



SOVEREIGNTY

EDUCATION KIT

Australian Centre
for Contemporary Art

acca



CONTENTS

Introduction

Welcome to Country
Curatorial introduction
Historical figures

Exhibition Themes & Artists

Celebrating cultural identity and resistance
Language and signs in contemporary society
The interconnectedness of Country, people and place
Matriarchal culture and wisdom
The aesthetics of sovereignty and activism

Support Material

Glossary
Further Reading
References

Acknowledgements

How to use this kit

The *Sovereignty* Education Kit has been developed by ACCA Education to assist and extend upon learning alongside the exhibition.

The writing is pitched at a senior secondary level, with the intention teachers can use and adapt the information to suit their needs.

The information provided can inform further research or studies. Another resource with links to Victorian and VCE Curricula has been provided, with examples of learning activities to be used in the classroom.

IMAGES FRONT COVER & LEFT:

Kent Morris, *Boonwurrung (St. Kilda) Rainbow Lorikeet*, 2016.
Courtesy the artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne

Installation view, *Sovereignty*, ACCA, 2016. Photo: Andrew Curtis



WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Usually an exhibition at ACCA begins with an opening celebration. In the case of *Sovereignty* a traditional Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony was performed. ACCA is located in the Yalukit Willam place of the Boon Wurrung peoples. A Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony is performed by the traditional owners of the land to welcome visitors and to communicate that they are welcome and are free to use the water and food present on Country, but must also respect the Country and care for its children. There are three symbolic native plants placed on a fire, because the leaves are green they create a lot of very fragrant smoke which cleanses the visitors.

Watch Arweet Carolyn Briggs from the Boon Wurrung Foundation discuss [here](#)

CURATORIAL INTRODUCTION

“Sovereignty itself is an inalienable, innate and intimate right; its expression can be found buried within artistic works, gently emerging from inherited practices, or boldly spelled out in new artistic forms adorned with confident lines, camouflage, electric lights and bling.”

- Paola Balla, Co-Curator

Sovereignty is an exhibition focusing upon contemporary art of First Nations peoples of South East Australia, alongside keynote historical works, to explore culturally and linguistically diverse narratives of self-determination, identity, sovereignty and resistance.

Taking the example of Ngurungaeta (Elder) and Wurundjeri leader William Barak (c.1824–1903) as a model – in particular Barak’s role as an artist, activist, leader, diplomat and translator – the exhibition presents the vibrant and diverse visual art and culture of the continuous and distinct nations, language groups and communities of Victoria’s sovereign, Indigenous peoples.

Bringing together new commissions, recent and historical works by over thirty artists, *Sovereignty* is structured around a set of practices and relationships in which art and society, community and family, history and politics are inextricably connected. A diverse range of discursive and thematic contexts are elaborated: the celebration and assertion of cultural identity and resistance; the significance and inter-connectedness of Country, people and place; the renewal and re-inscription of cultural languages

and practices; the importance of matriarchal culture and wisdom; the dynamic relations between activism and aesthetics; and a playfulness with language and signs in contemporary society.

Sovereignty provides an opportunity to engage with critical historical and contemporary issues in Australian society. The exhibition takes place against a backdrop of cultural, political and historical debates related to questions of colonialism and decolonisation, constitutional recognition, sovereignty and treaty.

- Paola Balla & Max Delany, Co-Curators

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander audiences are warned that the exhibition contains images and voices of people who have passed away.

IMAGE:

Installation view, *Sovereignty*, ACCA, 2016. Photo: Andrew Curtis

ARTISTS & FLOORPLAN



1. **William Barak**
Born 1824, Melbourne
Woiworung/Wurundjeri
Died 1903, Melbourne
Ngurungaeta (Elder) of the
Wurundjeri-willam clan
2. **Bill Onus**
Born 1906, Cummeragunja,
New South Wales
Yorta Yorta
Died 1968, Melbourne
3. **Marlene Gilson (Aunty)**
Born 1944, Warrnambool,
Victoria
Wadawurrung/Wathaurong
Lives and works in Gordon,
Victoria
4. **Steaphan Paton**
Born 1985, Mildura, Australia
Gunai/Monero
Lives and works in Melbourne
5. **Steven Rhall**
Born 1974 on Wautherung
Country
Taungurung
Lives and works in Melbourne
6. **Bruce McGuinness**
Born 1939, Cootamundra,
New South Wales
Wiradjuri
Died 2003, Melbourne
7. **Peter Waples-Crowe**
Born 1965, Sydney
Ngarigo
Lives and works in Melbourne
8. **Amiel Courtin-Wilson**
(Director)
Born 1979, Melbourne
Lives and works in Melbourne
- Jack Charles** (Actor)
Born 1943, Cummeragunja,
Victoria
Yorta Yorta
Lives and works in Melbourne
9. **Trevor 'Turbo' Brown**
Born 1967, Mildura, Victoria
Latje Latje
Lives and works in Melbourne
10. **Briggs [Adam Briggs]**
Born 1980, Shepparton,
Victoria
Yorta Yorta
Lives and works in Melbourne
11. **Mandy Nicholson**
Born 1975, Healesville, Victoria
Wurundjeri-willam
Lives and works in Melbourne
12. **Kent Morris**
Born 1964, Melbourne
Barkindji
Lives and works in Melbourne
13. **Brook Andrew**
Born 1970, Sydney
Wiradjuri
Lives and works in Melbourne
14. **Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser**
Destiny Deacon
Born 1957, Maryborough,
Queensland
Ku Ku/Erub/Mer
Lives and works in Melbourne
- Virginia Fraser**
Born Melbourne
Lives and works in Melbourne
15. **Clinton Nain**
Born 1971, Melbourne
Meriam-Mir/Ku-Ku
Lives and works in Melbourne
16. **Jim Berg**
Born 1938, Melbourne
Gunditjmara Elder
Lives and works in Melbourne
17. **Vicki Couzens**
Born 1960, Warrnambool,
Victoria
Kirrae Wurrong/Gunditjmara
Lives and works in the Stoney
Rises near Colac, Victoria
18. **Korin Gamadji Institute**
Lillian Arnold-Rendell
Born 1996, Wodonga, Victoria
Darug/Kamilaroi
Lives and works in Seymour
and Melbourne
- Olajuwon Bamblett
Born 1998
Yorta Yorta/Warlpiri
Lives and works in
Shepparton, Victoria
- Jessica Bennett
Born 1998, Wagga Wagga,
New South Wales
Ngunnawal
Lives and works in Albury
- Nakia Cadd
Born 1997, Melbourne
Gunditjmara/Yorta Yorta/Dja
Dja Wurrung/Bunitj
Lives and works in Melbourne
- Liam Dunstan
Born 1998, Portland, Victoria
Gunditjmara
Lives and works in Portland
- Lily Graham
Born 1996, Hobart
Tasmania
Lives and works in Melbourne
- Ajuka Julin-Turner
Born 1995, Frankston, Victoria
Ngarrindjeri
Lives and works in Melbourne
- Patricia McKean
Born 1998, Warrnambool,
Victoria
Gunditjmara/Kirrae Wurrong
Lives and works in
Warrnambool, Victoria
- Chamika Sadler
Born 1997, Kingaroy,
Queensland
Waka Waka/Quandamooka
Lives and works in Melbourne
- Tallara Sinclair
Born 1997, Shepparton,
Victoria
Yorta Yorta
Lives and works in
Shepparton
19. **Brian Martin**
Born 1972, Sydney
Muruwari/Bundjalung/
Kamilaroi
Lives and works in Melbourne
20. **Bronwyn Razem**
Born 1953, Warrnambool,
Victoria
Kirrae Wurrong/Gunditjmara
Lives and works in Geelong,
Victoria
21. **Yhonnie Scarce**
Born 1973, Woomera, South
Australia
Kokatha/Nukunu
Lives and works in Melbourne
22. **Lucy Williams-Connelly**
Born 1940 Narrandera, New
South Wales
Waradgerie
Lives and works in Swan Hill,
Victoria
23. **Maree Clarke**
Born 1961, Swan Hill, Victoria
Mutti Mutti/Yorta Yorta/
BoonWurrung
Lives and works in Melbourne
24. **Glenda Nicholls**
Born 1954, Swan Hill, Victoria
Waddi Waddi/Yorta Yorta and
Ngarrindjeri
Lives and works in Wood
Wood, Victoria
25. **Lisa Bellear**
Born 1961, Melbourne
Minjungbul/Goernpil/
Noonuccal
Died 2006, Melbourne
26. **Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance (WAR)**
Established 2014
Melbourne members include:
Gabi Briggs
Born 1990, Armidale, New
South Wales
Himberrong, Anaiwan and
Gumbangier
Lives and works in Melbourne
Meriki Onus
Born 1987, Naarm/Melbourne
Brayakaloong, Yigar and
Tjapwurrung
Lives and works in Melbourne
Arika Waulu
Born 1985, Naarm/Melbourne
Brayakaloong, Yigar and
Tjapwurrung
Lives and works in Melbourne
Dtarneen Onus-Williams
Born 1993, Gunditj country
Yigar, Yorta Yorta, Wakka
Wakka, Bindal and Dja Dja
Wurrung
Lives and works in Melbourne
27. **Megan Cope**
Born 1982, Brisbane
Quandamooka
Lives and works in Melbourne
28. **Reko Rennie**
Born 1974, Melbourne
Kamilaroi
Lives and works in Melbourne

HISTORICAL FIGURES

WILLIAM BARAK

Born 1824, Melbourne
Woiworung/Wurundjeri
Died 1903, Melbourne
Ngurungaeta (Elder) of the Wurundjeri-willam clan

Early Life

William Barak was born into the Wurundjeri clan of the Woiworung in 1824 in Brushy Creek, now known as Croydon. He received a basic education at George Langhorne's Yarra Mission School in Narm, now called Melbourne, before joining the Native Police as a trooper and tracker at the age of nineteen.¹ It was at this point that he changed his name from the original Beruk (meaning 'white grub in gum tree') Barak by adopting the first name William. Over his lifetime Barak became known as a polymath for significant achievements to a number of diverse fields - as leader, artist, cultural ambassador, indigenous advocate and storyteller.

* Barak may be a result of European's pronunciation of Beruk, rather than a separate name. As in Beruk only, rather than Beruk Barak, later William Barak.

Ngurungaeta (Clan Leader)

Barak's father, Bebjan, had been Ngurungaeta before him, and he was great nephew of prominent South East Australian tribal leaders Captain Turnbull and Jakki Jakki. He was also the nephew of Billibellary, a signatory, along with Bebjan, to John Batman's 1835 'treaty'. Barak witnessed this historical event as a boy, a momentous event that had profound

consequences for his people.² In 1875, upon the death of his ngurungaeta cousin Simon Wonga, Barak himself became Ngurungaeta.

Artist

Barak created artworks and artefacts prolifically throughout his lifetime, including drawings, paintings and objects. He developed a distinctive graphic style and his images were almost exclusively representative of the ceremonial activities of his people. He was also a master shield maker, and a carved shield and club he crafted are included in the exhibition *Sovereignty*.

Barak's painting included in *Sovereignty* is an important surviving work by Barak and is one of very few in existence. *Untitled (Ceremony)* is typical of Barak's style. The exact provenance of the picture is unknown but it is thought to depict a corroboree - a type of significant meeting between Aboriginal peoples that could be held to mark an initiation, wedding or important clan discussion. Corroborees were nightly occurrences during Barak's lifetime.³ In the last two decades of his life he dedicated himself almost exclusively to depicting these ceremonies in his artworks. In this sense Barak was able to transmit his culture through his pictures, which was important as his people had, by this stage of Barak's life, been severely affected by colonisation. Individuals are clearly outlined in the painting's composition, and their costume graphically depicted. This may be understood as an effort by Barak to promote and transmit his disappearing culture in the wake of white invasion and displacement of Aboriginal peoples from their traditional lands.



Along the top of the painting a row of dancers in costume are using boomerangs as clap sticks. The figures in the foreground are wearing emu or Lyrebird headdresses, and the alternating colour banded cloaks represent possum skin cloaks. Possum skin cloaks were symbolic and important items worn for practical and ceremonial purposes.⁴ Barak was among the first to incorporate introduced media from colonists, such as pigments and paints, in the representation of aboriginal culture. Barak incorporated lead pencil and bright pigments with traditional ochres and charcoal to render his images - another sense in which Barak constitutes a linkage between the culture of the colonials and that of Aboriginal peoples.⁵

Alongside Barak's painting in *Sovereignty* is a carved Club and parrying Shield, both created in 1897. The artwork and artefacts on display were produced by Barak whilst he was living on the aboriginal

reserve Coranderrk. At this time European settlers would visit Coranderrk to buy souvenirs of their visit and representative of Aboriginal art and craft. Many objects and images were made for the tourist market but some were also produced for visiting dignitaries from overseas and interstate.⁶ In this sense Coranderrk was the first Aboriginal art centre, a model that continues to this day as a means of artistic expression, cultural education and income generation for various Aboriginal communities.

Diplomat and Cultural Ambassador

Barak fulfilled his role as Ngurungaeta by championing and advocating for recognition and lands for his people to occupy. In approximately 1874 Barak was challenged to maintain Coranderrk as a reserve for his people.⁷ The land was being poorly managed by a board and there was public pressure to close the station and move the community. Barak marched to Parliament and made the request:

*“[We want] the Government [to] leave us here, give us the ground and let us manage here and get all the money.”*⁸

With this request Barak was trying to establish a space for Aboriginal independence and self-sufficiency, a key precedent in colonial history at that time. Barak was the first Aboriginal artist to be known by name outside of Australia. He had many strong relationships with different settlers and, as such, performed a linking role between indigenous and colonial communities.⁹ This resulted in some of his colonist friends becoming supporters in his mission to preserve Coranderrk as a reserve for his people.

Storyteller

Barak is remembered as having been a gifted and charismatic storyteller. This was another way in which he transmitted his identity and knowledge of his culture and people to not only to European settlers but also younger members of his clan. Oral history is a key feature of Indigenous culture as a means of passing on traditional knowledge of the land and spirituality to younger generations.¹⁰ During his lifetime Barak dictated a document entitled *My Words*, which is in the collection of the State Library of Victoria.¹¹

In many ways Barak’s art can be considered storytelling, not of fiction or mythology, but of Indigenous practices already passing out of knowledge during his lifetime. His depictions of corroborees functioned not only as distinctive and beautiful images but also as means of educating both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people about traditional customs and ritual. For the Aboriginal people of Coranderrk Barak’s artwork kept a link with their ancestors alive and active. For non-Indigenous people his artwork was a rare window into Indigenous cultural practices that would otherwise remain totally unknown to them.

A famous example of Barak’s working methodology in action centres around a request by the then Victorian Governor, Sir Henry Loch, requesting to witness a corroboree. At the time the Aboriginal Protection Board would not allow it because it had banned traditional practices which it classified as ‘Heathen’.¹² Instead, Barak painted a picture of a corroboree for the Governor and it was said, by

Barak’s friend Ann Fraser Bon, that Loch hung it on his wall opposite works by old masters. In this example Barak’s art functions as both a work of visual art and as a means of situating Aboriginal cultural practice from South East Australia within the very midst of Anglo-European cultural production. It is incredible to imagine the people - politicians, diplomats, royalty - who must have viewed this artwork on the Governor’s wall, thereby gaining a rare insight into Indigenous culture, and the powerful effect the Governor’s privileging of this work amongst his collection must have had upon them.¹³

IMAGE: William Barak, Wurundjeri Ngurungaeta, painting at Coranderrk, image courtesy State Library of Victoria *

¹ Culture Victoria, URL: <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/william-barak/william-barak-king-of-the-yarra/>

² Coranderrk, URL: http://coranderrk.com/wordpress/?page_id=98

³ Culture Victoria, URL: <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/william-barak/untitled-ceremony-painting-by-william-barak/>

⁴ Culture Victoria, URL: <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/possum-skin-cloaks/>

⁵ NGV, URL: <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/important-drawing-by-william-barak/>

⁶ Ian Clark: *A Peep at the Blacks’: A History of Tourism at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, 1863-1924.*

⁷ Proud Race, URL: <http://www.proudrace.org.au/victorian-indigenous-honor-roll?task=document.viewdoc&id=34>

⁸ NITV: *Remembering William Barak: artist, activist and leader of the Yarra Yarra tribe.* Article discussing Barak’s legacy and artworks. URL: <http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/08/15/remembering-william-barak-artist-activist-and-leader-yarra-yarra-tribe>

⁹ NITV: *Remembering William Barak: artist, activist and leader of the Yarra Yarra tribe.* Article discussing Barak’s legacy and artworks. URL: <http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/08/15/remembering-william-barak-artist-activist-and-leader-yarra-yarra-tribe>

¹⁰ Indigenous Australia, URL: <http://www.indigenoustraditions.info/languages/oral-traditions.html>

¹¹ Culture Victoria, URL: <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/william-barak/william-barak-king-of-the-yarra/>

Artworks in *Sovereignty*

Club 1897

wood

75.0 x 11.2 x 6.1 cm

Koorie Heritage Trust Collection

Shield 1897

wood

94.5 x 12.6 x 6.7 cm

Koorie Heritage Trust Collection

Club and *Shield* were carved by Barak and is inscribed in ink. This would have been written for Barak by someone else, as Barak could not write himself. Its provenance is unknown before the time that it was purchased by a private collector from a shop called 'Decoration' in Little Collins Street. Traditionally these type of objects would have been carved using handmade tools, such as possum jawbone, however it is likely that this artefact was carved using a pen knife or similar metal tool. On another area of the shield it appears as if glass has been used to smooth an area of the wood. In this way, this item is an interesting intersection of traditional Aboriginal technique and design in combination with introduced tools and materials.¹⁴

Untitled (Ceremony) c. 1880-1890s

paint, pencil, wash, pigments on paper

56.5 x 69.3 cm

Koorie Heritage Trust Collection

Untitled (Ceremony) has been titled retrospectively based upon its perceived subject matter. Barak produced many paintings and drawings of his people's cultural practices in the last two decades of his life from the 1880s to his death in 1903. This was during a period when Barak was living on

the Indigenous reserve Coranderrk, north-east of Melbourne. This was a place that Barak had fought for on behalf of his people firstly alongside his cousin and Ngurungaeta Simon Wonga, and then independently as succeeding Ngurungaeta upon Wonga's passing. Many settlers and non-Indigenous people - tourists and dignitaries included - would visit Coranderrk to witness indigenous people's way of life and cultural activities.¹⁵ Barak was unique at this time in that as an Indigenous artist he did not produce images of generic ceremonies, but rather specific representations of initiations, marriages, clan meetings and other important cultural events. The precise ceremony depicted here is unknown as it was not recorded anywhere in writing and any oral communication has been lost over time.

Untitled (Ceremony) sees Barak using an extremely interesting hybrid of materials. The blue pigments and pencil outlines are the result of him obtaining colonial media to make his artworks, however these are used with other more traditional materials such as natural pigments. Materially this makes the image a unique document representing a combination of colonial influence and indigenous media to create an image of indigenous ceremonial importance.

Barak used his art to educate two distinct groups about his culture. Firstly, Indigenous people who had not got to experience their culture in its wholeness because of colonisation and the accompanying violence, disease and dislocation from traditional lands, and, in this sense, Barak's works transmitted culture so that it may be continued and perpetuated by those younger generations. Secondly, Barak's art disseminated his culture to the wider Anglo-European colonial community. In this way Barak's works demonstrated the complexity, sophistication and cultural difference of the practices of his people.

Being on paper and close to 150 years old this artwork is extremely delicate, meaning that it requires specific care to ensure it does not degrade. Interestingly, when this work was taken into the University of Melbourne for conservation treatment, and subsequently photographed using infrared technology, it was found that the paper used had been repurposed by Barak. What is revealed is thought to be a map of an underground mine and Barak's underdrawings. This is something that many artists do as a way of mapping out their composition before applying paint.

Barak's use of second hand paper might indicates two things. Firstly, he was not making art in a dedicated and well supplied environment, rather he was making do as best he could with what he had. Secondly, it might point towards his strong desire to produce these artworks, despite not having all the best materials to hand. This underlines the drive Barak had to represent his culture in the face of a decimated Indigenous landscape and shrinking knowledge of traditional practices.

¹⁴ Culture Victoria, URL: <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/william-barak/the-william-barak-collection-at-the-koorie-heritage-trust/>

¹⁵ Culture Victoria, URL: <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-cul->



IMAGES TOP TO BOTTOM:

William Barak, *Untitled (Ceremony)*, c. 1880s-1890s. Courtesy the Koorie Heritage Trust Collection

William Barak, installation view, ACCA, 2016. Courtesy the Koorie Heritage Trust Collection. Photo: Andrew Curtis

HISTORICAL FIGURES

WILLIAM TOWNSEND (BILL) ONUS

Born 1906, Cummeragunja, New South Wales
Yorta Yorta
Died 1968, Melbourne

Early life

William Townsend (Bill) Onus was an important Aboriginal political activist, artist, performer and entrepreneur. He was born on the Cummeragunja (aka Coomeroogunga) Aboriginal reserve on the banks of the Murray River in New South Wales, the eldest child of William Townsend Onus, a drover, and Maud Mary Onus, of the Wiradjuri people. He was schooled in Cummeragunja and Echuca until the age of twelve and spent time droving with his family until leaving to pursue shearing at sixteen.¹⁶ After arriving in Sydney in 1929 Onus worked as a rigger, gold prospector and truck delivery driver. A member of the Australian Worker's Union since his teens Onus gained coaching in public speaking and in 1939 joined the Aborigines Progressive Association (APA), which was concerned with advocating for indigenous people's citizenship rights and improved living conditions. Soon after joining Onus became the APA's secretary.

Political activism

From 1941 Onus worked full time for the APA and in the early 1940s emerged as came to prominence as a principal member of the Committee for Aboriginal Citizen Rights. During this time Onus worked as a strategic tactician in generating support for APA causes. At the same time, on a community level, Onus worked to bring together scattered Aboriginal families who had settled in Redfern, Sydney, by

organising weekly dances, the proceeds of which were then put towards the legal costs of Aboriginal people brought before the courts.

Entrepreneur

Having moved down to Melbourne around 1946, in 1952 Onus established his new business Aboriginal Enterprises to produce boomerangs, woomeras, fabrics and greeting cards printed with Aboriginal motifs and designs, as well as to sell didgeridoos (or didjeridu) and other arts and crafts from different Aboriginal communities in far northern Australia. Onus sold these directly from a shop in Belgrave, in the Dandenong Ranges, and to promote his ware Onus toured Australia as a showman putting on demonstrations of Boomerang throwing and advocated for it to become a national sport. Author Ian MacLean has proposed that Onus' production of boomerangs and other souvenir ware was not only entrepreneurial but also strategic. Onus' shop and factory, located not far from Coranderrk, the site of William Barak's cultural production, was established because "the popular arts were the best means of fostering a pan-aboriginal identity and influence public opinion". Lin Onus, Bill and Mary Onus' only son, and a highly respected artist in his own right, had observed that "the area of the market that is widely perceived as the traditional enemy of fine art managed to keep the threads of a few ancient traditions intact".¹⁷

In this sense Bill Onus was performing a continuation of Barak's strategy of cultural transmission, but in his case meeting the changed conditions of his time with an appropriate model and product for dissemination. Also significant is the fact that the Aboriginal



IMAGE: Bill Onus posing with boomerang showing his distinctive style c. mid 1950s. Courtesy Tiriki Onus

¹⁶ Australian Dictionary of Biography, URL: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/onus-william-townsend-bill-11308>

¹⁷ Ian Clark: A Peep at the Blacks': A History of Tourism at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, 1863-1924.

¹⁸ Find & Connect, URL: <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/sa/SE00796>

Assimilation Policy had been enacted one year previously in 1951.¹⁸ Onus effectively negotiated this demand for Indigenous people to aspire to whiteness by enacting a model for cultural maintenance which could operate under this restrictive mandate.¹⁹

Onus' painted objects - coffee table, plate, boomerangs - and printed fabrics can be understood as a sophisticated method for infiltrating the average white Australian home. This engagement of everyday objects and materials reflects Onus' union roots, working with and within the people to create change and influence thinking.

Tourist Art

Onus produced what is commonly referred to as 'tourist art'. This type of production is often cast in a negative light as exploitative, opportunistic, non-serious, non-authentic or kitsch. However, it is possible to view Onus' production as part of a continuous lineage of indigenous artistic expression under the pressure of repressive governmental policies. Very significantly, tourist art is highly visible, financially accessible and plentiful.

The Olympic Games were held in Melbourne in 1956 and this created a massive market for tourist ware and souvenirs of Australia for spectators, athletes and officials to take back home with them. Tourist wares were an excellent opportunity to disseminate Aboriginal culture to the masses, not only locally but worldwide too. Significantly, at this time aboriginal themed decorative art, or 'aboriginalia', was being produced by many different sources, however Onus was one of the very small minority of people producing this type of product who was himself an

Indigenous person. This was a model for Indigenous people taking back their own iconography and cultural imagery for their own benefit.

Bill Onus' son Lin Onus went on to become a well known and significant painter in his own right. Lin Onus remembers painting his father's wares in their home when he was a child.

Performer

Onus travelled Australia as a performer and demonstrator of Boomerang throwing. His motivation was not only to promote and increase sales of his own Boomerangs, but to keep a part of traditional Aboriginal life in action. Though a far cry from the traditional contexts in which a boomerang might have been used, the demonstrations by Onus of Boomerang craft and technique exposed a huge number of non-Aboriginal audiences to this unique hunting tool and weapon.²⁰ Onus' demonstrations helped to show one unique aspect of some Indigenous peoples' culture and practices. To the viewers and buyers of Onus' boomerangs a richness and detail was added to their perception of the Aboriginal people in their community, and with it, ideally, a respect and value not previously evident.

Onus chose to sacrifice a degree of specificity in his representation of an undifferentiated pan-Aboriginal identity as a means of negotiating the oppressive and restrictive cultural climate that he was inhabiting. Today, Australian society is still learning about the massive variety of different Indigenous peoples that exist across Victoria and the continent.

Artworks in *Sovereignty*

Home movie collection c.1964
standard 8mm film transferred to digital files, silent
27:40 mins
National Film and Sound Archive of Australia
Courtesy the Onus family

It is fitting that Bill Onus should be present in *Sovereignty* through film. Onus made several appearances on screen as an actor of minor Aboriginal roles in several films, and more significantly as narrator of non-fiction 1962 ABC series *Alcheringa*, which chronicled different aspects of traditional Indigenous life on the land, and *Forgotten People* (1967) which chronicled Aboriginal living conditions in the Goulburn and Murray Valleys.²¹

The films presented in *Sovereignty* are excerpts from Onus' personal home movie collection. They record a range of subjects including his engagement with Indigenous rights; his business activities with Aboriginal Enterprises; his expertise as a boomerang thrower; his relations with personalities including Pastor Doug Nicholls and Harry Belafonte; a road trip across the Nullarbor; and the work of his son, the celebrated artist Lin Onus.

¹⁹ Australian National University, URL: <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p170581/html/ch07.xhtml?referer=1272&page=8>

²⁰ Australian Dictionary of Biography, URL: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/onus-william-townsend-bill-11308>

²¹ Australian Dictionary of Biography, URL: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/onus-william-townsend-bill-11308>

CELEBRATING CULTURAL IDENTITY & RESISTANCE

Central concept:

Resistance to loss of culture through either assimilation into culture, or loss of culture through loss of elders, achieved by the determined continuation of traditional cultural activities and ceremonies. This section is testament to the continuation of indigenous cultures as contemporary in themselves, not relics of the past.

Focus artworks:

4. STEAPHAN PATON

Cloaked Combat #2 2013
single-channel HDV
0:37 mins

Cloaked Combat #3 2013
single-channel HDV
0:32 mins

Yours faithfully the sheriff 2016
paper, archival glue, oil pastel and synthetic polymer
paint on canvas 160.0 x 210.0 cm

The magistrate 2016
paper, archival glue, oil pastel and synthetic polymer
paint on canvas 128.0 x 160.0 cm

The officer in charge 2016
paper, archival glue, oil pastel and synthetic polymer
paint on canvas 128.0 x 160.0 cm

Courtesy the artist and Tristian Koenig, Melbourne

Composed of green canvas commonly used for tents, swags and tarpaulins – material commonly used to occupy unfamiliar territory – Steaphan Paton's three cloaks are decorated with a geometric design that proudly declares his Gunai/Monero heritage. Paton's cloaks are lined with sewn paper documents – infringements, fines and letters of demand sent by various authorities to the artist – referencing long-standing traditions of cloak making. The reversible, two sided cloaks present symbols of Indigenous identity in confrontation with the disciplinary control of crown authorities.

Heavily invested in the maintenance of traditional practices, Paton's video works show the artist shooting arrows into traditional shields that he has made himself, using a traditional object, but activating it in a dramatic manner. The combination of the ancient technology and the new in this conflict is one key element to understanding this work. Paton is dressed in contemporary camouflage and using a high tech bow and fluoro tipped arrows. In the filmic short scenes, the impact of the arrows in the traditional bark shield is particularly jarring. On one hand this is a conflict between traditional Indigenous weaponry and craft, and modern, machine produced technology brought to Australia by non-indigenous people, representing colonial influence. On the other hand the videos represent the conflict of the old and the new. The high powered arrows easily pierce the shield, which was designed to defend its holder from hand thrown arrows. It is a conflict of traditional ways and contemporary times, an allegory for the continuation of Indigenous culture within contemporary times.

Other works in gallery:

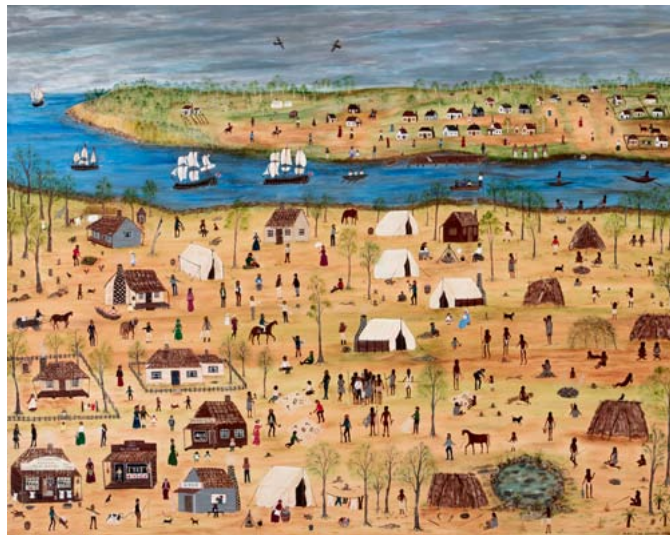
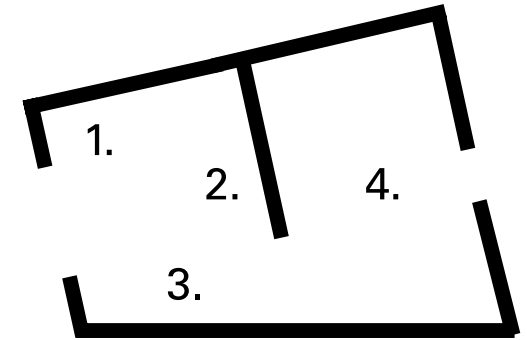
1 & 2. Works by William Barak and Bill Onus.

3. Marlene Gilson's contemporary history paintings, Tunnerminnerwait and Maulboyheenner, a visual representation of the 1842 Melbourne public execution of two young Tasmanian Aboriginal men by the settler colony of Port Phillip, and Land lost, land stolen, treaty which responds to the contentious 1835 Batman 'Treaty' with Elders of the Wurundjeri peoples.

Read more about these artworks here



GALLERY 1



IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Steaphan Paton, *Cloaked Combat #3* 2013 (still). Courtesy the artist and Tristian Koenig, Melbourne

Steaphan Paton, Installation view. Courtesy the artist and Tristian Koenig, Melbourne

Marlene Gilson, *Land lost, land stolen, treaty* 2016. Courtesy the artist.

LANGUAGE & SIGNS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Central concept:

Contemporary indigenous artists draw upon language, signs and cultural artefacts from contemporary society, playfully and critically altering their form and context to create new meanings and interpretations.

Focus artworks:

13. BROOK ANDREW

Maralinga clock 2015
inkjet and metallic foil on linen
280.0 x 160.0 x 120.0 cm

Brook Andrew has created a response to a very specific, unusual and rare item in his work *Maralinga clock*. This artwork is based on a clock that is in the collection of the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney, bought second hand by a curator of the museum. It is significant because it refers to a powerful and devastating episode in Australian history in 1957 when Australia's Prime Minister Robert Menzies allotted a piece of land the size of England for the British Military to use to test their nuclear weaponry.

The government treated the land as if it was empty, when in fact it was the traditional lands of the Tjarutja people, who still inhabited the land at that point. The land parcel was fenced off and extensive testing was undertaken over a seven-year period from 1956 - 1963.²² At that time the dangers posed by radioactive materials were not wholly understood, and today those lands are still contaminated in parts. The land was not called Maralinga by the Tjarutja, officials took the word meaning 'field of thunder' from a Northern Territory tribe.

The clock that Brook Andrew's installation refers to is a commemorative souvenir of these events. It is a block of Mulga wood in the shape of Australia featuring a clock and a small badge that pictures a mushroom cloud. The exact origin and maker of the clock is unknown. The clock exemplifies an attitude that is hard to reconcile in today's world. Knowing the harmful effects of radiation, the devastation of nuclear war, and the extensive displacement and violence wrought on Indigenous peoples it is hard to imagine anyone wanting such a souvenir on their mantle piece. One thing the clock does though is remind contemporary audiences of colonial Australian history and of the not too distant past.

Brook Andrew has made many artworks based on historical images and objects relating to indigenous peoples of Australia and the world and he frequently visits state collections to view ethnographic photographs and artefacts. By drawing these images and objects into his artworks Andrew highlights the manner in which Indigenous peoples worldwide have been subjected to processes of categorisation and objectification - their images and objects put on display as exotic artefacts. By choosing the *Maralinga clock* as a subject Andrew again brings to light an abhorrent episode of history, allowing thoughtful consideration and discussion to unfold.

²² Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences, URL: <https://maas.museum/magazine/2016/01/the-maralinga-souvenir-clock/>

12. KENT MORRIS

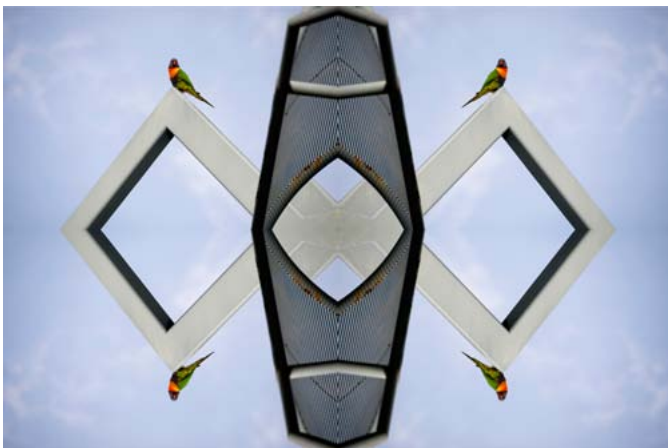
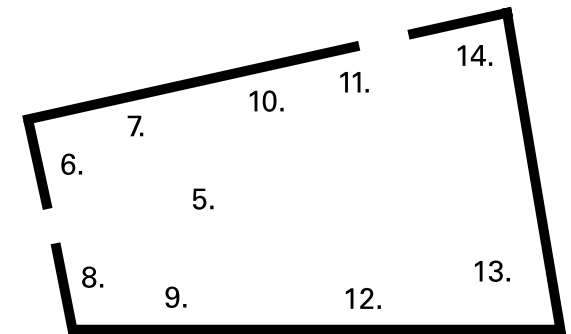
Cultural Reflections – Up Above #2 2016 (series)
archival prints on rag paper
100.0 x 150.0 cm (each)
All works courtesy the artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne

Kent Morris' *Cultural Reflections – Up Above #2* series reveal the continued presence and patterns of Aboriginal history and culture in the contemporary Australian landscape, notwithstanding colonial interventions that have irreversibly altered the environment. The works demonstrate how, despite all the change, construction and destruction of habitat, many native birds have adapted to thrive in Melbourne's built-up urban landscapes. The birds in Morris' photographs reflect the ways in which Indigenous cultures have continued to survive and adapt.

It may look like Morris has manipulated the birds into the images using digital editing software like Photoshop, however they were all present in real life. The only manipulation that Morris has made to the images is to copy, flip and reassemble the images like tiles. As Morris suggests, 'the rhythms, shapes and designs of our ancestors are ever-present and form the first layer of many that have been overlaid. When I walk, I see, experience and recreate these rhythms, shapes and designs; they are changed yet continuous'. Interesting symmetrical patterns arise out of the mirrored roofs, electrical cables and other structures. Morris is particularly interested in this quality because the resulting patterns come to resemble the shield designs of some Indigenous peoples, because symmetry was also a repeated design feature of those artefacts.



GALLERY 1



IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Installation view, *Sovereignty*, ACCA, 2016. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Kent Morris, *Boonwurrung (St. Kilda) Rainbow Lorikeet* 2016. Courtesy the artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne

Kent Morris, *Boonwurrung (St. Kilda) Magpie* 2016. Courtesy the artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne

LANGUAGE & SIGNS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Other works in gallery:

5. Steven Rhall's *The biggest Aboriginal artwork in Melbourne metro*, a relocated advertising sign, previously located on the exterior wall of a supermarket in Melbourne's western suburbs, that read 'The biggest IGA in Melbourne metro'. Rhall's multidisciplinary practice frequently involves interventions into public space, utilising pre-existing signs and symbols and altering them to transform their meaning.

6. A film made in 1972 called *Black Fire*, which reflects Bruce McGuinness' involvement as a pioneer of the Black Power movement in Australia, depicting the turbulent period of the Vietnam War, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, and struggles for land-rights and self-determination. As the first Indigenous Director of the Aboriginal Advancement League, and an initiator of numerous Aboriginal health and education initiatives in Victoria, Bruce McGuinness was a respected Elder and leading activist in the struggle for Aboriginal rights and self-determination, and the nephew of Aboriginal rights advocate, and filmmaker, Bill Onus.

7. A collection of images – composed of paint, collage and text – by Peter Waples-Crowe that speak loudly and proudly of queer identity, intersectionality, and the state of being 'mixed', at once insider and outsider. A Melbourne-based artist of Wiradjuri/Ngarigo descent, Waples-Crowe's works explore the complexity of contemporary Indigenous identity, challenging the voices that silence whilst celebrating those voices that are otherwise silenced.

8. *Bastardy*, a film directed by Amiel Courtin-Wilson and filmed over a six year time span, telling the story of actor, potter, musician and respected Elder and gifted story teller, Jack Charles. Born in 1943 at Cummeragunja Mission on Yorta Yorta Country, and a member of the Stolen Generations, he spent many of his formative years in boys' homes in Melbourne and many additional years in jail. From a life of addiction and crime, *Bastardy* demonstrates Jack's optimism and charisma that has seen him overcome huge odds.

9. Two paintings by Trevor 'Turbo' Brown who was born on Latje Latje Country around Mildura, and like Jack Charles, also removed from his family and sent to a boys home in Sydney, leading to extended periods of homelessness, much of his time living on the Murray River and the streets in Melbourne. Turbo's depictions of totemic figures – Bunjil the eagle, Owls, Kookaburras and Tasmanian Devils – are made with great vitality and affection, reaffirming the artist's connection to Country and cultural identity.

10. Two music videos called *Sheplife* and *Bad Apples* by rapper, writer and actor Briggs, a Yorta Yorta man from Shepparton. Reflecting on *Sheplife* and its focus on the eponymous country town, Briggs' music is firmly situated in place and personal narrative, which has seen him establish his own record label, Bad Apples Music.

11. Two highly graphic paintings with fine linear details and patterning by Mandy Nicholson. In *Mindi the devil snake and Dhulin (Goanna)* Nicholson vividly renders significant figures in radiant colour, endowing

them with renewed vibrancy and meaning. The paintings are conceived to both teach and inspire, ensuring that the invaluable truths of Wurundjeri lore continue to be shared, discussed and preserved.

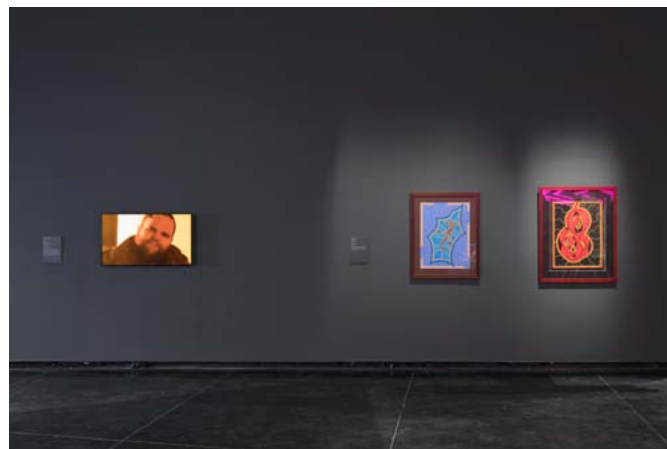
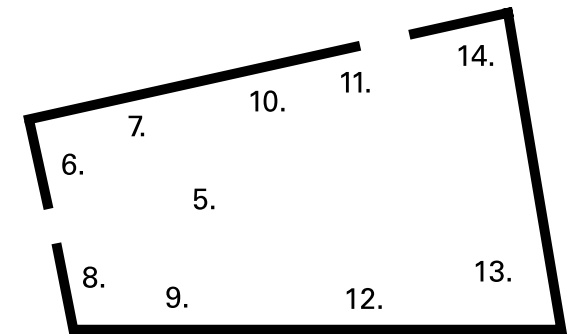
14. Destiny Deacon and Virginia Fraser's video *Something in the air* which brings together a cast of friends and family, dolls and a black cat, who perform for the camera, full of movement, shimmer and ambient sensation. Entering the scene from somewhere – we are not sure where – they share with us a chain of secret narratives and an awareness of the camera and its gaze.

28. A large banner by Reko Rennie in ACCA foyer, featuring abstracted designs of Kamilaroi geometry overlaid with camouflage pattern, playing with visibility and invisibility. The words *Always here* run down the banner, serving as a decisive statement of Indigenous sovereignty.

Read more about these artworks here



GALLERY 1



IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Steven Rhall, *The biggest Aboriginal artwork in Melbourne metro* 2014-16. Courtesy the artist

Installation view, *Sovereignty*, ACCA, 2016. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Installation view, *Sovereignty*, ACCA, 2016. Photo: Andrew Curtis

THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF COUNTRY, PEOPLE & PLACE

Central concept:

This section focuses on the interconnectedness of land, people and place, and the spiritual connection that Indigenous peoples have with Country.

Focus artworks:

16. JIM BERG

Silent witness – A window to the past 2005
c-type photographic prints
30.0 x 20.0 cm (each)

Silent witness – A window to the past 2005
wallpaper

Courtesy the artist

Jim Berg is a respected Guditjmarra Elder, author and educator. He did not begin this collection of photographs of scar trees as an artistic project, rather he was recording these trees on Wotjobaluk Country, depicting places of cultural significance and the literal trace of past presences. Scar trees are trees that have had areas of bark removed to produce sophisticated objects and technologies including canoes, coolamons and shields. Each image exemplifies Indigenous peoples reciprocal connection to Country, with minimal intervention or destruction, allowing the tree to adapt and continue living as a healthy organism. Berg refers to the scars as 'a testimonial to the skills of the People'.

Berg's photographs have been shown a little before, but the idea to scale them up, desaturate the colour, edit in dotted half-tone and turn them into 'wallpaper' was devised in collaboration between the curators.

Scaling up was an interesting way to adapt his photographs, as in the gallery the trees are almost life size and so can give the viewer a sense of what it must be like to stand in this environment. Hung on Berg's wallpaper is a collection of his original photographs of the scar trees, framed in full colour, as well as the work of other artists in the exhibition. Berg has described the scar trees as 'a window to the past. They reflect both the spiritual uplifting presence of the traditional owners and the often chilling events that happened after mish [mission] times'.

17. VICKI COUZENS

Weereeyta-wan, yoonggama wangan ngootyoong
(*We resist - bestow respect*) 2010 (series title)

All works courtesy the artist

Vicki Couzens' series *Weereeyta-wan, yoonggama wangan ngootyoong* takes an interdisciplinary approach to traditional Indigenous mortuary, funeral and morning rituals, in conjunction with colonial practices of public memorials, war memorials and acknowledging the dead, in a site-specific response to the Stony Rises Landscape of the Western Districts of Victoria.

The installation of Couzen's works in *Sovereignty* includes a series of digital images and wooden crosses, an honour roll, a possum skin burial cloak and walooyt – possum fur pouches in which deceased remains are carried against the body. Couzen reclaims and retells the stories of those who fought to defend her Country, drawing on conflicting cultural traditions to commemorate the lives of her ancestors lost in massacres and in battles in defence of Guditjmarra Country.

Other artworks in gallery:

15. *Water bottle bags* by Clinton Nain, a hanging sculpture composed of natural materials including emu eggs, feathers and shells, along with discarded Mt Franklin water bottles, electrical cables, wire and string. The work remembers traditional forms of water carrying, whilst also exploring the commercial exploitation of shared natural resources and waste on Indigenous land.

18. A series of films produced as part of digital storytelling workshops by ten young Aboriginal people – alumni of the Richmond Emerging Aboriginal Leaders program at Korin Gamadji Institute. The young artists/filmmakers engaged with digital technologies, including filmmaking apps and mobile devices, to explore various approaches to asserting their identities and culture as contemporary Aboriginal youth.

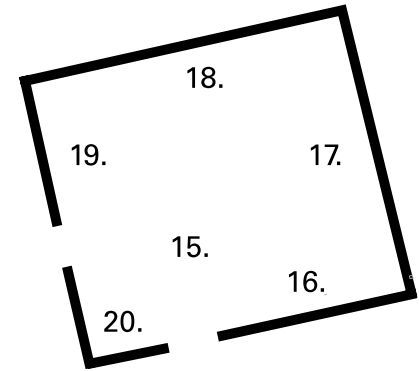
19. Brian Martin's *Methexical Countryscapes*, which present an Indigenous worldview centred on a material relation to Country. His immersive and embodied physical drawing method explores the relationship between people and Country, with two large framed charcoal drawings presented in ACCA's gallery space.

20. Two eel traps *Koomakarrak ngarrapan (new eel basket)* and *Woolee wooleeyt ngarrapan (old eel basket)*, by Bronwyn Razem who uses age-old weaving practices passed down by family. The curved, textured forms floating in the gallery exemplify the resourcefulness, craftsmanship and beauty of traditional techniques, maintaining a living connection to Razem's ancestors in Guditjmarra Country.

Read more about these artworks here



GALLERY 4



IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Installation view, *Sovereignty*, ACCA, 2016. Photo: Andrew Curti

Installation view, *Sovereignty*, ACCA, 2016. Photo: Andrew Curti

Clinton Nain, *Water bottle bags* 2013-16 (detail). Courtesy the artist

MATRIARCHAL CULTURE & WISDOM

Central concept:

Matriarchal culture, knowledge and wisdom significant to Indigenous culture, at the forefront of cultural preservation and renewal of long-standing cultural languages and practices.

Focus artwork:

24. GLENDA NICHOLLS

A woman's right of passage 2015

3 cloaks: jute string, dye, possum skin, wool, velvet, sixpence coin, silver chain, padlock, mussel shell, quandong seeds, mirror, glass beads, silver crucifix, emu feathers

Welcome Cloak: 139.0 x 294.0 cm (spread)

Acknowledgement Cloak: 153.0 x 275.0 cm (spread)

Elder's Cloak: 153.0 x 203.0 cm (spread)

Glenda Nicholls' work maintains the importance of preserving cultural traditions; sustaining the stories of her ancestors through her finely crafted forms. For *A woman's right of passage*, Nicholls has produced three woven cloaks adorned with a vast assortment of symbolic materials: possum skin, wool, velvet, a sixpence coin, silver chain and padlock, mussel shell, quandong seeds, mirror, glass beads, a silver crucifix and emu feathers. This list attests to Nicholls' ability to unite Indigenous and colonial objects and materials in order to subtly generate poetic and political significance.

The three cloaks – a *Welcome Cloak*, *Acknowledgement Cloak* and *Elder's Cloak* – are

used in traditional Welcome to Country ceremonies and embody the progressive stages in the life of an Aboriginal woman. Her *Milloo* (blue net) continues longstanding practices which demonstrate the centrality of the fishing net to the livelihood of First Nations peoples living along the Murray River (*Milloo*) on Waddi Waddi and Yorta Yorta Country.

Other artworks in gallery:

21. Yhonnie Scarce's *Fallout Babies* which addresses the British nuclear tests at Maralinga in the 1950s and 1960s, which produced Strontium-90, a by-product that entered the food chain and led to hundreds of deaths, particularly of infants. Scarce's delicate hand blown glass forms mimic the rounded shape of bush fruits in found hospital cribs in place of infants. Scarce's use of a cold and impersonal institutional aesthetic acts as a powerful symbol of the colonial disregard for the lives of the local Indigenous community at Maralinga, of which she has familial connections.

22. Poker-mark narrative-based drawings by Lucy Williams-Connelly depicting scenes of daily life on the Murray River, a skill she acquired from her father, with significant relation to family, daily life and kinship. The scenes include gathering food, conversations around the campfire, improvised architecture, along with the animals and birds who live alongside the people on Wemba-Wemba Country where she lives.

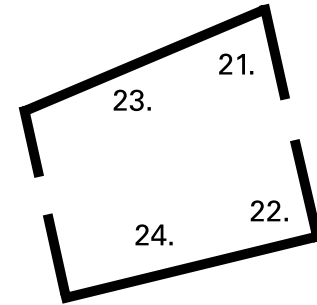
23. Maree Clarke's monumental and skillfully crafted necklaces, which affirm the power of art to rebuild and repair, exemplifying a regenerative and resistant

culture to the damages of colonisation, alongside her video installation *Born of the Land* expresses a profound sense of connectedness, belonging and union with Country.

Read more about these artworks here



GALLERY 3



IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Glenda Nicholls, installation view, ACCA, 2016. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Yhonnie Scarce, *Fallout babies* 2016. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY + diane tanzer gallery, Melbourne

Maree Clarke, installation view, ACCA, 2016. Photo: Andrew Curtis

THE AESTHETICS OF SOVEREIGNTY & ACTIVISM

Central concept:

Indigenous peoples' sovereign rights relating to their status as Australia's First Peoples, encompassing integral human rights, rights to land, among other inherent spiritual, legal and ethical frameworks. The exhibition takes place against a backdrop of cultural, political and historical debates related to questions of colonialism and de-colonisation, recognition in the Australian Constitution, and Indigenous peoples' quest for recognition of sovereignty, especially through treaty.

Focus artworks:

Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance (WAR)
Koori kids 2006 (& various other banners)
synthetic polymer paint on canvas
143.0 x 228.0
Courtesy the artists

Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance (WAR) was established in 2014 as a collective of young Aboriginal people committed to decolonisation, resistance and revival; and the amplification of community voices through protest.

The Melbourne chapter of WAR initially came together for a banner-making workshop for Invasion Day 2015 and have been actively involved in diverse grassroots Aboriginal campaigns across the country. The collective has been responsible for large mass protests in Melbourne in response to Invasion Day celebrations, and, in the words of WAR members, 'the continual torture of Aboriginal children, the

forced closures of Aboriginal communities, police and corrections brutality and Deaths in Custody'.

The banners on display at ACCA were made by members of WAR and community groups involved in workshops for the purpose of protesting and shutting down the streets of inner-city Melbourne. Informed by the collective legacy of earlier activism and campaigns for self-determination and resistance in Victoria, WAR continues to 'keep the fire burning'.

Other artworks in gallery:

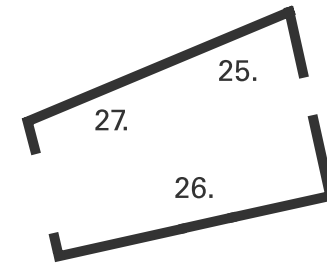
Resistance by Megan Cope, which takes the form of a series of protest placards that voice current anxieties about immigration and asylum seekers. These placards speak to a fear of the other, along with a disregard for Australia's First Peoples, whose sovereignty and ownership were compromised by settler society after invasion. Cope thus highlights the irony of the current refugee 'crisis' and European Australia's inability to reflect on past injustices.

Photographs from an archive of over 20,000 photographs, taken over two decades from the mid-1980s to 2006, by Lisa Belleair. Fondly remembered as a gifted poet, a lively radio broadcaster, and a committed activist with a passion for social change, Belleair's photographs, looped on a screen at ACCA alongside WAR's banners and Cope's placards, document the rich and dynamic cultural life and lived experience of the community in which she lived.

[Read more about these works here](#)



GALLERY 2



IMAGES CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

Warriors of The Aboriginal Resistance (WAR), *Koorie kids* 2006 (& various other banners). Courtesy the artists

Megan Cope, *Resistance* 2013. Installation view, ACCA, 2016. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY + Diane Tanzer gallery, Melbourne. Photo: Andrew Curtis

Lisa Belleair, *Sovereign Tea* 2006. Koorie Heritage Trust Collection

GLOSSARY

Activist; activism:

A person who plays a role in activities, such as public protests, with the intention to incite political and social change.

Aesthetic qualities:

A set of visual principles underlying an artwork or artistic movement. Aesthetic qualities are developed by the artist using art elements and principles together with the application of materials and techniques to elicit a response from the viewer. For example: When pondering aesthetic qualities you might ask yourself: "How has the artist used art elements and principles and techniques and materials to provoke a mood or a response in the viewer?"

Anglo-European:

Used to refer to those from both the British Isles and continental Europe; or those having heritage links to both those places.

Artefact:

An object made by a human being of cultural or historical interest.

Asylum seekers:

A person who has left their home country as a political refugee and is seeking asylum in another but whose claims have not yet been recognised by a government. However, since recognition by a government is not required to meet the definition of a refugee, an asylum seeker may also be at the same time a refugee.

Categorisation:

To categorise is to place people or objects into groups according to judgement of common features or qualities.

Ceremony:

The formal activities conducted on some solemn or important public or state occasion.

Colonialism:

The practice of acquiring political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting its resources.

Commission:

An order for something, especially a work of art, to be produced specially. ACCA often commissions artists to create artworks for exhibition.

Composition:

The composition of a two-dimensional artwork refers to the arrangement of visual objects and components within an image.

Constitutional recognition:

In Australia this refers to the move towards recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia's Constitution. The Australian Constitution is the founding document of our nation and the pre-eminent source of law.

Corroboree:

An Australian Aboriginal dance ceremony which may take the form of a sacred ritual or an informal gathering.

Decolonisation:

The breaking down and reversal of oppressive colonial structures.

Didactic Art:

Artwork intended to convey instruction and information, possibly as well as pleasure and entertainment.

Diplomat:

A person who is skilled at dealing with cross and inter-cultural communication related issues in a conciliatory manner.

Displacement:

This refers to the action of moving someone or something from its place or position. In this context displacement is used in relation to the forced removal or ejection of Indigenous peoples from their traditional lands by Anglo-European settler colonists.

Ethnographic:

Relating to the scientific description of peoples and cultures according to their observed customs, habits, and mutual differences.

Generic:

This refers to a feature or characteristic common to a group of things. In this case 'coroboree' is the generic word to describe a whole range of ceremonial meetings, however there are different types of corroborees, and Barak represented specifically and as distinct events.

History paintings:

History painting is a genre in painting defined by its subject matter rather than artistic style. History paintings usually depict a moment or event in a narrative story, rather than a specific and static subject.

Immigration:

The action of leaving one's birthplace to live permanently in a foreign country.

Matriarchal:

This refers to a form of social organization in which a woman is the head. For example, a matriarchal society is one that is led by a woman or group of women. Conversely, the word patriarchal refers to leadership by men.

Media:

The word media is the plural of medium and refers to the materials used to make an artwork. For example, the medium of an oil painting would be oil paint. Indigenous media included charcoal, shells, seeds, coral and a wide range of natural coloured ochres, whereas colonial media included artificial pigments and lead pencils.

Mish (Mission):

The word 'mish' is short for 'mission' and refers to the religious missions that were active in Australia. These were organised facilities originally set up and governed by different religious denominations for Aboriginal people to live. They provided accommodation for Aboriginal people on the condition of conversion to the specific religion, usually Christianity. Indigenous people had little

choice to live on missions and children were often taken from families by force to be raised on missions where they were trained to be household servants.

Ngurungaeta:

Ngurungaeta is a Wurundjeri word meaning 'head man' or 'tribal leader'.

Objectification:

To objectify is to degrade someone to the status of a mere object.

Oral history:

The collection and study of historical information using audio recordings of interviews with people having personal knowledge of past events.

Placard:

A sign with a message written on it, often designed to communicate political ideas. You will often see people carrying placards at protest rallies and marches.

Political Art:

In the visual arts, work that contains political subject matter, takes a stand on an issue, addresses a public concern, or awakens viewer sensitivity.

Polymath:

A person of wide knowledge or learning often at a high level and in typically unrelated fields. Leonardo da Vinci was a famous example of a polymath as he was a prolific inventor, designer, painter, sculptor, architect, botanist and writer amongst other activities.



IMAGE: Bill Onus in doorway of his shop in Belgrave c. late 1950s. Courtesy Tiriki Onus

GLOSSARY

Provenance:

The place of origin or earliest known history of something. An antique object or artwork is often accompanied by a recorded provenance which lists who first purchased the item and where, and subsequent exchanges of ownership and movements of the item.

Refugee:

A person who has been forced to leave their country in order to escape war, persecution, or natural disaster.

Resistance:

The refusal to accept or comply with something.

Retrospectively:

With reference to past events - literally 'to look back'. In law, a retrospective ruling is one that takes effect from a date already passed.

Revival:

1: An improvement in the condition, strength, or fortunes of someone or something.

2: An instance of something becoming popular, active, or important again.

Ritual:

A religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order.

Self-determination:

1 (Societal): The process by which a country determines its own statehood and forms its own government.

2 (Personal): The process by which a person controls their own life.

Settler:

A person who settles in a new region; often synonymous with a colonist.

Sovereignty:

Supreme and independent power or authority in government as possessed or claimed by a state or community.

Symmetry:

The quality of being made up of exactly similar parts facing each other or around an axis. For example, the patterns on butterfly wings are an example of perfect symmetry in nature.

Translator:

A person who translates from one language into another, especially as a profession.

Treaty:

The concept of a formally concluded and officially ratified agreement between groups. In an Australian context this refers to an agreement between the Australian Government and First Nations People that would both acknowledge the historical trajectory of injustices imposed upon First Nations People, and set out a mutual agreement regarding co-occupation into the future.

REFERENCES

Australian Dictionary of Biography: Biography - William Townsend (Bill) 1906-1968. Biographical information about William Townsend (Bill) Onus. URL: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/onus-william-townsend-bill-11308>

Australian National University: Aboriginal Enterprises: negotiating an urban Aboriginality. A paper referencing Bill Onus and tourist art. URL: <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p170581/html/ch07.xhtml?referer=1272&page=8>

Coranderrk: William Barak (1824-1903). Information about Barak living at Corenderrk. URL: http://coranderrk.com/wordpress/?page_id=98

Culture Victoria: Possum Skin Cloaks. Story about practice of making possum skin cloaks. URL: <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/possum-skin-cloaks/>

Culture Victoria: The William Barak collection at the Koorie Heritage Trust. Transcript of Senior Curator at the Koorie Heritage Trust, Nerissa Broben, discussing items in the Trust's William Barak Collection: a painting, a shield and a club. URL: <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/william-barak/the-william-barak-collection-at-the-koorie-heritage-trust/>

Culture Victoria: Untitled (Ceremony) painting by William Barak. Brief story about Untitled (Ceremony) and other artistic works by Barak. URL: <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/william-barak/untitled-ceremony-painting-by-william-barak/>

Culture Victoria: William Barak : King of the Yarra. A brief essay about William Barak. URL: <http://www.cv.vic.gov.au/stories/aboriginal-culture/william-barak/william-barak-king-of-the-yarra/>

Find & Connect: Assimilation Policy (1951 - 1962). Explanation of the Assimilation Policy in Australia. URL: <https://www.findandconnect.gov.au/guide/sa/SE00796>

Ian Clark: A Peep at the Blacks': A History of Tourism at Coranderrk Aboriginal Station, 1863-1924. A book concerned with the history of tourism at the Coranderrk Aboriginal Station at Healesville. URL: <https://books.google.com.au/books?id=RKYLCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA162&lpg=PA162&dq=barak+dignitaries&source=bl&ots=Ht9wwga91J&sig=FtinvDGvqaS9CnX2mXCnfoW2a6M&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjGut2Xnb7RAhWEoZQKHwJvBooQ6AEIjAC#v=onepage&q=barak%20dignitaries&f=false>

Indigenous Australia: Oral Traditions. Page outlining significance of oral traditions in Indigenous Australia. URL: <http://www.indigenoustralia.info/languages/oral-traditions.html>

Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences: The Maralinga Souvenir Clock. Information about the clock in regards to Brook Andrew's work. URL: <https://maas.museum/magazine/2016/01/the-maralinga-souvenir-clock/>

NGV: Important drawing by William Barak. Essay about acquisition of large scale drawing by William Barak. URL: <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/important-drawing-by-william-barak/>

NITV: Remembering William Barak: artist, activist and leader of the Yarra Yarra tribe. Article discussing Barak's legacy and artworks. URL: <http://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/article/2016/08/15/remembering-william-barak-artist-activist-and-leader-yarra-yarra-tribe>

Proud Race: Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll. A government document formally acknowledging the contribution of Indigenous Victorians to the identity and well being of Victoria. URL: <http://www.proudrace.org.au/victorian-indigenous-honor-roll?task=document.viewdoc&id=34>

State Library of Victoria: Artist William Barak. Biographical information on Barak. URL: <http://ergo.slv.vic.gov.au/explore-history/fight-rights/indigenous-rights/artist-william-barak>

FURTHER READING

Max Delany and Paola Balla (eds.), *Sovereignty*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne 2016.

Sovereignty: Exhibition wall labels, available at: <https://www.accaonline.org.au/sites/default/files/Wall%20labels.pdf>

When The Wattles Bloom Again: The Barak Project, National Gallery of Victoria, <http://www.ngv.vic.gov.au/essay/when-the-wattles-bloom-again-the-barak-project/>

Evidence: Brook Andrew, Brook Andrew, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences Media

How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art, Ian McLean, University of Wollongong

Rattling Spears: A history of Indigenous Australian art, Ian W. McLean, Reaktion Books

Daniel Boyd: The law of closure, Daniel Boyd, Perimeter Editions

Aboriginal Victorians - A history since 1880, Richard Broome, Allen & Unwin

Unfinished Constitutional Business? Rethinking Indigenous self-determination, Barbara Hocking, Aboriginal Studies Press

The Flash of Recognition: Photography and the emergence of Indigenous rights, Jane Lydon, University of New South Wales Press

Australia: William Blandowski's illustrated encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia, Harry Allen, Aboriginal Studies Press, Acton, 2010

Meerreeng-an Here is My Country : the story of Aboriginal

Victoria told through art, edited by Chris Keeler and Vicki Couzens, Koorie Heritage Trust Inc., Melbourne, 2010.

Not just dots: Aboriginal art and artists from East Gippsland in south eastern Victoria, Robyn Ann Evans, East Gippsland Aboriginal Arts Corporation, Bairnsdale, 2008

Artist's websites & representing galleries:

Brook Andrew: <http://www.brookandrew.com>

Briggs (Adam Briggs): <http://iambriggs.com>

Trevor 'Turbo' Brown: <https://japingkaaboriginalart.com/collections/turbo-brown/>

Jack Charles: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-09-13/uncle-jack-charles-goes-back-to-prison/7837136>

Maree Clarke: http://www.vivienandersongallery.com/artists.php?artist_id=97?osCsid=mt1a49f00g4d4hrvoa5it5o1n6&action=bio

Megan Cope: <http://nutmegandhoney.blogspot.com.au>

Destiny Deacon & Virginia Fraser:

http://www.roslynxley9.com.au/artists/2/Destiny_Deacon/profile/

<https://boxcopy.org/2015/11/10/virginia-fraser-elvis-richardson/>

Marlene Gilson: <http://www.thecourier.com.au/story/3358263/aunt-a-peoples-choice/>

Clinton Nain: http://shermangalleries.sherman-scaf.org.au/artists/inartists/artist_profile.asp%3Fartist=nainc.html

Glenda Nicholls: <http://mildurapalimpsestbiennale.com/artists-thinkers/glenda-nicholls/>

Mandy Nicholson: http://www.bunjils-country.com/index.php?p=1_17

Steaphan Paton: <http://www.steaphanpaton.com>

Reko Rennie: <http://rekorennie.com>

Steven Rhall: <http://steverhall.com>

Yhonnie Scarce: <http://thisisnofantasy.com/artist/yhonnie-scarce/>

Peter Waples-Crowe: <http://www.peterwaplescrowe.com/about.html>

Other artist references:

William Barak: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/barak-william-2930>

Lisa Bellear: <http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/07/06/1089000137670.html>

Jim Berg: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/Arts/Message-of-healing/2005/06/12/1118514923582.html>

Amiel Courtin-Wilson: <http://theliftebrow.com/post/96301344113/an-interview-with-amiel-courtin-wilson>

Vicki Couzens: <http://caama.com.au/news/2016/possum-cloak-maker-and-multi-media-artist-vicki-couzens>

http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2016/06/aye_20160625_1830.mp3

Korin Gamadji Institute: <http://www.kgi.org.au>

Brian Martin: <http://www.ddca.edu.au/events/event-media/2016/6/9/professor-brian-martin-immaterial-land-refiguring-art-and-materialism-through-an-indigenous-australian-ideology>

Bruce McGuiness: <http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/essays/tracker/tracker18.html>

Kent Morris: <http://stkildanews.com/kent-morris-vies-for-states-richest-indigenous-art-prize/>

Bill Onus: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/onus-william-townsend-bill-11308>

Bronwyn Razem: <http://trove.nla.gov.au/people/1482738?c=people>

Warriors of the Aboriginal Resistance (WAR): https://issuu.com/brisbaneblacks/docs/war_manifesto_d91595ceee8754

Lucy Williams-Connelly: http://archive.creative.vic.gov.au/Projects_Initiatives/Indigenous_Arts_Initiatives/Victorian_Indigenous_Art_Awards/VIAA_Peoples_Choice_Award_2015_-_VOTE_NOW/VIAA_2015_images/untitled_2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Education resource written and compiled by Eliza Devlin, Education Manager and Andrew Atchison, Artist Educator, with contributions from Max Delany, Paola Balla and Stephanie Berlangieri, ACCA, December 2016 - January 2017.

ACCA acknowledges the support of the Department of Education and Training through the Strategic Partnerships Program.

TERMS OF USE

This Education Resource has been produced by the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art to provide information and classroom support material for school visits to the exhibition *Sovereignty*. The reproduction and communication of this resource is permitted for educational purposes only.

VISITING ACCA

ACCA's Education Programs are FREE and available for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary groups.



Bookings are required for both guided and self-guided school and tertiary groups.


10am - 5pm Tuesday – Friday
Monday by special appointment

accaonline.org.au/learn
education@accaonline.org.au

Australian Centre for
Contemporary Art
111 Sturt Street
Southbank Victoria 3006
Australia
www.accaonline.org.au

Connect with us:

  #accamelbourne

 [acca_melbourne](https://twitter.com/acca_melbourne)

acca EDUCATION



acca