia, pre 1920
- X 46844, Club, Deniliquin, New South Wales, Australia, pre 1950
- X 81926, Basket, Murray River, Victoria, Australia, pre 1953
- X 84409, Shield, Dimboola, Northwest (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, pre 1912
- X 87848, Drawing, Tommy McRae, Upper Murray River, Northeast (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, 1890s
- X 87850, Drawing, Tommy McRae, Upper Murray River, Northeast (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, 1890s
- X 93481, Carving, Australia
- X 93486, Marked tree, Australia
- X 94256, Shield, Murray River, Victoria, Australia, about 1840
- X 94277, Club, Murray Valley, Victoria, Australia, about 1845
- X 94549, Boomerang, Moree, New South Wales, Australia, about 1850
- X 94551, Boomerang, Moree, New South Wales, Australia, about 1860
- X 94616, Shield, Darling River, New South Wales, Australia
- X 94634, Shield, Murrumbidgee River, New South Wales, Australia, pre 1987
- X 100314, Peg, Southeast, Australia, 1830
- X 100591, Axe, hafted, Birchip, Northeast (Victoria), Victoria, Australia
- X 104910, Drawing, Tommy McRae, locality unrecorded, Northeast (Victoria), Victoria, Australia, about 1890
- X 121040, Model, stretched possum skin on bark, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, 1980s

Other material in exhibition

Reproductions of Plates 34 and 64 from William Blandowski's *Australien in 142 photographischen Abbildungen* (1862).

Source: Library of Congress / Artist: William Blandowski.



Maya Hodge, *If I could speak the way you do*, 2023.
Image courtesy of the artist.

MORE THAN A TARRANG (TREE): MEMORY, MATERIAL & CULTURAL AGENCY

Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre,
Melbourne Museum
24 June - 5 November 2023

Co-curated by Kimberley Moulton (Yorta Yorta), Professor Brian Martin (Bundjalung, Kamilaroi, Muruwari), Professor Brook Andrew (Wiradjuri, Ngunnawal) and Dr Jessica Neath, this exhibition is collaboration between Museums Victoria and Wominjeka Djeembana Indigenous research lab, Monash Art Design and Architecture.

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