

# **INDIGENOUS FAMILIES: BEYOND THE VOIDS OF COLONIAL HISTORY**

by

**Jennifer Murray-Jones**

Bachelor of Arts  
Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary)  
Bachelor of Arts Honours 1<sup>st</sup> Class (Visual Arts)  
Graduate Certificate of Higher Education

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

**Deakin University**  
**March 2017**



**DEAKIN UNIVERSITY  
CANDIDATE DECLARATION**

I certify the following about the thesis entitled (10 word maximum)

INDIGENOUS FAMILIES: BEYOND THE  
VOIDS OF COLONIAL HISTORY

submitted for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

- a. I am the creator of all or part of the whole work(s) (including content and layout) and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.
- b. The work(s) are not in any way a violation or infringement of any copyright, trademark, patent, or other rights whatsoever of any person.
- c. That if the work(s) have been commissioned, sponsored or supported by any organisation, I have fulfilled all of the obligations required by such contract or agreement.
- d. That any material in the thesis which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any university or institution is identified in the text.
- e. All research integrity requirements have been complied with.

*'I certify that I am the student named below and that the information provided in the form is correct'*

Full Name: JENNIFER ELEN MURRAY-JONES  
(Please Print)

Signed: J. Murray-Jones

Date: 28th JUNE 2017



**DEAKIN UNIVERSITY  
ACCESS TO THESIS - A**

I am the author of the thesis entitled

submitted for the degree of

This thesis may be made available for consultation, loan and limited copying in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968.

*'I certify that I am the student named below and that the information provided in the form is correct'*

Full Name: JENNIFER ELLEN MURRAY-JONES  
(Please Print)

Signed: J. Murray-Jones

Date: 28TH JUNE 2017

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to acknowledge the Country where much of this research has taken place, my home Country of Yorta Yorta, Baraparapa and Wiradjuri, along with Mutti Mutti, Wemba Wemba, Nari Nari, Latji Latji, Dadi Dadi, Boonwoorung and Wathaurung, to all Elders past and present, to those who have walked before us, and all creation spirits amongst us.

I wish to acknowledge my parents Shirley and Norman Jones (Murray) for passing on so many skills to me. To my father Norman who passed away from Motor Neuron Disease, when I was just six years old. I stand in awe at the experiences in life which you faced being institutionalised, yet you were to become a wonderful father and one of the first Aboriginal Train Drivers in Victoria. My mother Shirley, you have given me so much knowledge in regard to history and arts practice and you have always been the one to point out significant sites when we were children, giving us an awareness of our Aboriginal history and the true history of this Country. To my grandmother Mollie Murray, you held so much pain in your heart because of your removal and the harsh government policies which were responsible for your battles. We can only imagine the horror of the fight, we now understand much more than we ever did.

I offer my gratitude to Professor Estelle Barrett for her patience and fortitude as my Supervisor. You have opened my eyes and my heart to research and the power of arts practice in presenting new knowledge. To my Assistant Supervisor Brian Martin, and my fellow PhD students at IKE, it has been an amazing journey, involving academic fellowship, as we share and support each other at IKE.

To my Grandmother Mollie, my Father Norman, Aunty Audrey, Aunty Nell, Uncle Les, Aunty Dawn, and Uncle Besley: your spirits are with us all, and I won't forget your love and support. I know you are here, may you rest in peace. To Uncle Frankie and Uncle Ray, thank you for sharing your story and your memories.

## ABSTRACT

As a result of colonisation, Aboriginal people were forced to move off their traditional lands and their children were taken to be trained as a cheap labour force for the colonisers. Colonisation severed family ties, missions forbade traditional practices and language, and children were often housed separately from adults so that customs and beliefs were not handed down. This resulted in a disconnection to family, country and cultural practices that produced gaps and voids in the lives of many Aboriginal people.

The aim of this research is to rediscover and reclaim knowledge of family, people and place, and our connection to Country by focussing on the experiences of my own family as a case study. The research by practice and exegesis, will employ a triangulated approach, including the making of visual art, interviews/auto-ethnographic accounts and the use of photography.

The research values Indigenous knowledge systems and is conducted through an Indigenous perspective which includes “yarning” and the sharing of knowledge during fieldtrips to Country as a mode of data collection. The outcome of the investigation is body of artwork that speaks for those across the generations through visual experience. The research is significant in that it articulates how contemporary Indigenous art operates as ceremony and commemoration and as a means of preserving culture. Moreover, it demonstrates how artistic research can work in combination with other

research methods to overcome the amnesia caused by colonisation and reveal aspects of Indigenous experience, family life and history, which are not exposed through other forms of research and documentation.

# CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	i
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	iii
<b>CONTENTS</b>	v
<b>LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS</b>	vii
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	xiii
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
Summary	1
Background Aims /Objectives	3
Methodology	7
Approach	10
Historical Background	13
Protection of Aborigines	17
Decolonising Methodologies	19
Overview of Chapters to follow	20
<b>CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>23</b>
The Void and The Gap	26
Photographs	27
Initial Contact	32
Mission Days	37
Oral Histories	39
Yorta Yorta Fight for Rights	49
Social Issues and Government Policies	56
Family Movements Around Southern New South Wales	61
Artistic Interpretation	69
The Works	70
<b>CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXT OF PRACTICE</b>	<b>72</b>
Julie Dowling	76
Daniel Boyd	92
Maree Clarke	103
John Glover	113
<b>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>121</b>
Method Overview	121
Genre	127
Materials and Media	139
Making the Works	141
Photography	151
Oral History / Yarning	158
Amnesia	163
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: ORAL HISTORIES</b>	<b>166</b>
Aunty Dawn Wolfe	173
Uncle Ray Murray	178
Uncle Besley Murray	181
Cultural Ways of Knowing	187

<b>CHAPTER FIVE: ART AS RESEARCH ART AS CEREMONY</b>	<b>191</b>
Art as Ceremony	191
Yanga	203
Talpee	208
This is Where They Wanted Us to be	211
Ancestors	213
Ben	215
Murrumbidgee	217
Piggery Lake	219
Bird's Eye	222
Aggie's Swamp	224
The Island	230
<b>CHAPTER SIX CONCLUSION</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>238</b>

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Tourism Australia, Map of Aboriginal Australia  
(extract, South-Eastern Australian Nations) 36
  
2. Unknown, c. 1911, *Aunty Aggie Edwards with her car at Speewa*, photograph, Swan Hill Regional Library Collection 63
  
3. Unknown, c. 1907, *Uncle Sidney John, Aunty Aggie Edwards holding Uncle Freddie and Mollie Murray*, photograph, Speewa, Murray family collection 66
  
4. Unknown, c. 1911 (*Mollie Priscilla Lavinia, William, (Jack) Sidney John, Lila Lilly, Ridley and (Bessy) Beatrice front*), photograph at Speewa. Murray family collection 67
  
5. Unknown, c. 1912, *The Milliner from Swan Hill and Aunty Aggie Edwards at Speewa*, photograph, Swan Hill Library collection 67
  
6. Left: Julie Dowling, *Icon to a Stolen Child: Fetish*, 1998, mixed media, 40.5 x 27.5cm 78
  
7. Right: Julie Dowling, *Icon to a Stolen Child: Fire*, 1998,

mixed media, 40.5 x 27.5cm	78
8. Julie Dowling, <i>Melbin</i> , 1999, mixed media, 120 x 100 cm	83
9. Julie Dowling, <i>Biddy the Midwife</i> , 2003, synthetic polymer paint, red ochre and plastic on canvas, 60 x 40cm	86
10. Daniel Boyd, <i>King No Beard</i> , 2007, oil on canvas	93
11. Left: Daniel Boyd, <i>Treasure Island</i> , 2005, oil on canvas, 192.5 x 220.0 cm	94
12. Right: Daniel Boyd, <i>We Call Them Pirates Out Here</i> , 2006, oil on canvas 226.5 x 275 cm	94
13. Daniel Boyd, <i>Sir No Beard</i> , 2007, oil on canvas, 182.5 x 121.5 cm	96
14. Daniel Boyd, <i>Untitled</i> 2014, oil, pastel and archival glue on canvas, 315 x 223.5cm	98

15. Daniel Boyd, *Untitled*, 2013, oil and archival glue on canvas 101
16. Daniel Boyd, *Untitled*, 2012,  
oil and archival glue on canvas 102
17. Maree Clarke, *Women in Mourning*, 2011,  
photographic image, *Ritual and Ceremony* Exhibition  
Bunjilaka Melbourne Museum 104
18. Maree Clarke, *Ritual and Ceremony*, (Kopi caps in background)  
2011, Exhibition Bunjilaka Melbourne Museum. 106
19. Maree Clarke, *Ritual Connection to Country*, 2015,  
Video Installation Koorie Heritage Trust.  
Photo: Luis Ascui Sydney Morning Herald 30/06/2015 112
20. John Glover, *The Bath of Dianna*, 1837, Van Diemen's Land 113
21. John Glover, *The River Nile*, 1840, Van Diemen's Land 118
22. John Glover, *A Corroboree in Van Diemen's Land*, 1840 119

23. Jennifer Murray-Jones, *Aunty Dawn Wolfe*,  
photographic image 173
24. Mollie Murray, *Formally the Murray family home at  
Kyalite*, c.1937 photographic image 175
25. Mollie Murray, *Formally the Murray Family home at  
Redgate Station Balranald*, c. 1937, photographic image,  
Balranald NSW 176
27. Jennifer Murray-Jones, *Uncle Besley Murray and  
Uncle Ray Murray*, 2013 photographic image,  
Sturt Highway Balranald 178
28. Russell Adcock , *Uncle Besley Murray on his horse*,  
2013 photographic image, Balranald NSW 181
29. *Sketch by G A Robinson of a bark drawing seen in a hut  
on the Loddon River*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1843. Mitchell Library,  
State Library of New South Wales. (cited Sayers 1997, p.95) 188
30. *Drawing on bark collected from Lake Tyrell*,  
*Victoria*, Unknown, c. 1860, (Sayers 1997 p. 96) 189

31. Jenny Murray-Jones, <i>Yanga</i> , 2015, oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm	203
32. Jenny Murray-Jones, <i>Talpee</i> , 2015, oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm	208
33: Jenny Murray-Jones, <i>This is Where They Wanted Us to Be</i> , 2014, oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm	211
34. Jenny Murray-Jones, <i>Ancestors</i> , 2017, oil and wax medium on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm	213
35. Jenny Murray-Jones, <i>Ben</i> , 2014, Oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm	215
36. Jenny Murray-Jones, <i>Murrumbidgee</i> , 2014, oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm	217
37. Jenny Murray-Jones, <i>Piggery Lake</i> 2016, oil and wax medium on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm	219
38. Jenny Murray-Jones, <i>Birds Eye</i> 2016, oil and wax medium on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm	222

39. Jenny Murray-Jones, *Aggie's Swamp* 2014,  
oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm 224
40. Jenny Murray-Jones, *The Island* 2017, Oil on Belgian Linen,  
112 x 137cm 230

## GLOSSARY

Intelligence	<i>gabra</i>
To make	<i>bunyma</i>
To think	<i>nangarna</i>
To do	<i>ngata</i>
About / see around	<i>nagawitpa</i>
How	<i>wannhulum</i>
Land / ground	<i>woka</i>
To look	<i>mirra</i>
To know	<i>ngai</i>
present, past	<i>ngaikun</i>
imperative	<i>ngaina</i>
To tell	<i>ngarri</i>
To listen	<i>ngarwu</i>
To be	<i>angoorram</i>
To search	<i>yamutj</i>

(Bowe, Peeler & Atkinson 1997, pp. 79–189)

# INTRODUCTION

## INDIGENOUS FAMILIES: BEYOND THE VOIDS OF COLONIAL HISTORY

### Summary

This research will use personal experience, oral history and visual practice to examine the effects of colonisation on Indigenous families and how oral history and art permits an emotionally and culturally relevant and appropriate form of recuperation and communal overcoming of loss. The research will extend understandings of the nature and make-up of contemporary Indigenous families and the ways in which oral history and art become a crucial means of reclaiming identity.

Selma Fraiberg, Edna Adelson and Vivian Shapiro (cited in Grenshaw, 2008, p.38) suggest that trauma experienced in one generation has profound effects on the emotional lives not only of the children of the next generation, but even on the descendants six or ten generations hence:

They refer to families that are “possessed by their ghosts.” They propose that in every nursery there are ghosts stating “they are the visitors from the unremembered past of parents; the uninvited guests at the christening”. For the stolen children, parental love was severed. This left children and their parents without protection from

the “malevolent ghosts” that have taken up residence in Aboriginal homes. (cited in Grenshaw 2008, p. 38)

A right to a loving home life and the security of cultural values and practices firmly grounds us all. When colonisation interrupted and dismantled this framework, the very structure of society was undermined and rendered tenuous. Added to this, the removal of children from Indigenous families severed them from the connections and care required to build emotional security. With an alienated family model by which to form notions of upbringing for their own children, later generations grapple with the social disability and voids that shaped family experience. This includes a sense of displacement, loss of identity and a true sense of belonging. Institutions set out to make people feel ashamed of their identity and culture, to the point where they keep this to themselves whenever possible. At Cootamundra Girls’ Home, Aboriginal girls had been told to, ‘think white, look white, act white’ (Family–Australian Museum 2012, p.1) and certainly also to marry white!

Older generations did not pass on their language, traditions or other information about their families, because they were told to be ashamed of being Aboriginal and not to go back to their camp or the mission.

Institutional life was to serve one purpose, and that was severing all connections to traditional Indigenous traditions. Now these children must

aspire to adopting the 'superior' white culture and identity in order to assimilate into white Australia.

### **Background Aims / Objectives**

This research will draw on personal experience and family oral history as a case study, in order to illuminate the effects of colonisation on the structure and experiences of indigenous families and to find ways of articulating this through visual art. The research investigates the ways in which people have responded to these effects from generation to generation. Throughout the research, I will gather oral histories from family and community and explore government documents and archives, as well as family documents, including photographs, in order to find information on both my grandmother and father. Both were institutionalised and both grappled with the voids left in their lives. My grandmother was taken at the age of eleven years and lost contact with family and community. My father became a Ward of the State at an early age, and was institutionalised until he was about sixteen years of age. He spent time at Sunbury's Rupertswood and later at Tally-ho Boys' Home. After this he was 'apprenticed' out to various farming jobs around Victoria where he was unfairly treated by his rural bosses. He escaped many of these places only to be picked up by the Police and returned to the Royal Park Depot and then back to the Boys' Home. Life was pretty tough for a young lad, who amazingly enough would find his way back to his mother no matter where she had moved.

Using archival material as a springboard for gathering further information through oral histories and interviews and also for capturing experience through visual imagery, this research aims to better articulate both the gaps and voids in Indigenous family life, as well as the ways in which cultural practices including storytelling and the making of art assists in restoring connections to place family and cultural identity.

The voids and gaps in my family past and which are to be addressed in this research, relate to much information that has been erased or does not appear in official histories. The indoctrination practiced in these institutions where our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents were detained, taught them to feel ashamed of who they were and that their customs, languages and traditions were inferior to that of a western civilisation. It was my grandmother's generation who were forbidden to pass on their language and beliefs, and this created a void in the transmission of our culture. This void exists in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, as to some extent nearly every family has been touched by separation and institutionalisation in one way or another.

Of primary concern in this research is my need to fill the voids and gaps in our histories, those which exist as the result of all that has been imposed and that which was taken away from Aboriginal people throughout colonisation. We must reclaim, reinstate and strengthen our world view in order to

challenge history's misrepresentations and replace this with our own epistemological perspective. This research will culminate in producing a body of artwork which does this through visual means. The works will begin through empirical research in the form of archival and other searches and interviews and responses to the data collected will manifest through the creation of images. The analysis of the final work will draw on what Jillian Hamilton and Luke Jaaniste (2014) have conceptualized as effective and evocative research as outcomes of artmaking. This notion of the evocative and the effective will be applied to argue that Indigenous art as ceremony transcends western conceptions of what art is and the work that art *does*. As these works emerge they will have the effect of bringing into the present memories and representations of the past as if they exist materially in the present. It is this aspect of the work that articulates the way in which Indigenous art operates as ceremony and commemoration as well as the transmission of knowledge. Through artistic expression emotions and affects are also evoked via the multiple registers of aesthetic image (Barrett, 2014).

These are the elements that produce sensory responses from the viewer, the unsaid and the unstated, the latent meanings that can only be accessed through aesthetic experience. It is at this point that the works become ceremony, a state which in a cultural sense, collapses the distance between the past and the present the real and the imaginary, the spiritual and the material. This is the "everywhen" associated with the concept of the

Dreaming, that we live in a place where we continue to exist in different parallels of past, present and future, coexisting simultaneously.

These images bring with them this sense of commemoration and ceremony that celebrates our continuum of existence in this Country. The evocative, and the effective and the ceremonial work in parallel to each other to convey an Indigenous epistemology, a window into our world view. They also validate our heritage and connection to Country through visual experience, the ceremony.

As I embarked on this research I came to realise the emotion and connection related to Country and ancestors, and how much is revealed to the artist practitioner as the works develop and grow. This is related to tacit knowledge and unspoken experiences of our world and world view which is within. This and more is revealed through the physical, material and sensory process of creating these artworks. Overall these are the foundations onto which I planned to explore and reveal our place in a world where so much bigotry had existed.

Reflecting on my childhood days, I grew up with an element of “shame” around me, I knew that my grandmother was holding back, as she was very guarded and kept to herself all of that which had hurt her and made her ashamed. She had been “whitewashed”, schooled in ways that would leave her psychologically abandoned and culturally remote, without family and

without identity. I was proud of my Aboriginality and needed to understand what had happened to her to make her fearful and guarded.

My journey will take me to Country where the shadows of my grandmother and father's footsteps remain. These policies of child removal have created a void between those with pride, language, knowledge and culture and those who have very little other than the negative stereotypes which were imposed upon them and the fears of being ostracised if they were to return. Some met up with friends and family in secret either due to their 'Dog Ticket' conditions or to avoid prejudice and discrimination in the community.

This study will provide a window into their worlds through a practice research exegesis and body of artwork, in order to translate into images the significance this has for Aboriginal people today.

## **Methodology**

This research will be conducted primarily through visual practice (painting) and a written exegesis. The research will also involve revisiting Country, and collecting and analysing the oral histories of my family and community.

These accounts will be interwoven in the exegesis and will also provide a foundation and inspiration for completing a body of artworks for exhibition.

The creative work will evolve through the use of a visual journal which will include photographic references, drawings and spontaneously painted

sketches. The journal will document my thoughts and processes throughout my research and fieldwork.

I will be drawing on both Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors in order to examine various ways in which research is developed in visual arts, and how academics have theorised about the underlying meaning and visual knowledge produced from research into image making as well as old photographs. This area of research holds great relevance in regard to my work as I delve into past and precious old photographs of my family along the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers. The research links photography and painting through the concept of the indexicality of the image. Within an Indigenous world view where all entities are interrelated and there is no separation between the imaginary and the real, the spiritual and the material — all artworks have a direct causal relationship to what they depict. Key questions related to this will be revisited in the final chapter using a framework derived from Indigenous and western perspectives on art — principally, the notions of art as ceremony as well as the concepts of the evocative and the effective as ways of articulating what art does as a mode of knowledge production (Wilson 2008; & Hamilton & Jaaniste 2014).

I will be working on a proposition that, for many of us, when telling our stories of the past, we draw individuals from the present to a past with all of the mental images to fit the narrative. It is from these images that each and every one of us pass these stories onto others using our own mental images

for reference as well as the imagined colours, textures sounds and smells of a time long past. In the practice of making these images, it is the tacit knowledge that enables the artist to interpret that which has been inherited, that close association with identity, culture and knowing as experiential knowledge.

I will take a number of journeys to significant places where my family have lived and worked. I will also travel with family Elder Uncle Besley Murray, my father's cousin, around the Country in which my family still live today. This is the Country where my family travelled from station to station for work shearing and as farm labourers and domestics.

Oral histories have the capacity to reinstate "voices", creating a sense of place and time, and an authenticity of experience that speaks to the audience. A selection of oral histories resourced, such as Louis Peeler's *River Connect*, (Peeler 2008), gives examples of how other authors have approached the recording of oral histories. Peeler gives an insight into the lives of our people after being disenfranchised and disillusioned by their treatment at Cummeragunja Mission Station. Carolyn Landon & Daryl Tonkin's, *Jackson's Track: Memoir of a Dreamtime Place*. (Landon & Tonkin 1999) presents a story which gives a vivid account of a family's struggles near a country town in Gippsland Victoria. Another example studied, is Carolyn Landon's *Black Swan* (2011), a biography researched and written in a manner which involves the writer introducing the oral history, yet allowing the voice

of the interviewee to speak to the reader. The methodology used here involves searching archives and government records, which were discussed with the participants during their interviews. This research will extend on these approaches by demonstrating how oral history and story-telling combine with the making of visual images, important modes of transmitting experience and knowledge as it is articulated through Indigenous perspectives that acknowledge the close connection between place or Country, family, identity and culture.

The fieldwork will involve travelling back to Country around Echuca, Swan Hill in Victoria and Balranald in New South Wales, to collect information and images that will inspire my creative artworks as spiritual connection to Country, and our traditional practices and ceremony, encompassing the fabric of our society. The artwork will link elements of the landscape which relate to the experiences of my family, to the dust and grit of their daily lives. This body of work will be a component of my thesis which will take the text to another level of understanding. Woven within these textual and artistic representations will be historical 'data' sourced through government and other archives as well as historical and scholarly research.

### **Approach**

Aboriginal knowledge systems will inform the theoretical foundations from which this research will be conducted. In particular, I will draw from Shawn

Wilson (2008), Karen Martin (2003), & Veronica Arbon (2008), who have highlighted that relationality, or relatedness between all, living and non-living entities, as a common feature within Aboriginal knowledge. This connectedness will inform my methodology to bring diverse aspects of my study together as a whole. It is important that my work bring to the fore the importance of storytelling and the visual images which express and communicate our culture and identity. The importance of researching the work of others involved in Practice as Research, will also adopt practice based approaches of those elaborated by other practitioners and theorists such as Brian Martin (2013) and Estelle Barrett (2010, 2011, 2016). This research will add to the knowledge and understanding of issues that had an impact on Aboriginal people. The research will follow appropriate protocols and I will propose to all participants that the text and images are approved of by family and community Elders prior to public scrutiny, as required in Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, protocols and guidelines (AIATSIS 2011).

In order to position myself and my artwork, I will study the work of a number of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists. These will include Julie Dowling, Daniel Boyd, and Maree Clarke. In contrast I will explore the influence of artist John Glover and the impact his work has had in relation to the amnesia of colonial discourse.

In the Aboriginal context, there will be a broader interest in the understandings that will emerge from this project. The wider community will benefit from this research as the narrative and artwork will depict an important part of Australian history that is not available in official histories. Participants will benefit from additional knowledge and a better understanding of who we are as Aboriginal people and of how contemporary art continues to operate as ceremony and as a renewal and preservation of Aboriginal culture and knowledge. The research will bring new knowledge of the history of one family that will also be relevant within a broader Australian historical context since many Aboriginal families share the experiences that are central to my research.

My research is intended to challenge the attitudes and beliefs of those people who may not be aware of the issues that have confronted Aboriginal people of south-eastern Australia throughout the colonisation of this country. The research will also provide substantial benefit to my family and community in attempting to assuage the uncertainties, created from forced separation and institutionalisation.

The exhibition will be an alternative mode of accessing knowledge for those who view the artwork. The void, which is the result of government policy and attitudes of the time, will be the focus of my work and the images will relate to my Country, the erasure that lies within and the textures of the landscape. This landscape is alive with the ancestors of the past and their

spirits. We pay respect to these ancestors and our creation spirits, totems and the great rivers as they wind their way through Country giving life to all.

Art is a communication of knowledge, thoughts and ideas, it provokes emotional response to its narrative and an understanding by those who view it. Art is a commemorative memorial to the emotions and experiences of a former time and former lives of our people who walked this land of theirs not so long ago, it is also a part of who we are today. Aboriginal knowledge systems have always been structured around the traditional arts of storytelling, yarning, and describing places and events using art and design. Spiritual beings and events and the relationships between these with other environmental phenomena and the landscape remain powerful in Indigenous belief systems. Keepers of knowledge are aware of what knowledge is appropriate to whom and when. Not all people have access to all knowledge as this can be secret or exclusive to various gender, age and totem groups at different times for varying reasons. In this sense, art continues to operate as ceremony and artworks as depositories of knowledge that operates at multiple levels depending on who encounters the work.

### **Historical Background**

In order to frame my research and subsequent practice, this exegesis will bring together personal accounts, oral histories and literature in order to present an interwoven account of Aboriginal lives in the early 1900s and into

the present. This research will give context to my family history and their journeys throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century at a time which is recognised as a very turbulent period of colonisation. Being born in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, I can recall vividly what it was like to be regarded as a 'half-caste' and the attitude of a society which saw Aboriginal people in a very negative light. I dedicate this research to my father and grandmother and those members of the family whom today need to know how our lives were shaped and affected through government policy and the attitudes of a colonial Australia.

From Cummeragunja to Mitcham my grandmother guarded her secrets and gave little information to her family of her life and its struggles. Little did we know that back in Balranald there was another part of the family who were grieving the loss of their two sisters removed around 1915, just prior to the death of my great-grandmother.

Searching for accounts of Aboriginal family lives and their struggles since colonisation will assist in my research which aims at filling some of the gaps in my family's lives and the lives of other Aboriginal families. The stories of many are similar. The names, places and times vary of course, but there is a common thread which weaves its way through years of oppression. In relation to institutionalisation, Anna Haebich discusses the impact of the brainwashing of children sent to homes like Cootamundra:

This “re-grooming”, to fit the children with institutional standards of dress and hygiene, was also intended to erase the outer vestiges of their former identity and individuality. As in other “total institutions” such as prisons and mental asylums, this was the initial stage in a central process of re-creating each individual anew ... how much more traumatic were the experiences of these young and vulnerable children who did not understand what was happening to them or why, and who had no familiar cultural reference points to draw on apart from a terror instilled in them of this very fate by their families? (Haebich 2000, p. 343)

Is it any wonder that my grandmother Mollie had such a sad demeanour at times. She had been taught to relinquish her cultural persona and to be ashamed of who she was. Her past was her secret and nobody was told anything about her time under the control of the Aboriginal Protection Board.

It is difficult to find information on my father and his mother because they have long passed, and many of those who lived at the same time are no longer alive to tell their accounts. The few Elders who are alive today and other family members however, can offer their oral accounts of the time when they were both living. We know very little about their early lives other than those few accounts which have been passed down to current generations. As a child it was not appropriate to ask personal questions of

one's grandmother, but I can remember what others said at the time. My father passed away when I was six years of age, and very little of his past experiences were communicated to me. However, I always knew that I was Aboriginal and that my grandmother Mollie had come from the Murray River region. My father's sister, Audrey, passed on some information to me as a young woman in my mid twenties and early thirties and set me on a trail to find the answers to the many questions we all had as members of the family.

During the process of investigation on my grandmother I applied through Aboriginal Affairs, to the New South Wales State Archives for any information on her as a stolen Aboriginal child. Of particular interest was to discover which of the institutions to which she was sent for training as a domestic. Cootamundra seemed to be the obvious place, yet no record of her life was found at this home or any of the others. No record of her removal was found either, however the archivist mentioned that many records were lost from a fire in the 1960s. Again, I encountered another void in my family history, many like myself feel powerless in the search to uncover any record of their families under the control of the Aborigines Protection Board.

It is obvious now that the Board set out to separate adolescent children particularly girls from their families and communities. These children were to be brainwashed in these institutions, to feel ashamed of who they were, and to no longer identify with their communities as Aboriginal people. They were not free to return to their families until after the term of their

apprenticeship. The Board was intent on preventing or hindering their return to their families and by this time it was hoped they would have no further connection to home, culture and Country.

In most institutions the cut with the children's families and past was intended to be total. Many were told their parents were dead or did not want them and visits and correspondence were banned. A former resident of Cootamundra Aboriginal Girls' Home claimed that family letters ended up in the "garbage bin." (Haebich 2000, p. 343)

In the early 1990s I managed to acquire a copy of my father's file through Freedom of Information and Human Services. This file is a substantial 122 pages of the later part of his time in the boys' homes, but not the early days at Rupertswood Salesian Brothers Boys' Home at Sunbury which my father said were particularly horrific.

### **"Protection" of Aborigines**

The New South Wales Board for the Protection of Aborigines Acts of 1909, 1915 and 1918 gave the government statutory powers in relation to every mission and reserve in New South Wales. Unlike the state of Victoria where there was a blatant "half-caste" [sic] policy, NSW defined an Aboriginal person as any:

Full blooded Aboriginal native of Australia, and any person apparently having an admixture of Aboriginal blood who applies for, or is in the receipt of rations or aid from the Board or is living on a reserve.

(Government of NSW, 1909, p.144)

In 1915 the Act was amended to include the following:

The Board may assume full control and custody of the child of any Aborigine, if after due inquiry it is satisfied that such a course is in the interest of the moral or physical welfare of such a child.' In addition to this is an amendment in relation to the Apprentices Act of 1901.

The Board may apprentice children on such terms and conditions as it may think under the circumstances of the case to be desirable.

(Aborigines Protection Act 1915, p.122)

Government took control over Aboriginal families and kept this information locked securely away from them, while Aboriginal people were totally under the control and direction of the government. In New South Wales, 'Home Finders' were sent out to Aboriginal families in order to entice their children away from them. In 1912 Miss Alice Lowe was appointed as the first 'Home-Finder'. Her duties were to visit the various stations, homes and reserves and explain to parents the advantages of apprenticing their children and having them trained at the Cootamundra Home. She also visited the girls in domestic service to ensure that they were paid for their services and

received food and clothing, (Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1912, p. 4).

It is then quite possible that Miss Alice Lowe visited the station where my family lived and worked, in order to take the two girls, my grandmother and great aunt, into training at Cootamundra Girls' Home.

These are some of the elements of discovery, assisting in the building of knowledge and piecing together details to fill in the voids or gaps in our knowledge. Hence this research acts as an exemplar to others who wish to trace family histories.

### **Decolonising Methodologies**

Of major focus are texts written by Aboriginal people as I examine Aboriginal knowledge systems and culturally appropriate and accurate ways of knowing. Aboriginal authors such as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2006), Veronica Arbon (2008) and Aunty Margaret Tucker (1978), (The title Aunty or Uncle, does not necessarily mean that this person is a relative, it is also used as a term of respect for all Elders), offer culturally relevant information in regard to Aboriginal ways of knowing and experience. For Aboriginal people interpretation of the world is of utmost importance in a world which has relied on a colonist's view of history and experience. Historical accounts by non-Aboriginal authors and researchers such as Anna Haebich (2000) and

Jane Lydon (2005) will be examined in order to make comparative links in timelines and colonial and post-colonial attitudes towards Aboriginal people. This may assist in the interpretation, evaluation and study of government policies which have affected our lives since the time of first contact. Ways of interpreting this are linked to every aspect of who we are as Aboriginal people today.

I will also use Yorta Yorta language terms when referring to various elements of Indigenous knowledge systems. This is another way I can reclaim and fill some of the gaps and voids in this research, using the 'lingo' which my grandmother Mollie spoke fluently, yet was forbidden to pass down to her children and grandchildren. The Glossary is provided for English interpretation of these words.

### **Overview of Chapters to Follow**

In Chapter One, I examine and begin to identify the gaps and the voids in our family's history as this is the basis for my research and is a case study approach to revealing the new knowledge which will be produced through creative practice. In order to situate the findings, it is also necessary to examine the government policies and social issues related to Aboriginal people during the colonial period and into the present. I research through government records, photographic records and literature which examine the

mission days and the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal people and how this has impacted on all of our lives.

In Chapter Two, I examine the work of other contemporary Indigenous artists and their artistic responses to issues surrounding Aboriginal marginalisation and the impact of colonisation on culture, identity and survival. In examining these works I also look at one colonial painter John Glover and see his interpretation of colonial times and attitudes revealed through his lens. Through this research I further develop my understanding of the impact of artistic expression on knowledge and how my works will further expand on this in the field of practice research.

Chapter Three outlines the research methodology and elaborates Indigenous knowledge systems. Here I position my research in terms of an Indigenous ontology. It is here that I also outline my research and interpretive method and relate this to practice led research. I examine the significance of oral history and yarning as culturally appropriate research methods and address the notion of amnesia in terms of the colonial lens.

In Chapter Four I discuss and present the oral history data which relates to my research and position this in relation to my creative practice and the

notion of art as commemoration and ceremony. Cultural ways of knowing are addressed in relation to the research outcomes.

In Chapter Five I relate the theory of art as research and art as ceremony, to my creative practice. Here I develop a tripartite framework of analysis using the notion of ceremony together with the concepts of the evocative and the effective as they have been presented in the work of Jillian Hamilton and Luke Jaaniste, in order reveal the ways in which these works bring with them new knowledge and insights through the aesthetic images that have evolved through practice led research.

In Chapter Six, the conclusion, I will highlight how the approach used in this research can be applied and extended more broadly and will pinpoint how the body of work allows us to better understand the relationship between Indigenous and western art within an Australian context

.

## CHAPTER ONE

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In a physical, and material sense it is difficult to identify the causes of the voids missing. However, I know my grandmother and father suffered a great deal psychologically in these times of separation from a loving family. These are the eight to ten years of my grandmother's life between being taken away and her meeting up with my grandfather. There have been some oral accounts by an uncle now deceased and an aunt more recently deceased, of the young couple and their volatile relationship, and the effect this had upon their children and my grandmother. My grandfather's family were close to my grandmother and continued that relationship for many years with the children staying on their farm at Berwick. Government records in the form of Electoral Roles confirm that my grandmother was in Berwick in the early years of my father's life.

There is pain here. What were the pressures put upon my grandmother? There is a photograph of my grandmother on my great aunt's horse at the family farm. My great Aunty Nell Webb said that she was very close to Mollie and told of the day that the picture was taken: 'See, she is wearing my jodhpurs and that is my mare Gypsy. Mollie was always very good to me, we were good friends' (Webb, personal communication, 2013).

Some years ago, my Uncle Les Jones told me a great deal about my grandmother and her marriage to his brother Steve Jones:

Mollie suffered a lot of abuse from my brother Steve, they should never have been together. He would call her his gin or lubra and there was always physical abuse. He was a very hard and cruel man. She would take off and leave him often, going to the farm of her mother-in-law at Berwick with the children. (Jones, personal communication, 2001)

My father's sister, Aunty Audrey told of the days when my grandparents lived above a bakers shop in Richmond. Though it has been some time since these stories were related to me they continue to evoke strong visual images and this link between visual and verbal images underpins the approach taken in this research:

One day mum and dad were arguing, yelling at each other, he called her for everything. Norm and I were so frightened, we hid in the wardrobe and shut the door. We lived above a bakery then in Richmond. Mum took a bedside lamp and hit dad over the head with it to protect herself. The lamp broke and she electrocuted herself. When all the noise stopped, Norm and I crept out the window which was at the back of the house and opened up onto the roof of a verandah above the baker's yard. We had no idea how we would go

as we slid down off the corrugated iron of the roof. Lucky for us the baker's horse and cart was parked underneath loaded with flour bags. We flew off the verandah and landed slap bang onto the pile of flour bags. Thank god it softened our landing! As I looked to see how Norm was, I couldn't stop laughing, he was all white and covered in a layer of flour from head to foot. (Daye, personal communication 2002)

My art is visual response to the information I have unearthed. I began my search by locating my father's file through the Freedom of Information Act from the Department of Family Services. I applied through my local government office in Warragul and was required to seek the approval of two surviving relatives of my father's, my father's sister, Aunty Audrey and my mother Shirley. Notification came in the mail of a registered parcel and I had to sign for this at my Post Office, my father's records from the Board were enclosed in a small A4 parcel. This included letters from my father back to the Board, letters from employers back to the Board and other information such as Police reports and Warrants for his arrest when he would abscond from the homes or a place of apprenticeship.

From here I searched other government files available to me such as Electoral Rolls. These were not entirely reliable as my grandmother only voted several times in her life as she had not always been registered.

However it does give an insight into where she had resided at different times.

### **The Void and the Gap**

I feel it is necessary to make a distinction between the gap and the void.

A void is place devoid of anything, it is empty. On the other hand, something can also be rendered void, that is, it can be cancelled. Maybe we would call a completely empty gap a complete void, nothing there is identifiable. Then there is the question of whether there has always been a void? There are examples of this word used in such a way that something has been rendered void. So a void can be produced from some action or violence. Where something was, there is now nothing perceptible left. Making this visible again is part of the aim of this thesis.

Alternatively, this space between the years of my grandmother leaving Balranald and meeting my grandfather, sits in a gap in the continuum of our family history. This space is not empty. However, from my perspective and our collective knowledge we have not yet, and possibly may never, completely identify what it was which occurred in that time. My artwork is therefore an imaginative recollection of what may have been there.

My research and study of literature has brought to the surface various clues and information related to this space of time. Government Acts at this time

of the Aboriginal Protection Board of New South Wales, show what the government had in mind for Aboriginal people, to separate all of the children and adolescents and assimilate them into the white community, breaking ties with their families and communities.

### **Photographs**

Through my research family Elders and members have offered copies of family photographs from the past, some from my grandmother's childhood. Births Deaths and Marriages Registers in New South Wales and Victoria, have cast light on the formal events from birth to marriage and death. These have been very valuable in terms of finding out about each sibling's birth and death, and that some did not survive into adult life. The documentation of marriages in cases where there has been the loss of a spouse, give many answers to us about the life and times.

Many of the photographs taken of Aboriginal people in this colonial period were taken by white men who went about the country seeking out mission stations and riverside camps to capture images that would either meet their anthropological curiosity or provide proof of the 'other', the natives of this country. Our family was the subject of many of these photographs either taken by members of the Aboriginal Protection Board or by travelling anthropologists. Sometimes they were taken by local photographers for the production of the ever popular postcard trend at this time. Even today,

many of these old photographs can be found on postcards at tourist destinations such as at the Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement. However, the people in the many commercial postcards of the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century were objectified, they were not identified as individuals as there were often captions stating only minimal or derogatory descriptions such as, 'river blacks', 'lubras' and 'mission natives'. Information and images collected for the Protection Board were evidence of the ways in which Aboriginal lives were being controlled, as families were detained on missions away from the gaze of a settler state.

Today many of these images have made it back to their families, some of whom have never before seen them, as they were held in government archives as trophies of the Protection era. Missionaries such as John Green at Coranderrk near Healesville had a number of visiting photographers to the mission including Charles Walter who had lengthy stays at the mission. Walter presented Green with an album of photographs of the many residents at Coranderrk during this time:

In Walter's interest in the Aboriginal people of Victoria expressed through visual language, we see the circulation of mimesis and alterity as white fascination with Aboriginal mimicry is itself expressed mimetically when subject reaches out to embrace object.

(Lydon 2005, p. 118)

However, Walter has captioned all of his portraits with the subject's names and often tribal groups, leaving a precious memory of our ancestors.

Old photographic images along with oral histories from Elders give personal accounts of a time gone by and an invaluable insight into the ways of knowing and living from an Aboriginal lens at a time of bigotry and inequality. Can these images be re-produced and can my paintings articulate this and the emotions it causes in a contemporary world?

My works attempt to produce an element of discomfort and may evoke a sense of sadness and trepidation through the ghostly presence of some images. As I paint, I talk to my Elders, asking them for guidance and help. At other times, I am fully immersed in the doing and the making while I allow the paint to lay down onto the canvas in expressive ways.

How has time and Country, people and oral history constructed our mental images? Time and place, are held in the ghostly images of old photographs of family members unknown to us in the present. How do we reconcile with their experiences?

Working with old photographs from the family's past lives, evoke some complex emotions both in a personal sense and an artistic and creative response. These images position my grandmother as a daughter, and a sibling in a cohesive family bond with my great-grandparents whom I have

not known. As a young teenager I knew none of this, my grandmother was on the whole a solitary woman with no extended family nearby or anywhere as far as I was aware. Susan Sontag writes: 'Those ghostly traces, photographs, supply the token presence of the dispersed relatives' (Sontag 1973, p. 9).

When first encountering these images, I experienced the strange sense of casting my eyes on my grandmother as a child. I recognised that this was certainly Mollie, but in the image she is just a little girl. With other photographs, I am looking back at faces of familiarity, yet somehow it is for the first time imagined, why has it taken so long? Susan Sontag captures some of the mixed experiences evoked through the encounter with photographs:

As the fascination that photographs exercise is a reminder of death, it is also an invitation to sentimentality. Photographs turn the past into an object of tender regard, scrambling moral distinctions and disarming historical judgements by the generalized pathos of looking at time past. (Sontag 1973, p.71)

Discovering a never before seen photograph of family is an immobilising moment. I am haunted by the feelings of mortality which is inevitable. These images can be viewed as the return of the dead as they are inanimate reproductions of a once animated and very much alive personality.

Roland Barthes states:

I observed that a photograph can be the object of three practices (or three emotions, or of three intentions); to do, to undergo, to look.

The Operator is the Photographer. The Spectator is ourselves, all of us who glance through collections of photographs—in magazines and newspapers, in books albums and archives. And the person or thing photographed is the target, the referent, a kind of little simulacrum, any eidolon emitted by the object, which I should like to call the Spectrum of the Photograph, because this word retains, through its root a relation to “spectacle” and adds to it that terrible thing which is there in every photograph: the return of the dead. (Barthes 1984, p. 9)

So do these family photographs signify the return of the dead? Photographs like other images operate iconically, symbolically and indexically (Peirce, 1998), but within an Indigenous world view, it is the indexicality of photographs and indeed of all images that renders them powerful. This is because within an Indigenous ontology, there is no separation between imaginary and real, material and spiritual realms.

Hence, emotionally photographs bring to me, as artist and researcher, an image in a micro second of my family’s life. I scan over their faces looking for

some clue in regard to their feelings at the time. I study their faces chubby and happy, not acknowledging each other, but looking out at the viewer, or as would have been the case, looking towards the photographer.

This reality is what evokes the emotionally charged experience I felt when first look at these images. Captured in a fraction of a second, the light causes an image to be exposed onto a light sensitive plate or negative. These images indicate this moment frozen in time, preserved for all to see as witness to a moment of their past lives, now just a ghostly image.

### **Initial Contact**

In order to gain some insight into the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal people and in particular my ancestors, it is important to access available information related to first contact. Oral histories have passed much of this information on, but much has been lost along the way. Noel Butlin (1983) documents the impacts of disease as the first epidemic to affect our people. Bruce Pascoe (2014), documents excerpts from journals of several explorers, documenting that we lived a sustainable life, farming our Country trapping fish in complex weir systems and stone channels, and harvesting acres of *murnong*, the yam daisy tuber. Collecting and storing large amounts of grains for present and future use, were all a part of the everyday for Aboriginal people.

This evidence didn't fit with the colonisers view of Indigenous Australians, who were seen as nomadic or even as simple hunter gatherers. When referring to Aboriginal agriculture on the Mulligan River Queensland, Pascoe notes the observations of Arthur C Ashwin a drover/explorer documenting two granaries he found, one with about a ton of rice seed stored in seventeen large dishes. He went further to say that this was, 'delicious grain and it was a pity we did not take more' (Pascoe 2014, p. 44). In Protector William Thomas' observations of south eastern Australia, he notes that he had seen a large village near Port Fairy, which had more than thirty houses capable of accommodating around two-hundred people. The whole village was burnt and the sluice gates of its fishery destroyed (Pascoe 2014, p. 60). In south-western New South Wales, King, on the doomed Burke and Wills expedition, found a store of grain in an Aboriginal house, which he estimated at four tons (Pascoe 2014, p. 44).

The Wati Wati people around current-day Swan Hill were seen by Kirby and Beveridge:

They found vast acreages of rushes which the Wati Wati were harvesting and nurturing: 'the reeds looked like large fields of ripe wheat; and nearer they had burnt them, it had the appearance of a splendid crop just before it comes into ear. Kirby described the meal from this compung (cumbungi) rush as very similar to flour or potato meal. Mitchell said that the cakes made from the cumbungi flour

were lighter and sweeter than those made from common flour.

(Pascoe 2014, p. 45)

It was commonplace to destroy Aboriginal villages and agricultural and horticultural enterprise in the process of disenfranchising our people. Once this had begun in the very first days of colonisation, people did become wanderers as they were systematically displaced, murdered and rendered homeless. Their permanent housing and farming pursuits were abandoned as they fled the frontier. There was nothing to come back to as the coloniser had taken possession and erased any evidence of their former infrastructure. The dislocation and destruction splintered families and many lost their ties and connections to each other creating the gaps and voids that this thesis is attempting to address.

Also, it is of vital importance to place oneself in this time and recognise the first impact of disease, in particular smallpox, which travelled ahead of the frontiers of direct contact. Historians such as Professor Noel Butlin (1983) have documented how, large groups of people were wiped out along Dhungahla, now known as the Murray River, by Smallpox, passed on through the trade links with nations to the north in the early 1800s. This had a fatal impact on our people who suffered great losses from this formerly unknown disease. This was yet another shockwave of destruction to come our way.

The resulting evidence of Smallpox scars were noted, and the first epidemic, occurred from 1789 to 1820s along the Murray River. The second epidemic, 1829 to 1831, was recorded by Sturt and Mitchell, exploring along the Bogan River, the Darling and Murrumbidgee in early 1829. Pock-marking was evident in the now diminished populations along the river systems, and mass graves were found close to Euston. Evidence of massive depopulation was observed by Mitchell. Butlin quotes Mitchell as saying, 'Decaying villages made up of "permanent" and solidly constructed dwellings with large parts of the population gone' (cited in Butlin 1983, p. 25).

This had a devastating impact on my ancestors well before they had ever sighted a white person on their country. It is obvious from what Butlin has written, that populations along the Murray, Darling, Edwards and Murrumbidgee Rivers were decimated by two major plagues of Smallpox, along with many other illnesses such as Syphilis, Tuberculosis and other chronic illnesses brought by the colonists. (Butlin 1983). Our ancestors would not have known what struck them when these epidemics decimated families and clans in those early days prior to first direct contact. There was much more to come in terms of survival and our battles related to health and wellbeing not to mention culture and languages.



1. Tourism Australia, Map of Aboriginal Australia (extract, South-Eastern Australian Nations).

My family originated from these areas, my great-great grandmother Harriet Brown was from Bogan River, and my great-great grandfather Johnny Atkinson was from Yorta Yorta country around Echuca and the Moira Lakes. The Murray family, my great-great grandfather and great, great grandmother were from Conargo NSW. From all accounts William Murray was a Baraparapa/Wiradjuri man.

So what is remembered of this time and what oral accounts have been passed on? Pascoe quotes Swan Hill settlers in the days of Beveridge and Kirby and the reasons why Beveridge was speared as the Wati Wati discovered that Andrew Beverage had been violating their women:

Heavily armed warriors advanced on the station (Tyntynder) and ignored all other Europeans until they found Andrew Beverage, the

man who they claimed had been violating women. He was isolated and speared and his body symbolically daubed with ochre. (Pascoe 2014, p. 15)

Warfare between the colonisers and Aboriginal people was on the whole in retaliation for crimes against our people and our Country. They wore the people down physically, emotionally, culturally and killed them for defending themselves and their Country. Evidence of our former civilisation was destroyed along with our culture and beliefs, in the name of King and Country.

#### **Mission Days:**

From the mid 1870s our family were living at Maloga Mission near Echuca and later Cummeragunja a little further upstream on the Murray River towards the Moira Lakes. There are many gaps in this history of the early days of Maloga Mission. However, Daniel Matthews the founder of this mission did keep detailed journals of all Mission business and records of all those who lived there. These records contain many details which related to what he perceived as racial categories 'full-bloods', 'half-castes', 'quadroons' and 'octaroons', terms that reflected the Darwinian attitudes of the times. These details had been recorded, yet the history from the perspective of the families living there is missing. Interestingly however, Daniel Matthews does record a comment from my Great-Great Grandfather Johnny Atkinson who

left the mission at one stage and built a hut to the north. Johnny is quoted as saying that; 'Mr Matthews wears out our trousers with praying so much' (Cato 1976, p. 121). The conversion of people to Christianity was yet another means of erasing cultural practices and the aim of the missionaries was to 'Christianise and civilise the natives'.

Many of our ancestors protested against the new regime at Cummeragunja after Daniel Matthews had moved on. In 1930, official letters were sent by Great-Great Uncle William Cooper to federal and state government and newspapers of the day protesting for equal rights for the people of Cummeragunja. On 6th February 1939 the mass walk off from Cummeragunja took place as a result of many years of poor treatment and government restrictions and the rights of Aboriginal people being ignored (Peeler 2008, p. 9).

Government policy with regard to Aboriginal children was far from charitable as can be seen from the following account from Anna Haebich's, *Broken Circles : Fragmenting Indigenous Families*:

There were wide spread anxieties about race and gender reflected in government reports such as the New South Wales 1913 Royal Commission into Neglected and Delinquent and Mentally-Deficient Children which linked Aboriginal girls with sexual promiscuity, 'moral feeble mindedness' and the need for reform through

institutionalisation. Aboriginal children were not being groomed for citizenship but were being trained to become docile, semi-enslaved disenfranchised domestic and rural workers, either in the wider community or in permanently segregated Aboriginal communities. (Haebich 2000, p. 155)

It was in 1919, that my Great Grandmother passed away whilst the family were living and working out on Kia-ora Station near Balranald New South Wales.

### **Oral Histories**

In 2003, the Aboriginal Community Elders Service (ACES) and Kate Harvey, produced a collection of oral histories, entitled, *Aboriginal Elders' Voices: Stories of the Tide of History. Victorian Indigenous Elders' Life Stories and Oral Histories*. This collection begins with an explanation of the importance of oral history as a cultural tradition which must not be lost, and the recognition of the importance of Elders knowledge is discussed (Harvey 2003, p. 1). Aboriginal family history knowledge is passed on from Elders, they know who is related to whom and how, and the movements of families from mission to mission and country town to city and across the country. Authors formed a Reference Group which guided all of the stages of the project:

Aboriginal custodians take the responsibility to maintain their culture very seriously. The aims of cultural respect, custodianship and accurate representation of Indigenous life experiences can only be achieved through Indigenous direction of all aspects of work.

(Harvey 2003, p. 255)

Just as oral histories provide clues to the past, so too, can the making of visual imagery evoke memory. Such imagery is also contextualized in and through paintings of people and locations which relate to the histories of our past.

This Reference Group had the responsibility of overseeing all editing and issues related to cultural knowledge. As is the case with this thesis, copyright of oral histories will remain with the participants. Ownership must remain with those whose stories are being recorded, so that Aboriginal concepts regarding cultural ownership are respected. Entwined in these oral histories are many gaps in knowledge, from times when they were very young, and from forced “whitewashing” or brain washing of children in regard to their heritage.

My studio practice will make reference to these oral histories and through these images I will translate some of the events which occurred throughout the generations. This is an important aspect of this research into the voids

and gaps in family information which holds a great deal of pain for many of us.

Simon Flagg, and Sebastian Gurciullo's (2008) book *Journey of Lucy and Percy Pepper, An Aboriginal Family's Struggle for Survival*, examines archival information, photographic images and family oral history to tell the story of the Pepper family of East Gippsland. This is an important book, as it brings together both historical records, photographs and oral accounts in a similar way to what I envisage can be done with my research. The text is presented as a timeline of the lives of this family, working chronologically from their birth throughout the hardships of mission life and Percy's war service, to moving to Kooweerup on a soldier settlement property, then to his death in 1956.

Of primary focus is the government's view of Aboriginal people and their perceived percentage of Aboriginality. 'Half-caste' [sic] policies were in place at this time and Mission Stations or the Aboriginal Protection Board would send those of "mixed race" off the mission and into white society to fend for themselves. Added to this were strict rules in relation to them returning to the missions even if it were to support Elders with health problems in need of aged care assistance. Family members would come into the mission under the protection of darkness for fear of being caught, and others would acquire permission to come for a visit and then refuse to leave. These laws were responsible for the fragmentation of families who were separated, some

being confined to the missions and others barred from entering the missions (Flagg & Gurciullo 2008, p. 13–15). It was this type of over-administration and control served out from mission managers and the Protection Board that harassed and discriminated against our people and their right to freedom.

This form of control weighed heavily on our families close bonds and cultural needs, wearing away at the fabric of our long practiced traditions and lore.

This is the pain which I must reveal and bring to my works, the adversity and constructed injustices that plagued families who strived to continue their strong and proudly traditional lives. These are issues which also relate directly to my grandmother and great-aunt through their separation from family at a very young age. This was the cause of so much pain that they suffered for the rest of their lives and was in many ways passed onto their children through battles with family relationships, something they had little experience of after being taken away while so young. They remained silent about their former lives and their institutionalisation for fear of being discriminated against. Many Aboriginal families said they were Italian or Indian or something else other than Aboriginal because they were made to feel inferior to other races.

This forced separation is a key issue in this study, something with which many Aboriginal families have had to deal. This impacted heavily on families as did the forced institutionalization. Families such as the Peppers continued to write to authorities for assistance in regard to health, housing and

permission to travel in order to visit relatives at other missions. They had little resources, and were dictated to in terms of what they could do and where they could go, through mission rules and government policies (Flagg & Gurciullo 2008, p. 13–15).

Documenting and researching issues surrounding my family story of separation, loss and disadvantage, may assist us to understand some of the impacts of government policy. Because this is what happened in my family, it is important that I familiarise myself with the stories of other women taken from the same district, at the same time, and find out where they were taken. Aunty Marg Tucker's account in, *If Everyone Cared*, (1978) of children being taken from Cummeragunja around 1919, describes the practice vividly. Bain Attwood and Fiona Magowan research the injustices of this time based on Aunty Marge's oral history account of her life at Cummeragunja, a very common experience for many Aboriginal families:

After the Manager organising a rabbit hunting expedition for the men, car loads of Police came in and ... seized all of the children they could lay their hands on. (Attwood & Magowan 2001, p. 184)

These children were dispersed to children's institutions for training as domestics and farm hands. Many of these children did not return home as they were either too young to remember where they came from, or were

told at Cootamundra Girls Home, that they must never go back to their family.

These stories are those which have inspired some of my works, in particular, the work in this research titled *This is Where They Wanted Us to Be*, (2015) (see figure 33 on p. 206 ) which places my grandmother as a young girl preparing meals in a large station kitchen, standing by the wood stove cooking for the workers.

But for their families, this became a void which was encapsulated in a silence and denial of who they were and from where they had come. This gap or void is what I grapple with in relation to my works. Family know some of the story, but not all in relation to these times of institutionalisation. Some events have come to light in my father's file, yet available details are only of the years after leaving Rupertswood Salesian Boys' Home. Another question I ask myself is, "How I can re-articulate this void, this space where family have walked before a place to which I have not had access?"

My works have emerged from these oral histories and piece by piece they articulate the traumas of those times. There are varied themes here, those of the loss of Country, culture and identity and those of the loss of family members who didn't have the opportunity to heal the wounds of their past.

The practice of taking Aboriginal children went on for many years from the time of the invasion and well into the 20th Century. As adults, they did not return to their families, whom had searched for them and often died never having seen their children again:

Consequently, their relationship to their own past lives was a vexed one; for most of those separated, their descent or background was scarcely relevant to how they understood and/or represented themselves – in fact many wanted to deny their origins – and so their memory of separation was marginalised in the life stories they told. This silence was especially pronounced among those who had grown up in an era when government policy and practice distinguished between ‘Aborigines’ of ‘full’ and ‘mixed’ descent and determined their rights and privileges accordingly. (Attwood & Magowan 2001, p. 187)

This is also true in regard to my grandmother and her little sister and their separation from family. Could it be that they too were sent to Cootamundra Girls’ Home? I know that they worked for a doctor in Swan Hill for some time. My research into NSW government archives of the Aboriginal Protection Board could not uncover exactly what was happening at this time in our family’s lives. After my search, no existing files were located as they were presumed destroyed by fire back in the 1960s.

Many families still living back on country, having left the mission at Cummeragunja, had made their homes on “The Flat” or “Daish’s Paddock” near Shepparton and Mooroopna. These families were those who continued the activism of their ancestors Aaron Atkinson, William Cooper and Jacky Patten. On the 6th February 1939 the Cummeragunja ‘Walk Off’ took place and people left and moved to the southern side of the river. Lois Peeler presents documentation of this time:

Jack Patten called a meeting with the people of Cummeragunja and told them about their rights. He also told them that across in New South Wales children were being removed from their families. When the meeting was finished, the Police arrested Jack Patten for being a trouble maker. He was locked up in the Moama police lock-up.

(Peeler 2008, p. 9)

The harsh conditions of the mission and the unfair treatment by A. J. McGuiggan the Manager, had caused the action. *River Connect*, an Aboriginal Oral History, Peeler (2008) is a collection of oral histories of those families who left the mission after their harsh treatment and the threat of children being stolen. Peeler describes the survival tactics and ingenuity of Aboriginal people, at a time when they had so very little. Communities were close knit and people assisted each other to build their homes and collect water and wood. ‘Grandmothers looked after the children while their

parents went off to earn money wherever they found employment' (Peeler 2008, p. 19).

Jan Critchett's *Untold Stories, Memories and Lives of Victorian Kooris*, (1998) presents a collection of accounts of Aboriginal lives in the Western District of Victoria which draw on Aboriginal oral accounts and histories from an Aboriginal perspective. The dialogue consists of her historical accounts from non- Aboriginal historians, combined with oral accounts from Elders and other archival sources such as correspondence, press articles and government records. This collection provides some never before published photographic images which add an outstanding account of Aboriginal lives at a time when the Aboriginal Protection Board were rounding up families and forcing them on to missions, constructing severe and inhumane laws which affected and divided Aboriginal families. Communities were divided due to the Aboriginal Protection Board's judgement of a perceived percentage of Aboriginality, as people were strictly categorized in the Boards genealogies and mission records.

This book provides a history which comes from both sides of the frontier, the white settlers and their hunger for land and Aboriginal people fighting to protect and maintain their sovereignty over their own country. It provides a valuable portrayal of the way things changed so rapidly throughout the 1800s and into the early 1900s in terms of the displacement and marginalisation of Aboriginal people in Victoria. My people in the far north

of the state and the south western reaches of New South Wales suffered the same battles and dislocation at the hands of the spreading European invasion.

How can my artwork bring knowledge to my viewers? For Aboriginal people, the experience of viewing these works brings back to them the importance of the Elders stories, the stories they personally heard around the fire at night. These are the stories of our link to ancestors and the ways in which our lives were changed forever. They bring us closer to our roots, our culture and connection to Country. For non-Aboriginal people, I can imagine that new knowledge about our lives and our emotional and spiritual ties to culture and country will give an understanding of a world that for the most part has been erased from this Colony's short history. This is the history which has suffered from amnesia where the true events of the past are left out or have fallen into another void or gap in historical conscience.

The techniques used to develop my works, both research of oral history and field trips to locations with a connection to family, evoke images of those times past. I work extensively on sketches and to referencing old photographs along with further discussions with family members. These works are influenced by what aunts, uncles and cousin have to talk about, little pieces of memory, things seen and things said. They have input into my images as we yarn about what these gaps in knowledge are.

## **Yorta Yorta Fight for Rights**

The fight for Native Title through the Federal Court in 1998, is another important event in the lives of Yorta Yorta people. This case was rejected, after four years, with the claim that, “the tide of history” had swept away any claims the Yorta Yorta people had to their traditional land. Yorta Yorta people were pushed from their country and as the agricultural enterprises expanded, massacre, murder and violence were employed in this massive take over. Yorta Yorta fought for their country and many paid with their lives. The squatters formed hunting parties, and poisoning of food and waterholes became common place. Nancy Cato has recorded the history of Maloga and Cummeragunja missions in her book *Mister Maloga*, (1976) and missionaries such as Daniel Matthews who travelled around picking up my surviving ancestors and bringing them back to the mission. Here he provided a safe haven for our people, but not without conditions. Christianity was seen as a civilising influence by the colonists who believed that Aboriginal people needed to be saved. As the squatters claimed more land, Maloga Mission was forced to move further up the river. Cummeragunja was established on the big bend in the Murray River near Barmah, still situated on traditional Yorta Yorta Country.

My grandmother would have known all this history of her family in their fight for equal rights. Her Great Uncle William Cooper and others from Cummeragunja were activists and later her nephew Stewart Murray and his

son Gary Murray, have had an ongoing commitment to campaigning for Aboriginal people. Many of the issues fought for are, the Stolen Generations, Native Title, Aboriginal Legal Service, Aboriginal Funeral Service and the Aboriginal Advancement League. Generations of the Murray family have been involved in the many organisations put in place to support and assist in the welfare of Aboriginal people of South-eastern Australia.

Aboriginal people were confined to missions for protection from the colonisers who had been hunting them down. There were many atrocities at this time which had taken the lives and spirits of many of our people. It was obvious to our people that our lives were never to be the same again.

Hunting grounds became part of the squatter's station and they now fiercely protected what they saw as their land. Aboriginal people were fenced off from food and water, spiritual sites and the cultural and ceremonial fabric of society was not encouraged. My language heritage died with my grandmother in 1972 as she was a native speaker and hadn't passed this on to her children or grandchildren.

In what ways can my research bring the impact of these enforced and coercive indoctrinating acts on our people to my visual medium? In creating my works I draw on the emotional attachment I have to my father and grandmother and the unexplainable feeling of knowing that my native language was so close, yet so far. I was fourteen years old when my

grandmother passed away. I was too young to ask too many questions of her as this was not acceptable back then.

My works attempt to evoke the sense of what has been lost and of the unknown. They also attempt to capture a private view into a past which was not always officially witnessed. However, in this project they are imagined and recreated from research into oral accounts, archives and family photographs.

The imagery is intended to conjure up an experience and the transient yet fragile nature of what has gone before as well as the fragility of the characters and their world realities in contrast to the realities of the non-Indigenous world around them. In many ways, the works represent the ghosts from the past calling to those who are linked to them in the present, the complexities of what is known and by whom. The images contain secrets and tales of hardship, survival, bigotry, racism, marginalisation, exclusion, suspicion, mistrust, assumption and blatant ignorance towards Aboriginal peoples, both in the past and in the present.

These works are structured through the representations of memory and story, those relayed accounts of the many experiences my grandmother and father had. Meaning emerges through the visuals, but also through colour. I believe that colour translates much about emotion, along with the symbolism and the various elements of the compositions. Scale has a great

deal to do with the importance of certain elements and their relationship to others. These works all represent the past and my aim is to bring these to the canvas, from a pallet which conjures up a sense of antiquity.

Aboriginal connection to Country is acknowledged in my works through the placement of textures and colours and the symbolic elements of a landscape. This landscape is alive with our stories and our ancestors, their spirits and the spirits of our creators. For want of a better term, the Dreaming is around us in the past, present and future all at the same time. Cultural belief exists in a multidimensional sense weaving its presence in, around and through every aspect of our existence, part of every element in this country. Much of this knowledge has been erased from our history through the separation and institutionalisation of our families. Through my artwork I bring some elements of this back to the fore to be embraced and reclaimed.

How strong were our people, the survivors of the frontier? When Aunty Aggie Edwards set up her camp at Speewa, she and her people knew that this was survival. The curfew in many a country town was put in place, which meant no 'blackfellas' in town between certain hours of the day. The delineating border was always the Boundary Road, and many exist today. Aggie's Swamp became a refuge for my family as it was for many others.

These are the images in my mind, of hard working Aboriginal people seeking out an existence whether it be as a farm labourer or shearer, horse breaker,

domestic or stockrider. Our people had adapted extremely well into a labour force, which was skilled and experienced in a landscape which had served them well since the Dreaming. Aboriginal people were hard workers and from the very beginning of their arrival, assisted the colonists in their pursuits in taking over this Country. They took advantage of our knowledge of the country and our cheap labour. How do we see ourselves on the fringes of society, not wanted, ignored and often considered as fringe dwellers. My paintings will have to express these emotions, both through image and the techniques of making and my application of paint. Shimmering images of faces from the past, smoky fires and as near as I can get to the viewer even tasting the dust under their feet.

*Piggery Lake* 2017 (Fig: 37 p.218), brings together the sense of the bush, an ancient bottle neck River Redgum with all of the scars of its past life. I have worked in wax medium to bring the textures of this ancient trunk to life.

Artistic practice produces visual imagery that articulates that which words cannot convey. These multi-layers of aesthetic experience give life and meaning to our stories and memory in ways which evoke new and emotional responses to knowledge through visual stimulation. Dennis Schmidt views artwork as a matter of “knowing”:

When properly under-stood, the questions one asks are not able to be domesticated by being regarded as a matter of “aesthetics,” a

lesser form of cognition, or as only a matter of pleasure and nothing more. Instead, the work of art needs to be understood as a “knowing,” a way in which truth happens, that cannot be measured by the standards of knowledge proper to the sciences. (Schmidt 2013, p. 24)

As an artist practitioner I believe that artworks convey many truths and many important forms of knowledge which may be difficult to classify, in ways as mentioned, above and beyond the realm of aesthetics. From an Indigenous view, we already know this.

This research will rely heavily upon Oral Histories which are traditionally known as reliable accounts of the past and the experiences of Aboriginal peoples throughout history, colonial times and into the present. My interviews will involve speaking to those family members who knew both my father and grandmother. Also it is important to speak to those who only know the family stories that were passed down about their lives. The experiences of our family, where they worked, where they lived and where they spent time together. The highlights of family history which have impacted on those today and the final hours of their lives leading to places they were put to rest. My father’s first cousin Uncle Besley Murray didn’t know my father nor my grandmother, but he knows of them and is a great story teller and grew up with the rest of the family in our hometown of Balranald. My Uncle Frankie Eppingstall is the last surviving member of my

father's siblings. He has a great memory of both my grandmother and father and the hardships of their lives back in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. My Uncle Ray Murray another of my father's first cousins has a great memory of his father Uncle Ridley, my grandmother's younger brother. He too had his language as did my grandmother and their other siblings.

My mother and her sister have a great memory of both my father and grandmother. Added to this they remember vividly the attitudes of a time in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne of many non-Aboriginal people towards our family. Uncle Sir Doug Nicholls lived a couple of doors from my aunty and she would see my grandmother going to visit them on occasions. In light of my grandmother holding an Exemption Certificate, she would have to had no-one know of this or any other visit to family or community, including Aunty Freda Walpole back in the 1940s.

Having lived throughout the 1960s it is important to focus in on the ways in which Aboriginal people were dominated and marginalized. It is therefore interesting to look at what Damien W. Riggs writes in his book, *Taking Up the Challenge: Critical Race & Whiteness Studies in a Post-Colonising Nation*, on the implications of property law based on racial domination:

The possessive logic of patriarchal white sovereignty operated discursively and ideologically in the Yorta Yorta decision to produce legal and political resistance to native title by creating judicial and

legal impediments that were presented as though they are race blind. Yet, the origin and assertion of property law in Australia continues to be based on racial domination. (Riggs 2007, p. 122)

Evident in this text is the judiciary's belief that the Yorta Yorta adaptation of white culture was necessary for their survival (Riggs 2007, p. 122). Attitudes towards Aboriginal people in the south east of Australia perpetuate the myth that the only 'real Aboriginal peoples' are those living in the centre and northern parts of the country.

### **Social Issues and Government Policies**

Aileen Moreton-Robinson draws on Maureen Perkins to consider many cultural constructs the British have placed on what it is to be of 'colour'. 'Passing' is seen as betrayal in white society, and the concept of unmasking a person of 'colour' will ultimately be exposed through social behaviour and the, 'natural attraction to rhythms'. Yet the British in their strict class-conscious codes, reveal that:

The appearance of whiteness is coded, so that those who are able, by upbringing and education, to read the coding are empowered. Indeed, they can even protect white society by exposing colour when it is hidden. (Perkins cited in Moreton-Robinson 2004, p.165)

Perkins essay attempts to decipher the hidden codes of racial and class assessments that open and close the gates of social capital to separate or categorize those of 'acceptable' white blood lines and those of the 'other'. In regard to the Stolen Generations, full acceptance was never to be, rather there was some type of charitable acceptance which made allowances for those of colour.

If the creation of an underclass of permanent servants and labourers may be called benevolent, it might be ceded that policies of child removal were well intentioned, (Parry cited in Moreton-Robinson 2004, p. 173).

How did my father and grandmother personally challenge the views of white Europeans towards them? Their lives were influenced by this mentality and their achievements judged by what Moreton-Robinson views as a, 'predominant lack of respect for colour in their society, "white" guardians became perpetrators of terrible acts of child abuse' (Moreton-Robinson 2004, p 174).

My father and grandmother became members of what was seen at that time as an underclass in a dominant white society in their own country working as servants and farm hands. It seems that the policies which separated them from family were in fact the tools to provide cheap labour for an expanding white colony and economy. This research addresses the outreaching effects of the gaps and voids in family life upon subsequent generations as a result

of this. These gaps and voids are experienced not only by my own family but other indigenous peoples across Australia. My research is thus relevant and significant on a broader level and is intended to give voice to the experiences of others like myself.

Through my art I explore what my experience has been, living alongside non-Aboriginal people throughout my life. Having no close relatives other than my father's sister's children, gave me very little contact. I asked my mother, why we didn't have contact with all of Nana Epp's family as we did with Grandma Rene? My mother couldn't answer, she did however say that Mollie had family somewhere, but that she thought they might be up on the Murray River. She said that Mollie had not told her anything about them if they did exist. I had made a decision early in my life to make sure I found them.

This is what my painting attempts to do, recapture my response and the pride of my family that was kept from me for so long. The mysteries, the secrets, the joys and the sadness. This texture of the country to which I belonged and all of the culture which I had longed for in my life in my search to complete my sense of identity. Haebich (2000) tells us exactly what it was I recognised on the face of my grandmother all those years ago. This inner sadness and sense of loss which can only come from a life where one's identity has been whitewashed and hidden.

Haebich goes on to emphasise that:

Now reduced to a “remnant” population they fitted the profile of a ‘conquered people’ and appeared to no longer present an obstacle to official claims to the land and its resources. However, they were anathema to the country’s new modernising and nationalising project. There was no place for them in the emerging Australian nation. Instead they were to be swept out of sight into remote “gulags” or their “mixed race” children absorbed into the lowest rungs of the colonial work force or kept permanently in segregated institutions. (Haebich 2000, p.132)

These beliefs regarding Aboriginal peoples have been perpetuated throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and into the present, in the minds of some. As mentioned before, they were fuelled by the theories of Social Darwinism, which put forward the theory of the “survival of the fittest”, which in their minds implied the “extinction” of Aboriginal people. Haebich stresses that in the minds of the colonists, ‘They were Stone Age relics – profoundly primitive, irredeemably barbaric and closer to primates and children than ‘civilised man’ (Haebich 2000, p. 132).

It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the British paid tribute to the, ‘emerging Eugenic theories’, and that it was inevitable that the demise of

Aboriginal people was essential for the progress of mankind (Haebich 2000, p. 132).

It was a common attitude in white Australia for Aboriginal families to be seen as uncaring and under resourced in relation to family bonds. However it is well understood how close and supportive family bonds are between Aboriginal families. Children are cherished and their futures are passionately considered just like any other family, yet this myth has been perpetuated in order to allow the policies of assimilation and institutionalisation to flourish in a settler state. I want to redress these attitudes which I lived with as a child. Through my artistic practice I hope to bring my story and emotional journey through life as the child of two stolen generations. I want to justify through creative practice, my own and the existence of others in relation to the injustices of the past.

There is strength in having close family ties in all cultures. As these bonds were broken through forced removal and institutionalization, Aboriginal children could not repair the family links, as often they did not know who they belonged to.

The Government offered Aboriginal people of mixed ancestry a Certificate of Exemption. The wording on the certificate claimed that this person:

M...is a person who in the opinion of the Aborigines Welfare Board, ought no longer be subject to the provisions of the Aborigines Protection Act and Regulations, or any of such provisions he/she is accordingly exempted from such provisions. (Peeler 2008, p. 51).

This Exemption Certificate gave the holder full citizenship rights including the right to go into public places where Aboriginal people were not permitted, such as clubs where alcohol was served. (Peeler 2008, p. 51) These certificates were in place up to the 1950s and 60s. It is very likely that my grandmother did have one, as Aboriginal people were told that they must not consort with their families if they were the holder of a "Dog Ticket". My grandmother did not tell us anything about her family other than that she had a brother Freddie whom she loved dearly. No one was ever told whether or not they were still alive or even where they lived. At this time I was far too young to ask questions.

### **Family Movements Around Southern New South Wales**

Searching through family photographs it is evident that my grandmother lived at Speewa Swamp between Swan Hill and Stoney Crossing in south-western New South Wales. Various family members have told me that the family lived with Aunty Aggie Edwards at Aggies Swamp, at Redgate Station, The Island Balranald, Moulamein, Kyalite and Kia-ora Station after leaving Cummeragunja Mission. My great-grandfather was a shearer who travelled

around from one place to another to work throughout the season. The family lived and worked in New South Wales all in the general district of Speewa Swamp. Searching for more information on these places and the era that my family lived in this district, I found information on Aunty Aggie Edwards and the lives of her and her partner Harry Edwards who made out a living on the fringes of the Swan Hill township.

My research has led me to many photographs through my close family and extended family. In addition to these are photographs from the Swan Hill Library and Pioneer Settlement Swan Hill. These images bring to life my grandmother's childhood and her beautiful and caring Aunty Aggie Edwards.

An important text referred to in this research in regard to the time when my family had lived with Aunty Aggie at Speewa is a La Trobe University Honours Thesis by Jan Penney titled, *Death of Queen Aggie, Culture, Contact in the Mid Murray Region 1979*. In this work there are photographs from this period when the Murray family lived at Speewa. However, there are possibly more of these in some of the other local collections. Penney's thesis does not contain a great deal of information about the life and times of Aunty Aggie specifically, nor does it tell us much about the details of her life and the lives of others there as predicted.

This work does however, document the invaders' side of the story including the conflicts between Europeans and Aboriginal people and accounts and

records of Aboriginal farm labour in the district with some of the squatters of the time. Aboriginal people were barred by a curfew from the towns and pushed to the fringes of these settlements. Aunty Aggie Edwards' camp was a safe haven for Aboriginal people travelling for seasonal work. She travelled in and out of town in her car selling goods she had made and caught out at her Speewa camp on the Murray north east of the township.



2. Unknown, c. 1911, *Aunty Aggie Edwards with her car at Speewa*, photograph, Swan Hill Regional Library Collection.

In her Preface to, *Eye Contact, Photographing Indigenous Australians*, 2005, Jane Lydon speaks from a European view-point with regard to old photographs:

Photographs seem to draw the viewer in, beyond the looking glass into a wonderland of strange new people and events; yet at the same time, they strike a note of familiarity, revealing a parallel universe of

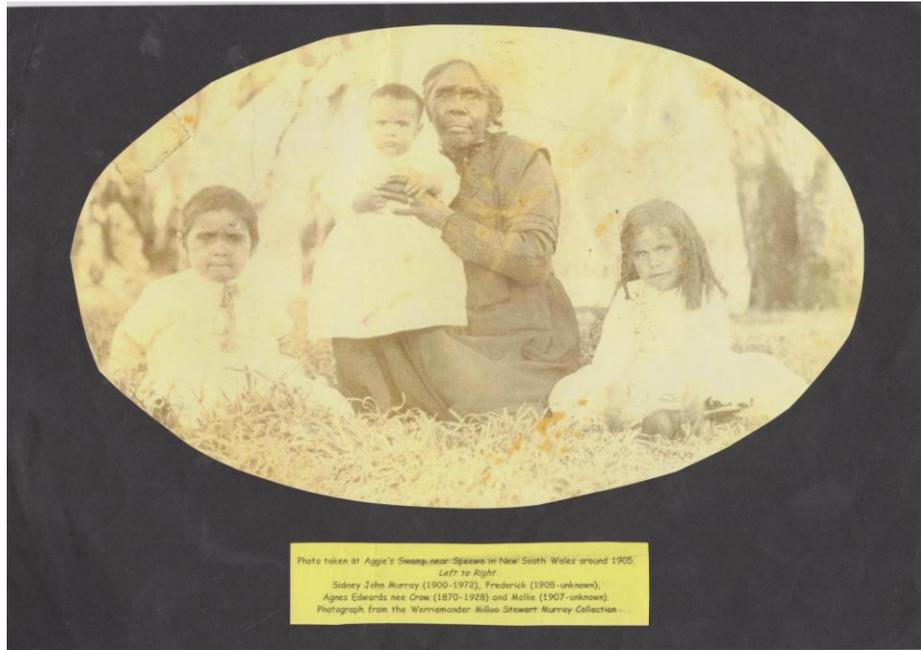
experience and emotion – we see *ourselves* gazing back from the “mirror with a memory” with stolid, ineffable truth. Old photographs concentrate this play between imagined and lived, animating the past through our own reality, and photographs of so-called others further intensify a movement back and forth, between recognition and disavowal, in the ambivalence of colonialism. (Lydon 2005, p. xxiii)

Family photographs are generally taken from the lens of the Coloniser. These staged images are a wonderful record of our people, however there is always a degree of objectification. These are from a colonial gaze which speaks of the other, the “natives” dressed in European clothes validating the success of the missionary system. To Christianise and civilise, giving kudos to the success of a colonial take over and the missionary system to tame the “natives”. Even today we are pressured into being silent, tame and quiet, not to create any stir in community and public life. Yet at the same time, an amnesia which exists in the minds of many colonial descendants perpetuating notions of wilderness and the false reality of walking into a land of plenty that ignores Indigenous peoples’ sovereignty and land management. In fact much of the history of this country had been written from behind the ‘white blindfold’ of the settler state.

In many ways colonial photographs were a trophy to be displayed alongside skulls and skeletons. As Lydon states:

It has become common to regard nineteenth century photographs of Indigenous people as trophies bagged by the colonial hunter, ciphers in a relationship characterised by distance, exploitation, and coercion. A dominant analytical strategy has been to show how the discourse of colonial photography maps the West's strategies of knowing and controlling Indigenous peoples, and some have argued that this distancing, objectifying mode of perception constitutes an inherent feature of modern "scope regimes," making photography an ideal tool of surveillance and control. (Lydon 2005, p 2)

The Aboriginal Protection Board in all states used photography to record and survey Indigenous people. This surveillance as mentioned earlier was often kept in government files as evidence of colonial powers and control, as proof of their success of governing 'natives'. Then of course there were the anthropologists, biologists and ethnographers such as Frank Gillen and Baldwin Spencer in the Horn Expedition to central Australia. Again these are the images of a curious anthropological gazing into the lives of Aboriginal people. Their interests were in the scientific curiosities of the nineteenth century which involved measuring people's bodies and collecting the data in order to study the ethnographic importance of themselves.



3. Unknown, c. 1907, *Uncle Sidney John, Aunty Aggie Edwards holding Uncle Freddie and Mollie Murray*, photograph, Speewa, Murray family collection.

This photograph is posed and due to the time that it was taken, one could imagine that a travelling photographer took it, or maybe someone from the local newspaper or Protection Board. Postcards were popular at the time, and it was common place for these people to cash in on images of Aboriginal people like those found in the Swan Hill Library collection. Even today some of these images have been reprinted by the Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement as postcards, with no names to identify the individuals and no recognised permission from families. Objectification of 'the other' was a common theme in this era and certainly sold on the postcard stands. However both myself and my family see this image as a very precious image of our family.



4. Unknown, c. 1911 (*Mollie*) *Priscilla Lavinia, William, (Jack), Sidney John, Lila Lilly, Ridley and (Bessy) Beatrice* front, photograph at Speewa. Murray family collection.



5. Unknown, c. 1912, *The Milliner from Swan Hill and Aunty Aggie Edwards* at Speewa, photograph, Swan Hill Library collection.

The eyes of my grandmother as a child before she was taken from her family haunt me in these family portraits taken at Aggies Swamp Speewa. Knowing this as being one of her former homes, this place holds great significance for many reasons to be discussed later in this exegesis. So many gaps in the story of their lives, have created voids in my connection and identity.

Linking these issues to my artistic works raises many questions. How do I create that feeling which has plagued so many Aboriginal families for so many years? The faces of my family can reflect or evoke this emotion, the texture and nature of the landscape will also be of importance.

What is my connection to these photographic images and how do I explain this? These images at first sight, in my early 30s, gave me solace, eventually I had found images of my family which I had never seen. Here they were posing together as a family group. I had not seen my grandmother in this context before, not with siblings and parents, not before in her Country. Whether this image was taken as an ethnographic curiosity or a piece of evidence for the Protection Board, I saw this image as a warm and monumental family photograph. We can discuss the theories of photography and the meanings behind images, yet I find no other narrative other than this being a precious record of a family who have lived through a time of great challenges. They look proud and dignified and certainly happy.

## **Artistic Interpretation**

My Literature Review theory and Context of Practice to be presented here, sits in a place which is a void, the void between what is known and what is not known, and connected to identity. The project of obtaining oral histories from family Elders was an effort to fill some of the voids with anecdotal evidence of times gone by. As if studying the characters in a play, I needed to know what their personalities were like, what they believed in and what sort of impact they had made upon our world and on us as their descendants.

Through the gathering of oral histories I asked Elders to share their knowledge of the past. This involves acknowledging the importance of 'relatedness' which Karen Martin explains in the following way:

It is through an ontological premise of relatedness and with the use of traditional devices such as First Stories and visual Stories that this Indigenist research paradigm makes transparent the assumptions, theory, methodology and ethics of the research study. The theoretical framework, called relatedness theory, is comprised of three conditions: Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing. (Martin 2008, p. 9)

Martin explains, that as Indigenous peoples, we must come to understand who we are and then live in this strength. We cannot separate or look at these three conditions alone, as all interplay together in terms of culture, identity and artistic practice. Oral Histories are an active element in all of this as a traditional way of transmission and an important grounding in culture that brings together ways, *angoorram* (to be), *ngai* (to know) and *ngata* (to do). (Bowe, Peeler & Atkinson 1997, p.79–128)

### **The Works**

Because of these experiences, the sense of loss and grieving plagues us throughout childhood and into our adult lives. I knew I belonged somewhere, but did not know where to look. We grieve for this sense of belonging. Estelle Barrett draws on Julia Kristeva's observations about melancholia and its influence upon the artist.

It is often the case that great works of art emerge from conditions of adversity or alienation. Why is this so? Kristeva tells us that melancholia is a precondition for creative production. (Barrett 2011, p, 64)

A major part of overcoming melancholia is this expression of finding my Country through my artwork. It is through this mark making and imagery that I find comfort and a reinstatement of a family past which has haunted

me for years, yet been out of reach. I have always felt my identity as an Aboriginal woman so strongly, identifying certain traits and talents, skills, senses and mindset and my comfort in the bush. Tacit knowledge in handling materials and tools, working with wood and catching food, lighting fires and cooking with the bare minimum of ingredients on an open fire. Is this inherited memory from my ancestors? In recent times much research has been entered into regarding inherited memory and how the events which have impacted on family members of the past, can materialise in subsequent generations:

Scientists have documented numerous cases where the children of significantly traumatized parents have in fact inherited specific predispositions, direct experimental evidence for this phenomenon, and a plausible mechanism, has until now been lacking. (Hewitt 2013, n.p)

Some of this research has certainly made links between fears and phobias which cannot be explained and experiences in the life of the child, but can be linked to parental events of the past.

## CHAPTER TWO

### CONTEXT OF PRACTICE

Artistic practice in an Indigenous cultural context is closely aligned with the production of knowledge. As creative practitioners we develop and produce that which is part of our identity and history in order to perpetuate traditional knowing, being and doing (Martin 2008, p. 9). This articulates into a long standing commitment to the continuum of cultural heritage and relatedness, the importance of identity, culture and Country and of positioning oneself appropriately in this landscape. Brian Martin notes that, art does not exist in isolation from life and culture as it plays a crucial role in cultural life, extending its relationship with Country (Martin 2013, p.38). As Aboriginal practitioners in arts practice, it is our everyday existence, knowledge and experience that frame our perspective and our ontology in terms of creative practices.

Scott Stroud refers to John Dewey and his notion of the everyday. Dewey focuses almost exclusively on experience in its aspect of everyday aesthetics (Stroud 2014, p. 34). This backs up my belief that one can only produce creative practice from a lens we already own. This comes from our own experience and existence. Quoting Dewey, Stroud continues:

Dewey does this to, 'restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience'. (Stroud 2014 p.34)

Stroud also argues that Dewey, 'Not only points at a way to see into the everyday world of mundane activity as aesthetic, but also gives us a melioristic way to artfully create aesthetic experiences through attention and action with the goal of creating better qualities in experience' (Stroud 2014, p. 34).

Although Stroud focuses on mainstream western art, in relation to art objects, I can confidently say that in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, art has always been a way of celebrating and communicating the everyday, the making of meaning, production of knowledge and sharing of storytelling traditions, using highly regarded aesthetic skills and expression. Important to note is that we are not frozen in time in our artistic expression, as our work travels along a continuum into a contemporary world of visual knowledge. Our artistic practice is our research as it moves backwards and forwards between what is known and what is to become known.

What is unique, is our relationship to Country, both past and present. Marcia Langton (2000) gives a cogent explanation of how Aboriginal people relate to their landscape in a very different way to that of the settler or colonizer.

Langton suggests that the colonizer's very notion of landscape is based on erasure of the spiritually charged conception held by the original people of the continent:

Land and landscapes shared by settlers and indigenes are divergently imagined. The fascination with Aboriginal art lies in the fact of starkly different relationships with place. Whereas settlers see an empty wilderness, Aboriginal people see a busy spiritual landscape, peopled by ancestors and the evidence of their creative feats. These divergent visions produce a tension, one that spills over into the world of Aboriginal art. (Langton 2000, p. 11)

Through my work I will challenge the settler notion of 'wilderness' to further validate our belonging and sovereignty over this Country. Equally important to all Indigenous artists is that need to produce evidence of our presence and the interwoven fabric of our connectedness with ancestors, Country and everything on it, as pivotal to our existence. This tension of which Langton speaks, spilling over into our art, is our journey and experience, whether it be entirely from our own eyes or be it a visual quotation from behind enemy lines, through the appropriated images of the colonisers, looking and speaking back at them using their visions of colonising the antipodes.

As previously mentioned, it is important that I position myself and my work in the field of artists, those who have influenced my work and those who also

strive to articulate Indigenous identity knowledge and culture through visual means. Creative practice is my way of communicating new knowledge and opening up barriers there may have been to this knowledge for those who are not close or familiar to it. Before looking closely at my own studio practice and research method, an account of other contemporary artists will help to provide context for the major themes and concerns relating to this research.

The Indigenous artists I will consider, produce work which is based on or characterized by observation and theory. This empirical method is what Dewey finds of value when reflecting on his theory of communication and artistic expression (Stroud 2007, p.7). These are artists who speak their history and knowledge through their production of creative works. This comes from an Indigenous perspective all of which represents communication based on Indigenous knowledge and culture, both historically and yet in a contemporary setting.

Julie Dowling, Daniel Boyd and Maree Clarke are my contemporaries, it is essential that I study their practice in order to place my own work among them. In addition, the these artists I have also chosen to study colonial artist John Glover and his colonial picturesque, as previously mentioned, from the other side of the frontier in order to make some sense of his interpretation of our world from a western point of view and from a colonial gaze.

## Julie Dowling

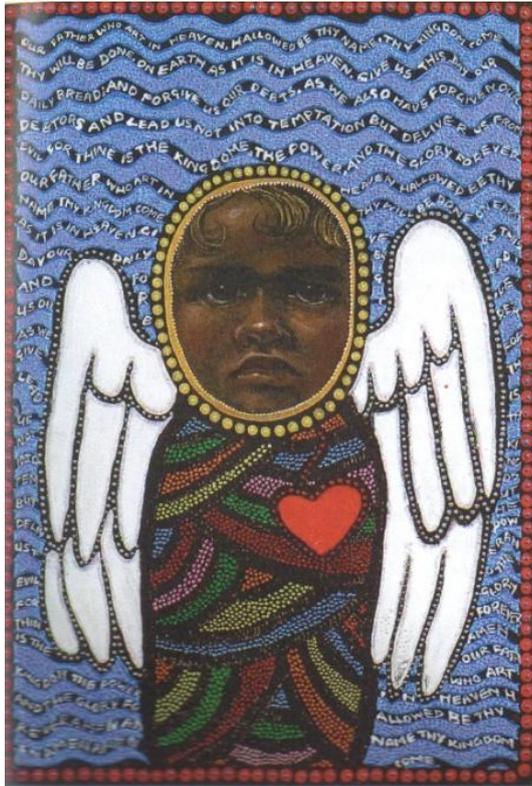
Dowling works in a wide variety of media, synthetic polymer, blood, ochre, beads, and occasionally gold leaf, in a style which can make reference to ancient Christian iconography and to the collections of old family photographs which survive today.

Dowling's combination of traditional and figurative style, brings another dimension to stories from an Aboriginal lens. Dowling draws upon her own family and their journey throughout the colonial and post-colonial periods. Dowling's works give insight into what happened in their lives with regard to the impact of invasion, colonisation, segregation, assimilation and institutionalisation of Indigenous people. Dowling often represents family members through a religious lens and in the manner of illuminated manuscripts with the decorative and ornate style that evokes medieval religiosity and dogma. Works such as Dowling's 1998, *Icon to a Stolen Child: Fetish* (see figure 6 on p. 78) and *Icon to a Stolen Child: Fire*, (see figure 7 on p. 78), reflect the iconography of Christianity, in the style of Russian or Byzantine paintings, placing the young stolen children into an image of saintly quality. The backgrounds however, tell of angels and religious beliefs of another land and culture yet with reference to the injustices of forced 'Christianising and civilising' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in these institutions and missions. The stark separation of the faces encapsulated by the religious background suggests the imprisonment of

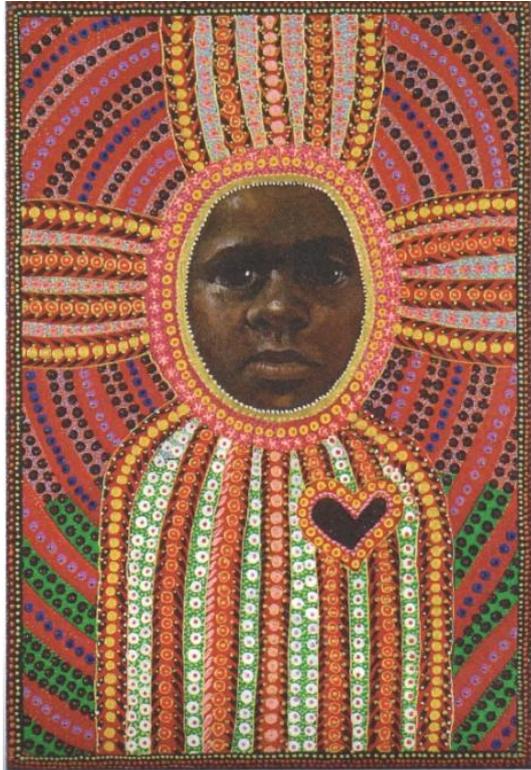
these children and their separation from family, culture and spirituality. A background so strong and symbolic, acts as a powerful indication of incarceration which confines the innocent face of the child victim.

The use of traditional patterns and design work bring to the canvas quotations of Aboriginal culture and Christian prayer, creating an intercultural aesthetic which manifests in the confronting reality of a dogma determined to transform these children into 'white washed specimens'. Their separation from culture was to be permanent. Jeanette Hoorn observes:

In the series '*Icon to a stolen child*', Dowling paints children of the stolen generations as black saints, paying homage to the many Indigenous Australians who, from the first years of the arrival of Europeans in Australia, were taken from their families and raised within the white community. Placed in foster homes, in orphanages and in missions, they now constitute what in Australia has become known as the stolen generations. (Hoorn 2007a, p. 6)



6. Julie Dowling, *Icon to a Stolen Child: Fetish*, 1998, mixed media, 40.5 x 27.5cm.



7. Julie Dowling, *Icon to a Stolen Child: Fire*, 1998, mixed media, 40.5 x 27.5cm.

The composition in both works is formal and symmetrical, which adds to the sense of rigidity of their internment. The large white angel wings speak of purity and goodness which was preached to the children, the Christian ethic which they should aspire to. The 'Fetish' child is tightly wrapped like a mummy and confined by the background consisting of 'The Lord's Prayer'. This relates to the submerging of the child into the doctrines of Anglo, Christian beliefs. This prayer would have been ringing in their ears at night, and forming the basis of their nightmares. White angel wings symbolic of a Christian view of an afterlife, speak of heaven and goodness. Yet these children wrapped up like mummies are constricted and kept from their own cultural beliefs. However it is possible that the wings may be symbolic of a totemic bird which is caring for the child, or the wings of freedom to fly away from their confinement?

Dowling's painting technique crosses both cultures in terms of traditional dots, circles and patterns recognisable from Central Desert Aboriginal art combined with the realistic faces of children and the use of letterform and significantly, Christian prayer. The compositions create a tension, a feeling of discomfort and uneasiness as these represent the pain and confusion of a child being institutionalised and separated from love and culture, all of which once made sense to their being.

Dowling's works are an expression of the identified experiences of these institutionalized children being forced to chant, 'and forgive us our

trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us', knowing too well who the real trespassers were. Entrapped and enslaved into a Christian work ethic, many of these children could never be released from the emotional scars that were left with them. To this I can relate through the relayed stories of desolation and helplessness of my father, grandmother and great aunt as they suffered in the hands of missionary institutions.

The cross structure which connects the 'fire child' (see Fig 7 p. 78) to the boundary of the picture, acts as a restraining device, as if they were tied to a cross. The state of their hearts are symbolic of their transformation, one red, still the colour of life, and one black, as the erasing of Aboriginal identity is being stripped away and a new identity has been created. Their heart is now black the colour of death and dying, bloodless and lifeless. Enshrined in a tomb like headstone, these children are gone, they are merely facades of their former selves with little love and a sadly confused identity.

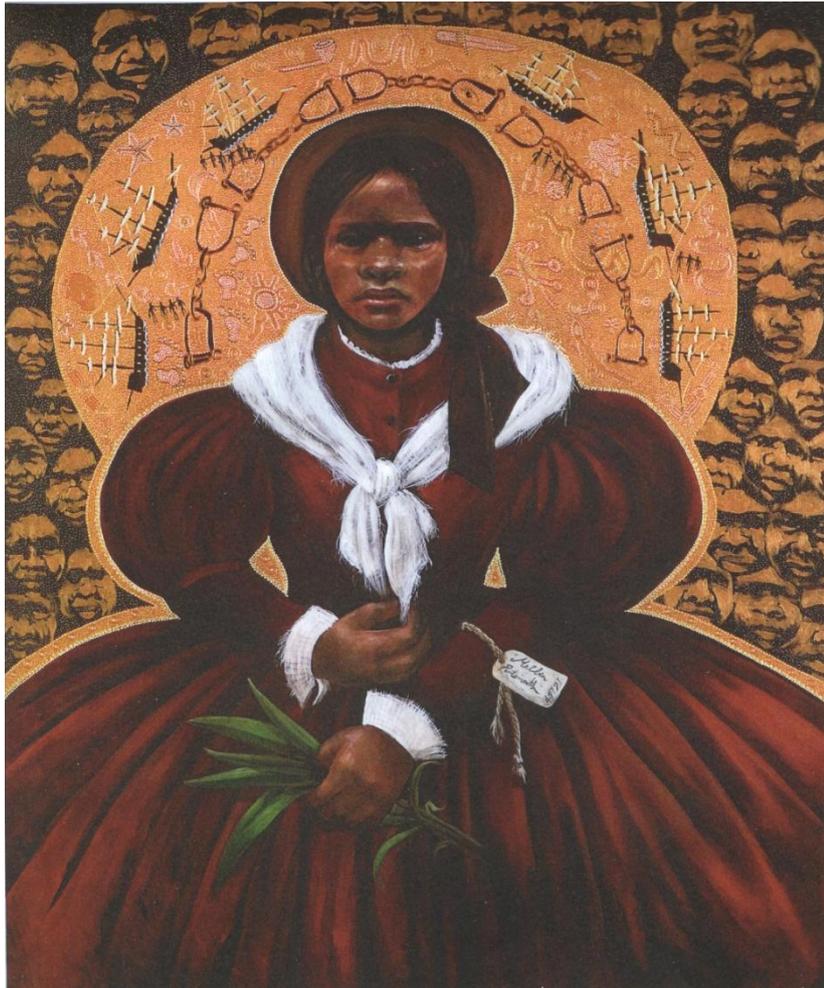
Other works evoke the power of a proud Indigenous past demonstrating strength and beauty, yet some are drawn from a traumatic and wrongfully imposed shame. *Melbin* (1999) ( see Fig 9 p. 83) the portrait of Dowling's great-great-grandmother, speaks of her hardship and exploitation as a curiosity subjected to being displayed to an English audience in the late 1800's and toured as a 'savage queen'(Hoorn 2007a, p. 9). The halo around her head makes reference to the colonial ships arriving with their shackles and chains, however these are presented on this shimmering golden halo

embossed with traditional symbols of Melbin's world. The faces of Aboriginal women crowd the background, as they are pushed together on mass peering from their world through to this image of a transformed Melbin. The repetition of the colourless faces creates a pattern, a sea of suffering and disparity staring back towards the colonists. This backdrop is very flat and lifeless in contrast to the very three dimensional Melbin. The outline of dot painting surrounding Melbin and separating her from the background, flattens the image even more so.

Dowling connects with her great, great grandmother's emotions, a beautiful young woman taken to a foreign land as a curiosity, a specimen, part of an antipodean side show. This artwork represents Melbin to them as a living anthropological woman from a land of no one. Her face is expressionless, creating ambiguity as to whether it is fear or compliance being conveyed. The viewer is left to wonder what was the enticement and what inducements were used to convince her to go with them to England on the other side of the world, dressed in the paraphernalia of her oppressors. This work explores the emotional connection and pride we have in our ancestors as the people who faced the impact of colonisation, and yet managed to live on in two worlds. The people of that time faced many hardships and unjust policies which tore their families apart leaving many voids and gaps in the fabric of their lives and identities, it is these voids and gaps with which my own work in this research is concerned.

Dowling's *Melbin* (1999), is a powerful image that conveys this knowledge of colonialisation from a black perspective. John Dewey translates this notion of knowledge production through artistic expression:

The sense of increased understanding, of a deepened intelligibility on the part of objects of nature and man, resulting from esthetic experience, has led philosophic theorists to treat art as a mode of knowledge, and has induced artists, especially poets, to regard art as a mode of revelation of the inner nature of things that cannot be any other way. It has led to treating art as a mode of knowledge superior not only to that of ordinary life but to that of science itself. (Dewey 1934, p. 288)



8. Julie Dowling, *Melbin*, 1999, mixed media, 120 x 100 cm.

Dressed in the finery of western dress of the late 1800s, Melbin is the subject of a colonial gaze. The composition is formal and symmetrical, rigid and confining. Her dress is corseted and constrained, the billowing skirt and sleeves and the tight bodice and cuffs cover her body and enclose and confine her humanity and reality. Her white cuffs, collar and shawl are reminiscent of a style of adornment which speaks of purity and cleanliness, separating her from any form of physical work. She is separated her from her people, the mass of bodiless heads which crowd the distance looking back at her. Her bonnet covers her head as an imposed form of decency

controlling her hair and keeping her closeted and void of any form of outward sexuality.

Tied to her wrist is a luggage ticket for her journey, she is merely an object to be shipped to Britain and back as some exotic specimen to be exposed to the voyeurism of another cultural gaze. A loss of individuality and dignity in confinement is conveyed by the shackles and sailing ships which crowd the “hallo”. Dowling’s work creates multiple meanings and ambiguity through the interplay of intercultural and compositional elements in the work.

Tanya Fitzgerald writes about the influences of the missionary women of colonial Aotearoa (New Zealand) and their strategies of ‘civilizing’ Maori women:

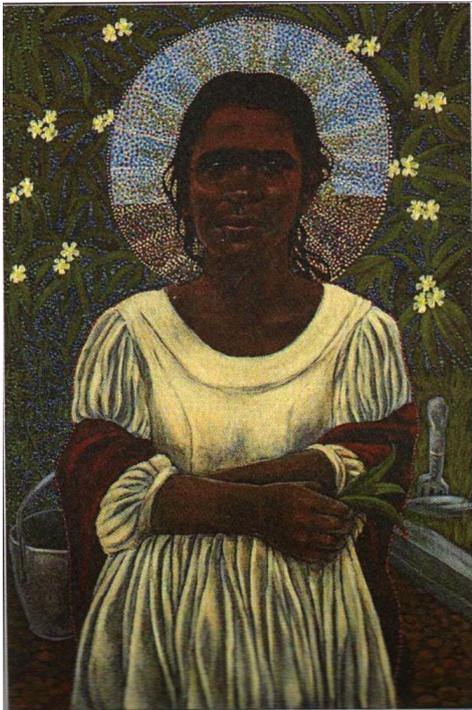
For Nga Puhi women, the mission family home provoked resistance to attempts to re-create them as Maori Christian women. In these two examples, ‘home’ simultaneously reinforced middle-class evangelical values and the subjugation of Nga Puhi women to the Christian ‘ideal’. Furthermore, for both the Christian Missionary Society and Nga Puhi women, the mission home conveyed the powerlessness of both groups of women—against the environment and the legacies of empire that connected their histories. (Fitzgerald 2005, p.671)

Missionaries saw the importance of re-creating or 'civilizing' women into their ideal of what they should be. This was a way in which they could change their values. The Anglo Christian idea of the meaning of home, from an imperial and patriarchal ideology, was that this model would 'civilise' the native. Missionaries worked at converting the domestic practices of women in order for them to have a "civilizing" impact on their men and children. Many material things and "female roles" were to be imposed, and the missionaries supervised this closely with random home inspections. In addition to this, is the imposition of Anglo European dress codes which implied many and varied notions of class and decency in terms of western Christian values of the era.

Melbin is grasping a switch of gum leaves, maybe as a reminder of home. This may symbolise her Country and also be reference to a smoking ceremony, that involves the keeping away of evil spirits. Both Melbin and Biddy dressed in Anglo western dress, grasp a switch of gumleaves. This may symbolise their position as Elders or ones who may conduct ceremonies to ward off spirits that might be a threat to the wellbeing of their people. Alternatively this could be a response from Christian indoctrination, where saints and others carried an olive branch extended to their enemy as a symbol of peace.

*Biddy The Midwife* (2003), is the saintly image of a woman who worked as midwife to both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal women:

The shimmering halo that frames Bidy's head symbolises her humanity, civility and suffering, and her stature as an individual whose life and work is in keeping with that of a saint – even though she has not been ordained as one. (Hosseini 2007, p.2)



9. Julie Dowling, *Biddy the Midwife*, 2003, synthetic polymer paint, red ochre and plastic on canvas, 60 x 40cm.

Biddy is pictured on a background of domesticity, a garden, garden path and gardening tools. Flowering shrubs fill the background on a night sky. Bidy is wrapped in a shawl to keep away the chill of the night. Her white dress signifies her role as nurse or medical worker or carer. The composition is symmetrical and again constructed in a similar way to that of the Byzantine

style of painting. Her halo of dots, shimmers in the evening light giving it an ethereal luminosity.

There is an allusion to Orientalism in the aforementioned works through the use of highly decorative elements. It could be argued that Dowling presents the judgmental gaze of the Occident and Aboriginal people viewed from that gaze. Edward Said's notion of 'the other' is implied in paintings from this Orientalist genre in which the West (Occident) ethnocentrically classifies the Orient. Anglo western and colonial lenses presented the authority the west took over the Orient. In many ways Dowling makes reference to this genre of painting, as she presents Aboriginal women clothed and judged by Anglo western standards. This ethnocentric view is often present in the colonial gaze, the gaze which is cast upon Aboriginal people judged by the standards and culture of another.

Orientalism can be discussed and analysed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient – dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said 1979 p. 3)

All of this was instrumental in perpetuating the colonial control and power over Indigenous peoples. The fabricated colonial quotations of Australia and

the Pacific, all combined to complete this transformation of what in their view was a subordinate culture to be transformed and dominated by their own superiority.

There is a play between these Western views of Aboriginal culture and being, and the Aboriginal view from a cultural lens. This is a part of the ambiguity and latent/symbolic meaning brought together in these works which suspends us in a cross cultural interpretation.

Dowling follows the trail of her family and community life on Country where they were disenfranchised, exploited and marginalized in a landscape of white dominance and privilege. Colonial governance was forcibly superimposed over every aspect of life as they had known it and domination and servitude was the plan. This representation of Dowling's family and community reinstates events and people of the past, a past that in many ways has been stored in government archives and away from the ownership and care of those depicted in these images. Are these images the relics from this 'war zone' (Hoorn 2007a, p.11) where dislocated detainees were confined to mission stations and kept from inheriting traditional languages, land, knowledge, customs and beliefs. Dowling uses a collection of photographs from which she draws her images, many of which were obtained from Government archives and were never in the family's collections.

Hoorn says of Julie Dowling:

The circumstances that formed her family life and history are the strongest force propelling Julie Dowling to paint. For many Aboriginal people their family history resembles that of a people living in a war zone: fractured, incomplete and dispersed. (Hoorn 2007a, p.11)

As with Dowling, this need to express my world view through artwork is exceptionally strong. After all of these fractures our family must have some recompense in order to deal with these traumas and build our lives again securely on foundations of identity and pride. In addition to this many of us have wondered how many photographs of our families exist in Government archives. It is often the case that there are more photographs of our families in these musty drawers and files than in our own possession.

Dowling speaks of her connection to her Country through her images, such as *Melbin*. Here is her connection to ancestors and memory, culture, history and Country. She provides multi layered quotations from traditional places, a contemporary world and her connections to all of these realities. The messages are powerful as they bring oral histories from the past to the present all from an authentic Indigenous perspective, rather than from a western version of colonial history.

My works are based on the images from those places and times which I have never inhabited. They are out of reach and yet they uncannily exist in another dimension. As I have explained before, the Dreaming is a multi-layered timeline where the past and the present exist in the same time and place. Can I reach into that space to extract what is felt to be there from memory and oral histories which are still there running parallel to our way of being?

Christine Nicholls quotes Jeannie Herbert Nungarrayi's explanation:

To get an insight into us – (the Warlpiri people of the Tanimi Desert)- it is necessary to understand something about our major religious belief, the Jukurrpa. The Jukurrpa is an all-embracing concept that provides rules for living, a moral code, as well as rules for interacting with the natural environment. The philosophy behind it is holistic – the Jukurrpa provides for a total, integrated way of life. It is important to understand that, for Walpiri and other Aboriginal people living in remote Aboriginal settlements, The Dreaming isn't something that has been consigned to the past but is a lived daily reality. We, the Walpiri people, believe in the Jukurrpa to this day. (Nungarrayi, cited in Nicholls, 2014, p.1)

Christine Nicholls goes further to explain the Dreaming as follows:

The Dreaming embraces time past, present and future, a substantively different concept from populist characterisations portraying it as “timeless” or having taken place at the so-called ‘dawn of time’. Unfortunately, even in mainstream Australia today, when and where we should know better, schmaltzy, quasi-New Age notions of ‘The Dreaming’ frequently still hold sway. Nicholls observes that the Australian anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner conveyed the idea more accurately in his 1956 essay:

‘The Dreaming in time’ It was, and is, ‘everywhen’. Stanner went on to observe that: “We [*non-Indigenous Australians*] shall not understand the Dreaming fully, except as a complex of meanings. (cited in Nicholls 2014, p. 2)

Dowling presents a spectrum of colour in textural and patterned compositions from where the faces of her people gaze. There is a sense that they are drowning in the layers of foreign culture having been enforced upon them, particularly in the works Icons of stolen children, where just the faces are revealed.

My works are not always peopled, there can be a suggestion of their presence, a hint or implication in the void which holds the answers to my research questions. As mentioned before, the landscape is alive with our ancestors, their spirits are there and remind us of their journeys. The gaps

and voids in what we know will never be fully answered. Yet there is a peaceful reassurance when you are on Country, as you are surrounded by the knowing and feeling of their presence in every feature of the landscape:

The ancestors are those Creators who have at some point in time taken the form of *People, Animals, Plants, Climate, Skies, Land and Waterways*. However both the Creators and Ancestors can and do, traverse these realms and with the aid of the *Spirits*, sustain the Law and thus relatedness. (Martin 2008, p.66)

### **Daniel Boyd**

Daniel Boyd, Kujjila/Gangalu artist of Cairns, works in a number of genres, from installations and film to painting. Boyd uses appropriated iconic colonial paintings reframed through a humorous Indigenous lens to parody the arrival of Captain Cook and the notion of piracy, from the perspective of the colonised. Other images demonstrate the blatant ethnocentric views of the colonists assumed superiority, which resulted in the barbaric treatment of Indigenous people in the many colonies they made claim to. The *No Beard* series draws from this Eurocentric position and exposes the pomp and arrogance of a people who flaunted their power in displaying the trophies of their victories in the antipodes.

Other monumental works include the large mixed media images which bring visions of the South Seas and Pentacost Island, revealing the story of his Great-Great Grandfather “blackbirded” into slavery to labour in the sugarcane fields of Queensland. It is these images which Boyd takes from European photographic archival references of colonialism in the Pacific, as he reverses the gaze to present an Indigenous view point.



10. Daniel Boyd, *King No Beard*, 2007, oil on canvas.

*King No Beard*, (2007) is an appropriation of Sir Nathaniel Dance Holland’s, King George III, 1773. The original painting shows the regal King George III resplendent in all of his formal attire with ermine and velvet cape, silk

stockings and regal jewels. He holds a staff and his brocade suit is belted with a dagger holster. Placed on the table to the right of him is his jewelled crown, as he stands posed in front of a backdrop of palatial opulence. Boyd has replaced his crown with a large specimen jar containing Boyd's own decapitated head, symbolic of a trophy from the antipodes. The reference of being beardless in this series of works, is drawn from the initial sexual ambiguity observed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, when first contact was made.

The red parrot on King George III's shoulder, and eye patch, identifies him as a pirate, seen as a person of doubtful intent and out for personal gain, wealth and power in taking this country.



11. Left: Daniel Boyd, *Treasure Island*, 2005, oil on canvas, 192.5 x 220.0 cm.

12. Right: Daniel Boyd, *We Call Them Pirates Out Here*, 2006, oil on canvas 226.5 x 275 cm.

Boyd's work overtly critiques and debunks colonial discourses through the use of humour, satire and symbolism and the appropriation of iconic colonial

imagery. *We Call Them Pirates Out Here*, (2006 Fig 12 p. 94) exposes the myths of 'terra nullius' using the appropriation of colonial visual language in Boyd's works, by transforming the British landing into a pirate invasion and assault on Indigenous shores, complete with skull and cross bones and the mandatory eye patch. Boyd works with the selective appropriation and editing of familiar colonial images which are inherently part of the folklore of white Australia, and in doing so replaces accounts under an alternative lens coming from an Indigenous perspective. *Treasure Island*, (2005 Fig 11 p. 94) is a map of Indigenous Australia identifying all of the language groups of this continent. This land of plenty was seen as a gold mine of treasures for the ever expanding British colonies, there for the taking regardless of what the impact on Indigenous people was to be in the process.



13. Daniel Boyd, *Sir No Beard*, 2007, oil on canvas, 182.5 x 121.5 cm.

*Sir No Beard* (2007) resplendent in his British regalia, poses beside trophies from the Australia / Pacific colonies, again here is the head of Boyd, a stolen specimen. These works stand as evidence to the wrongs of the past and the attitudes of the present. It is poignant that these images bring a truth and awareness which is visible as a post colonial statement utilising iconic artworks of the oppressor to make an even more powerful revelation of historical truths. There is reference here to Hans Holbein's *The Ambassadors* (1533). However in Holbein's work, the human skull is camouflaged using extreme distortion. Boyd makes a strong statement here by demonstrating the notion that Indigenous people were seen simply as another piece of the

flora and fauna of this Country. This conqueror stands proud amongst his display of trophies from the antipodes. Boyd makes reference to the fallacy of British superiority which constitutes their racist view towards 'the other' which is perpetuated through colonial images.

Boyd challenges colonial imagery by researching back into European art and looking for the symbolism which has been a part of its propaganda. This propaganda is responsible for much of this ethnocentrism and notions of 'the other'. Colonial discourse worked hard at promoting its view through images and propaganda, in order to create what can be identified today as an amnesia in regard to the occupation of humanity in this land at the time of colonisation:

Robert Garbutt explains the notion of colonial amnesia;

Australia's colonial experience and trauma – far from being resolved – are characterised by a condition of collective amnesia expressed in social, cultural, political and psychological boundaries that are bound up in the cultural encounters that happen in the everyday. (Garbutt, Biermann & Offord 2012, p.63)



14. Daniel Boyd, *Untitled* 2014, oil, pastel and archival glue on canvas, 315 x 223.5cm.

Boyd brings revived images of Pentecost Island from the past into the present, carrying many meanings and emotions for Indigenous people. The sheer size of these works has an impact, as they are far larger than the photographic images they were taken from, giving them a powerful presence. This faded low focus quality gives the impression of the image coming from a lens in antiquity. Is this hazy quality also an expression of this colonial amnesia, looking back to an antiquity of unspoken truths excluded from colonial history erased and replaced with a pride in exploration and discovery at a huge cost to Indigenous peoples?

This romantic quality was often used by colonial artists in order to present these locations as an exotic and desirable place of adventure and beauty. John Glover's work certainly has this quality as he struggles to represent Aboriginal people. He also presents a very unrealistic view of the Tasmanian bush:

Paintings, sketches and later photographs of Aboriginal people in the early years of European settlement form a significant part of a discursive formation which constitutes the Indigenous race as stereotypical figures – feral, fierce and untamed creatures, with barbaric customs and brutish actions. Artists sketching a fracas, for instance, made clear distinctions between the 'civilised' clothed bodies of the newcomers and the 'uncivilised' naked bodies of the indigenes. (Creed & Hoorn 2001, p. 51)

The image evokes sadness, a quality enhanced by the monochromatic nature of the work. The dots make reference to traditional Aboriginal paintings of the Central Desert, yet they also are reminiscent of aquatint and etching techniques found in the journals and reports of colonial explorers. This series of works may be viewed through multiple perspectives. They are very different to earlier works, as they come from the discourse of arcadia, and from the same place and psyche of colonial amnesia:

Creating a visual language where incomprehension is acknowledged is important to my practice; it's about the memory of this landscape and the multiple connections to it. The surface of the work is made up of dots, which acts as lenses. It's about the perception of multiple lenses and the marks on the surface. (Kubler cites Boyd, 2014 p.3)

Kubler states further that Boyd has researched the ceremonial mask from Vanuatu, that Henri Matisse had in his collection. Kubler suggests that Boyd believes this addresses 'the lineage of primitivism' (Kubler 2014, p. 5).

Primitivism as a construct of western belief, places the peoples of Australia and the Pacific into an archaeological classification stored in western museums and ethnographic archives on colonial shelves. These collections of trophies, are evidence of the feats of these foreign explorers fascinated in exotic and 'primitive' beings, those of the other.



15. Daniel Boyd, *Untitled*, 2013, oil and archival glue on canvas.

Taken from a European lens, the original photograph of this young warrior (above) would have been part of ethnographic documentation of Indigenous people by the colonisers. It is obvious how these colonial photographs objectified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. These images were in many situations gathered for scientific data and international journals intent on studying what they saw as specimens of another “fossil race”. The European intent was to record, for curiosity’s sake these “dying races”.

Boyd takes this image and stages it from a different perspective. He stands this up so that it looks almost as if it were part of a performance staring back

at the European gaze. The surfaces of the works have a character which references traditional cultural painting techniques, yet a reference to European pointillist techniques. Boyd is looking back at the colonial viewer with these powerful images, through their size and presence as well as their textural nature and references to a long past moment of contact.



16. Daniel Boyd, *Untitled*, 2012, oil and archival glue on canvas.

This warrior is not looking away from the lens, he staring right through it as a proud warrior ready to defend his people against any invader. There is a sense of mystical antiquity about these images, as if they were burnt into memory and vision from a long distant past. Nevertheless, Boyd's mark making and technique present a very formidable image of a powerful man gazing back at the viewer.

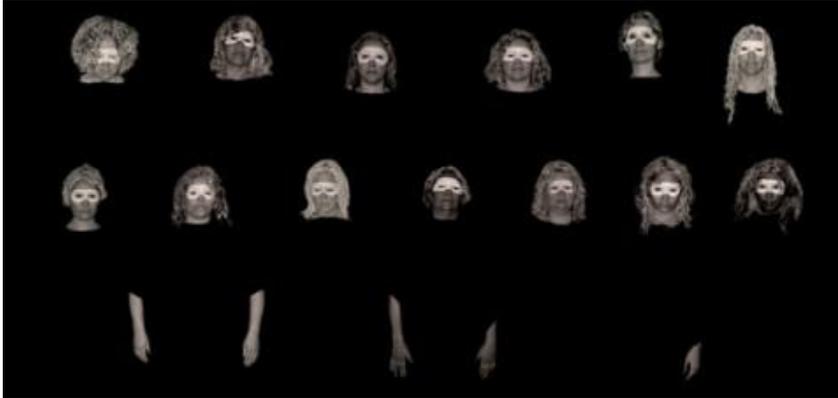
We mourn the passing of our ancestors and the voids left in our family histories through forced removal and other government policies which restricted our cultural practices and movements in a traditional setting. White is the colour of mourning and these images have a ghostly presence as if they were the spirits of our ancestors daubed in white clay shimmering through a veil of darkness.

Through my work I intend to use the signifiers of death and the power of these, such as in the painting *Aggie's Swamp*, (2014 see figure 39, p. 223) where the white clothing of the children has dappled sunlight dancing over it, giving an almost ghostly shimmering to the figures. These family members have now passed and this along with the shimmering dots of Aunty Aggie's dress embrace this emotion and sense of loss. My work aligns with that of Boyd in that it is an attempt to reveal the amnesia of colonial history.

### **Maree Clarke**

Clarke's works explore representations from the region along Dhungala, (the Murray River) where our people once lived a sustainable lifestyle before the arrival of the colonials. Clarke's imagery includes appropriation and quotations from many customs and traditions. It reveals ingenuity, and the craftsmanship of contemporary Indigenous art-making to preserve ceremony and the presence of Indigenous culture in a contemporary world. This work demonstrates the continuum of Indigenous traditional practices rather than

classifying these in an archival context. Indigenous artists continue to express living Indigenous culture and society in ways that go beyond the approaches of anthropologists and museum curators.



17. Maree Clarke, *Women in Mourning*, 2011, photographic image, *Ritual and Ceremony* Exhibition Bunjilaka Melbourne Museum.

*Women in Mourning* captures grief and loss and the significance of the Kopi cap as a tool of healing. These caps were traditionally moulded around the heads of the family and community, made from white gypsum and could weigh up to 7kgs. The closer you were to the deceased the longer you would wear the cap until it was placed on the person's grave.

Clarke's images demonstrate ceremony which was yet another cultural practice to come under the eye of the Protectorate. At a time when the Eugenics movement and Galton's theories had supported Social Darwinist theory, Europeans under the instrumentation of the Christian missionaries, set out to erase many cultural practices. Theories of "whitening" both minds and bodies were viewed as a sure way to delete "primitive" peoples from the

landscape. This ensued well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century with the Aboriginal Protectorate enforcing many and varied Government Acts in order to see that this would occur. Auber Octavious Neville, Protector in Western Australia, self-published book, *Australia's Coloured Minority: Its Place in the Community* (1947), presents his ideas of 'breeding the race out'. He saw this as a natural consequence in Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest.

Along the Murray River traditional ceremony and tradition were often rubbed out in order to make way for a "more civilised" version of Australian life to proliferate. Today, the work of artists discussed here and my own work, is underpinned by a drive to correct the misconceptions of colonial discourses and to restore and reclaim lived experience that history has tried to erase.

Clarke takes the tradition of Kopi and mourning from her country and reinstates it in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in order to turn Eugenics on its head. These powerful images speak of the great emotional loss experienced throughout a lengthy period of wailing, chanting and mourning. I feel that this work quotes both the mourning of the past and the present, in terms of lost cultural practices. The participants were first daubed in white clay for mourning and then the caps were built up on their heads in layers of gypsum. The exhibition consisted of these many photographic images and an installation of the Kopi caps placed together on a bed of red earth at the base of a row of saplings.

The overall sensation and emotion was evident in the gallery space as the viewer walk silently along and through the exhibition. It certainly had a sense of the spiritual and of the presence of the many generations who have passed before us. Clarke has commented that this is not for the mourning of an individual, but as a symbol of collective grief for all of the lost people, languages, land and culture. (Clarke cited in Gingold 2011, p.1)



18. Maree Clarke, *Ritual and Ceremony*, (Kopi caps in background) 2011, Exhibition Bunjilaka Melbourne Museum.

As an important part of this exhibition, Clarke gathered statements from all of the participants in order to reflect on the project and how this has made meaning for them dealing with their own losses of loved ones and the many facets of identity and culture past or lost. These statements were projected onto the opposing wall.

Clarke's work challenges the notions of *terra nullius* as it relates to south-eastern Australia. Again this colonial amnesia is counteracted by the production of this artwork which demonstrates a strong connection to tradition and Country:

The viewer can see, hear and feel my story. The work is one of juxtapositions, as I move from the past to the present, standing strong on the Country of my Ancestors to reveal contemporary representations of who I am and where I come from. (Clarke, 2014, p. 2)

Like Clarke, I work to present my view in connection to the images. This involves demonstrating my relationship to Country and the meaning of this to us all. My representations materialise through my attention to textures and colours of the land, reflecting my passion and intimate relationship with Country and producing alternative images and "truths" to those that persist in colonial discourses.

Clarke's work, *Born of the Land*, 2014, a sculptural and video installation is a powerful if not unsettling experience. Framed by a number of Murray River branches on one plane, a video image projects onto a screen behind. As the video images emerge from the scene, one can see the sandy soil of the river bank from which a female figure emerges slowly from the earth. The woman

is Clarke painted in traditional white ochre and hair daubed with ochre as if this is a scene from a ceremony. Clarke goes on to explain:

As Aboriginal people we are connected to place, yet we may live away from place; we are connected to stories and people from the past, yet they continue to resonate in our lives today. All these things and more inform my work, as I create and reclaim my cultural heritage as a contemporary Aboriginal artist. (Clarke 2014, p. 2)

This reclamation is emphasized through visual imagery along with performance and video media, emotionally stirring the viewer as is Clarke's intention, and therefore provocatively presenting evidence of our presence and reality. The video element of this work in which Clarke emerges from the soil of her Country, speaks of connection and the customary belief that we are part of our Country and our Country is part of us. All that is us is our Country and this is symbolically acted out as Clarke is borne from her soil.

The multilayered elements of river vegetation, lighting and sound, work together to produce an experience which translates the power of this connection to Country. Again Clarke challenges the amnesia which persists in the colonial discourse.

Commemoration and reclamation are pivotal elements in my own works, this need to express the anxieties associated with being separated from Country.

The strength of these emotions are intended to be demonstrated through the visual articulation of my own works, and recognized for the importance this has to our overall physical and psychological wellbeing.

Artists such as Clarke, make statements in their works through a poetic rhetoric which communicates far more than words. The research which artists develop and hone to articulate the ideas and issues they wish to address, leads them on a journey of knowledge and production. In the case of my work, I search for memory from a broad spectrum of sources. These sources may stem from oral histories, the yarning with Elders and family. This discussion could be prompted by photographic images, old documents, and experience of place. Positioning oneself on Country and feeling the sense of place can inform memory in the provocation of creative responses:

Storytelling, as a type of utterance that affects both thought and perception, involves free association that can retrieve what has been lost to memory. In this process thought and perception become amalgamated in the artist's images, allowing memory to be put into words, bringing about the displacement of prohibition and possible renewal of psychic space. (Barrett 2011, p. 137)

Personal journeys and experiences on Country, yarns with Elders and trips out bush with family members to significant places, provoke creative responses to time, place and people, all which manifest themselves in my

research and creative production. Both Clarke and myself make reference to Country through image, mark-making, rhythms and quotations, which speak of our experience and immersion in Country. We go beyond simple representation and dig deeper into the very essence of our being, who we are and how we came to be. As we work we become bodily and spiritually involved in our Country, we are connected to our ancestors and our very existence. All of this impacts upon the act of producing our work, we are working from our ontological context. Non-Indigenous Australia may see our artistic expression as revolt against a colonial discourse, yet I rather see our artistic expression as our right to have a voice and tell our stories from our Country in order to challenge and reveal our shared history.

Barrett explains what can often be seen as gestures of revolt from the creative arts practitioner:

In the context of creative practice as a process that moves between transgressive and established meanings we may conceive of the other as 'me' – the social self or subject, as opposed to the 'me' that is articulated by drive or excitability. An understanding of this is essential if we are to appreciate the way in which material process operates as transgression and produces figures of revolt through creative practice. (Barrett 2011, p. 139)

The ideas and visions of the artist related to this research and prior to the emergence of the images, are worked through thought processes, drawing, photography and yarnng — yet what comes into play as the work progresses, are opportunities to challenge any perceived rules, and to work from intuition, instinct and the embodied vision and experience-in-practice. In moments of making an artist as maker and interpreter, can opt to present and challenge the rules in order to extend the language of artistic expression and so allow new meaning to emerge through the aesthetic image. Because these choices made are often intuitive and unconscious and only come to light after the fact and in subsequent viewings.

Dewey, writing on the characteristics of the aesthetic in relation to theories of art, comments on the aesthetic nature of everyday experience artists draw on in order to:

Restore continuity between the refined and intensified forms of experience that are works of art and the everyday events, doings, and sufferings that are universally recognized to constitute experience.

(Dewey 1934, p. 9).

*Ngaikun* (to know), *ngarwu* (to listen), *yamutj* (to search), *ngarri* (to tell), *ngata* (to do) and *bunyma* (to make). (Bowe, Peeler & Atkinson 1997, p.79–189) These elements translate to the making of meaning from connection to

everyday experience, Country, identity and creative practice and the dissemination of knowledge which comes from this.

Experiential knowledge through artistic expression does not occur in a vacuum. The former experiences in life and practice all come together in this mix of expression. Both the material and immaterial are at play here, mind, body and soul.



19. Maree Clarke, *Ritual Connection to Country*, 2015, Video Installation Koorie Heritage Trust. Photo: Luis Ascui Sydney Morning Herald 30/06/2015.

As Clarke has done in her works discussed here, I too am, reclaiming and revisiting our cultural property and bringing this to exhibition in order to share, inform and reclaim the knowledge and discourse of our cultural heritage with those who would otherwise be unaware of our world. Our heritage has not always come from our own mouths or hands and hence, in the past, history has lacked authenticity and accuracy. As contemporary Aboriginal artists we are bringing cultural knowledge to light, extending and

extending it through artistic expression in a way that cannot be communicated simply in words alone.

### John Glover



20. John Glover, *The Bath of Dianna*, 1837, Van Diemen's Land.

Glover's representations of his personal colonial experience offered me as a child a sense of identity. Never before had I gazed upon the landscapes of our Country where we were included. This has constantly fascinated me in terms of what I saw as a secret view of our world in the past. However, I battled with representations of Eucalypts that were snake like and tortured and put this down to his European inability to fathom the flora of our country after the formal structures of his. Still my fascination extended, here was a man who was there at a time when we were considered vermin, the hunted,

the savage and the uncivilized in the minds of the colonizer. Was Glover representing a tension in his optimistic view of reality 'between the land as a disappearing Eden, on the one hand, and a revived Eden on the other,' (McPhee 2004, p. 110). McLean also comments on Glover's biblical references:

Whatever the case may be, Glover continued to visually quote from his biblical stance making use of symbolism, rainbows and pagan views of a world he was yet to feel comfortable with. By depicting the Aborigines happily at home in their land, Glover also reminds us of whose land this is, thus countering the doctrine of *terra nullius*. (McLean 2004, p. 122)

Yet, McLean says that his (Glover's) paintings were not, 'Just generalised representations of the Rousseauesque "noble savage", but pictures of people and things he had seen in Tasmania' (McLean 2004, p. 126).

As Glover and other western artists produced works that represented a colonial view of this land of Indigenous people, they paid paternalistic homage to their ideal of the 'noble savage' through their artwork of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. The Black Wars were over by the time Glover had arrived in Tasmania, so he was generally working from what he had heard rather than what he had experienced. Orientalism or the romanticised lens, focused on 'the other', and implied a form of propaganda which ultimately

set about celebrating the assumed superiority of the west under an exotic gaze of the other. This all functioned to establish the colonial rhetoric and to construct a 'history which has to be begun,' as Homi Bhabha has stated, (2012, p. 362).

I loved to scan my way through these works looking for quotations of a time past, clinging to what was and what may have been. Still I question, is this truth or is there some other perspective at play here? Well there has to be, because he was a man from a different world, we can only quote from a perspective we know:

In such responses, as indeed in Glover's Australian *oeuvre* as a whole, we can see, even more clearly than we can in his British work, the tension between observed reality and pictorial convention; between Glover's "naturalism" and his "classicism". (Hansen 2004, p. 96)

Working in a traditional European style, Glover was schooled in the period of Claudean Romanticism which is evident in his works. He worked in oils and sketched in pencil and ink into numerous sketchbooks which made the journey to Australia with him in February 1831. The composition of his works which tend to be quite classical in their arrangement. The symbolism of *The Bath of Dianna*, (1837) follows mythology closely where the man to the left is accompanied by his hunting dogs as the woman swims across the waterhole. Remembering she is the Goddess of Chastity, for Glover, she can only be a

European construct. As she swims across the waterhole past a very phallic vertical rock formation, she turns this man into a stag and with that the hunting dogs turn on their master and eat him. Dianna was known for her dislike of men and remained a virgin to the end.

In one painting *The Bath of Diana*, Glover uses Aboriginal people to illustrate the Greek myth of Diana and Acteon, in which the hunter sees the goddess bathing. In revenge, she turns him into a stag and he is torn to pieces by his own hounds:

Dianna was also known as a Roman Goddess of Chastity and was also Goddess of the Moon, renowned for her hunting prowess. Perhaps this painting is also an attempt by Glover, to represent the 'noble savage'?

I see the images of Aboriginal people in Glover's work as those emerging from a typically colonial gaze. They are barely human in form, rather animal like as he shows them climbing trees to hunt possum. Negative stereotypes are revealed in terms of European attitudes towards the people which they saw as closer to the primate rung on the same imaginary ladder which supported Europeans at the top. His references to classical mythology and those of the settlers in their naming of the Tasmanian landscape, demonstrates an inability to accept the differences of this land. They had to refer back to their own mythology in order to deal with making sense of it, it seems. The strangely contorted limbs of the trees writhe skywards in an

unnatural yet stylistic and romantic way. The foliage of the trees barely mimics the nature of our evergreen eucalypts leaves which should hang almost vertically. There is a romantic softness to the trees of Glover's, yet the colours of the landscape are very different from those of England and Europe.

I suggest that Glover struggled to present an accurate view of the Australian bush. He was still influenced by the style of works he had made back in England and the influence of the Romantic style of painting of the time. I would imagine that for him, letting go of what he had established as a style in his work, was difficult for him to adapt to this Country. My research and image making stems from immersion in Country and a familiarity with the nature of the landscape as it has been lived for countless generations and to my way of viewing it, as a part of who I am — just as Glover was a part of his former landscape.

The art of the settlement years perpetuates the discourses of the colonial lens, where Indigenous people are seen as a part of the flora and fauna of this country. Civilised verses uncivilised seems to be the message, the noble savage living in purity untainted by the evils of the civilised world. The positioning is both confusing and ironic given the colonial intent of Christianising the First Nation peoples. The aim was to clear the land of its inhabitants and widespread murder was commonplace. The Black Wars had been fought prior to and during Glover's arrival, and very few Palawa people

remained apart from those detained on missions or imprisoned for defending their country. In fact Glover had to travel to these jails in order to make his studies of Palawa people or to catch up with Chief Protector, George Augustus Robinson, on his journey rounding up the remaining tribes.



21. John Glover, *The River Nile*, 1840, Van Diemen's Land.

Glover's work has had an impression on me for a lifetime, I have examined these works as a child and as an adult and yet could not see a true representation of Indigenous people as equals. In their representation of the landscape and the people these images certainly reveal the colonial gaze. The places are represented sometimes romantically, which is in many ways attractive, speaking of antiquity and of arcadia. However, Glover could only draw upon what already knew — his own culture and classical literature to depict an imagined paradise constructed through a colonial lens.

Reclaiming our Country through artistic expression is important to me as an Aboriginal woman. I draw upon what I know and what I understand I am an integral part of. This is in effect a ceremony in which I celebrate my connection to Country and our generations of connection which go back to the beginning of time. This is our Dreaming.



22. John Glover, *A Corroboree in Van Diemen's Land*, 1840.

It is evident to me that Glover depicted landscapes of colonial expansion quite differently to that of landscapes with an Aboriginal presence, these were often dark and threatening in character. Here the trees become more snake like and threatening, on the other hand, when it comes to the colonial settlements and farms, the trees take on a more European stance, erect and less twisted. My "Glover" fascination still continues as I question the angle from which he was coming from, as he painted the world from his colonial perspective. My work peoples the landscape differently, empathetically and

from lived experience and memories that are irrevocably connected to both the land and the ancestors who dwelt within in before my time. In the following chapter I will consider how this different vision is forged through a relational methodology that draws strongly on Indigenous epistemology and ontology as well as the inescapable influence of western discourses and practices.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Method Overview

Shawn Wilson defines methodology in the following way: 'When we talk about methodology, we are talking about how you are going to use your ways of thinking (epistemology) to gain more knowledge about your reality' (Wilson 2001, p. 175).

Important to my reality as it relates to the realities of many Indigenous peoples, is that I endeavour to reveal meaning through practice exegesis research and through all encompassing perspectives of Indigenous knowledge systems which culminates in the artistic expression as my practice outcome in this project. As Margaret Kovach states, 'Gaining control of the research process has been pivotal for Indigenous peoples in decolonisation' (Kovach 2005, p. 23).

In this chapter I will present the idea of a triangulated framework for practice-research. I have positioned at each one of the three points of this triangle, practice, oral history and photography. Norman Denzin theorised triangulation as a tool to support the qualitative researcher's framework. Methodological triangulation is one of four of Denzin's approaches to this

framework. He emphasises the nature of qualitative research and its function of triangulation which is, to locate and reveal the understanding of the object under investigation from 'different aspects of empirical reality' (Denzin & Lincoln 1978, p. 3).

Empirical reality for the artist is related to an all embracing immersion in which experience, particularly from sensory observation and experimentation, produces tacit knowledge that is closely connected to experience-in-practice as doing and knowing. The evaluation of qualitative research is where the practitioner can interpret their research findings through the production of visual practice. Earlier in this exegesis I have suggested that contemporary practice is a continuation of earlier cultural practices and evolves in response to changing environments and conditions. I argue that this evolution is a continuation of the visual and verbal storytelling as ceremony and commemoration that preserves cultural knowledge and identity.

Denzin urges researchers to be aware of the historical record of pragmatists, as well as the history associated with bringing the voices of marginalized communities into the research world to consciously keep their experiences in the current discussions. (Mertens & Hesse-Biber 2012, p. 76)

In regard to artistic and visual practice, Barrett states:

Such practices are therefore always contextual and situated. The key to understanding the relationship between experience, practice and knowledge is the notion of “sense activity”. (Barrett 2016, p. 38)

This qualitative research project employs a multi-method of research which meets cultural, ethical and social values associated with Indigenous research. As discussed earlier in this paper, as an Indigenous researcher, I work ethically in a culturally sensitive manner as a matter of protocol and respect. Since colonisation, our lives have been scrutinised and recorded by government departments and much of our cultural history interpreted by non-Aboriginal people. The integrity in my work is supported by a traditional ethos and a methodology which is appropriate to Aboriginal knowledge systems.

Photographic references, whether they be archival or current personal images, are essential for research in a visual context. Much can be interpreted from these images. Archival images are a fond, and yet often painful, reminder of the past and past injustices. Understanding that many images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were the subject of ethnographic studies and documentation, causes pain to family members of the present. Contemporary photographs I have taken on field trips constitute an extension of this data collection, an important element of my

research, as are the sketches made of locations of family significance and meaning.

Dr Sharon Huebner is currently launching a project which will connect oral history to archival photographs of Aboriginal people. When speaking of the case of young Bessy Flowers, a *Wirlomin Minag Noongar* (Aboriginal person of south western Australia) woman taken from her Country in the west of Australia to Ramahyuck Mission in Gippsland Victoria, Sharon Huebner states in regard to the archival images that:

These photographs are too easily viewed as representations of a dying race of people who were powerless, when Bessy's letters reveal a strong and determined person. But it is rare for the words and views of Aboriginals to be preserved, so we need to fill that gap in our knowledge by making space for the Aboriginal experience and the Aboriginal voice. (Huebner cited in Trounson 2016, p. 4)

Huebner, whose research project revolves around the use of these archival photographs, states that; 'Photographs of ancestors represent more than colonial injury' (Trounson 2016, p. 3). I relate my family's perspective to this, as oral histories give evidence of the many ways in which family members stood up against the settler state in the past and present. Many of the photographs represent the everyday celebration of family life. As an Aboriginal woman I see the pride and dignity my ancestors had. I can also

appreciate the hard work they did to survive as subjects of colonisation. I see the love and family resourcefulness in their demeanour and attitude in these images.

Barbara Harrison suggests that we as the audience begin to make our own narratives in regard to photographic images of the past. Harrison refers to these images as “visual fragments” as we begin to piece together a narrative:

Thus it would seem that for individuals and for researchers, photographs provide a basis for narrative work; there are stories about photographs, and there are stories that lie behind them and between them. For people in everyday life one use of these visual fragments other than to refresh or preserve their memories, has been to illustrate their life, to provide a way of communicating who they are and where they have come from. (Harrison 2002, p. 105)

Uncovering old family photographs from various personal collections has brought many images to my attention in this research. Analysing these images brings forth many questions which can only be assessed using qualitative research. These images work as prompts to interviewees when retelling and recalling events from the past. These photographs viewed by family members are interpreted in a direct and meaningful way which connects these images to the past movements and characters which populate our world view. Our world view is from the perspective of first

national people with all of our cultural values, clan and nation connections, now located beneath a contemporary landscape. This traditional landscape is now veiled by a superimposed 'euroschema' which disguises that with which non-Indigenous people may fail to identify.

My body of work materializes through my connection to Country and the oral histories which have been shared during the interview process. It is an honour to be able to have a yarn with Elders and to record their stories and memories of family life. Some of these notable family members have passed during the course of my research which is traumatic. Honourable Elders form the foundation to our personal identity and their oral accounts and storytelling are valuable data which support and link us to our Dreaming.

My practice is a culmination of extensive research and field trips, oral histories and collections of archival material including photographic images. Very little in terms of photographic documentation exists today. Searches in New South Wales archives were futile, in regard to documentation of my grandmother and her training as a domestic. Archivists revealed to me, that many records of the era of my grandmother's institutionalization were lost in a fire of the 1960s. Searches of NSW archival Aboriginal Protectorate and Welfare Board were exhausted at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Islander Studies, (AIATSIS) and the NSW Government Archives after extensive searches.

Oral history will feed into my creative works and become an important informant in terms of this research practice. In addition to this, I feel that the practice exegesis mode of research, sits comfortably within an Indigenous paradigm.

Carving space for emancipatory research in the academy, particularly for “new” methodologies like Indigenous research, is exhausting. Questioning established views about what counts as meaning, knowledge, and truth provokes defensiveness. (Kovach 2005, p. 21)

The practice exegesis mode, coupled with Indigenous knowledge systems jointly bring to the academy a challenge in terms of established western ideas of academic value. In defence of Indigenous knowledge systems and the valuing of artwork as a valid and recognised Indigenous form of expression and ceremony, makes way for Indigenous scholars to take control over knowledge production and the research process. The academy of the west can then no longer take total control as the gatekeepers of the recognised and valued knowledge. Access and equity in all domains of life give voice to individuals from previously marginalised groups of the world.

## **Genre**

Knowing who I am and where I come from has always been a primary force in my existence. This need to know and a core connection to Aboriginal

identity has always driven my curiosity, ultimately being responsible for my overall concept of self. I have always related my identity as an Aboriginal person, to my inherent ways of knowing, doing and being of which Martin articulates further:

The core conditions of Ways of Knowing are to know, as fully as it is possible: who your *People* are; where your Country is and how you are related to the “Entities”. That is identities unfold through knowing your stories of relatedness including the individual and communal stories (Martin 2008, p. 72)

Indigenous art is related to these core conditions and my body of work is in itself part of this tradition. The works are both evocative and effective. The works operate to bring together memories and a commemoration of past events, as well as emotional and aesthetic ambiguities which explore the imagination of the viewers. These works assist in leading individuals to information they may never have intended to experience, “information” which the individual may not have understood before. These works evoke a sense of the unknown and previously uncovered, to the broader community, playing on the emotions and symbolic references which read as new knowledge and understanding in many ways that may have hitherto seemed obscure.

The works operate through the “effective” mode where they may affect those who may have negative attitudes towards a certain aspect of Aboriginal being, into an appreciation and understanding of a strength of spirit and existence that exceeds what they may have thought possible. This is derived from the ways in which the works refuse stereotypic representations and challenge pre-existing knowledge systems, often without the viewer fully realising it.

In the studio and out on Country, I sketch my ideas, the memories of others and the ways in which I can bring some of what we have lost in being together. In many ways, this making is itself a ritual act and a ceremony that is an acknowledgment of ancestors, those I have known and those of whom I know. These lives are all a part of who I am, and painting is an enactment of that bond.

I work up the idea of a painting through sketches and reference material as I begin to draft out the image onto stretched linen with a thinned raw umber and medium filbert brush. I work freely and spontaneously to achieve a balanced composition. Proportions are important to me in order to give a sense of scale and hierarchy, there is no formal method here, as I rely on my instincts to produce a framework which supports the whole composition. Subjectivity in my moment of interpretation, is related to all of this, over external evidence. The motivation is always related to the experience of the

work both through practice and observation. Barrett explains this aspect of practice as such:

Learning takes place through action and intentional, explicit reflection on that action. This approach acknowledges that we cannot separate knowledge to be learned from situations in which it is used. Thus situated enquiry or learning demonstrates a unity between problem, context and solution. A general feature of practice-based research projects is that personal interest and experience, rather than objective “disinterestedness” motivates the research process.

(Barrett 2007, p.5)

The action of artistic practice does involve a deeper immersion into what is being investigated. In the process, one is also involved in the performance of the actions, the physical actioning in practice research. This can lead to some very reactive responses in the application of paint, in terms of spontaneity, giving life to the mark making as it is carried out in a tacit and reactionary manner. There can sometimes be no verbal explanation of what has resulted in the mark making, yet it begins to work of its own accord. Discovery is the result and knowledge comes from this action as it leads the way in artistic expression.

The term, emergent methodologies, has come from, Martin Heidegger’s notion of “praxical knowledge” or what is theorised as the material basis of

knowledge. This provides a philosophical framework for understanding the acquisition of human knowledge as emergent (Barrett 2007, p.6).

Praxical knowledge is tacit in terms of my creative practice. From an inexplicable source while producing creative works, an intuitive and sensory creative manner kicks in. Familiarity with materials and skills, actions a certain confidence and bravery, which doesn't contemplate fear for one moment, is where the artist's performance is situated. We are fearless as we know that from working our way through a problem, something new will emerge. This could be the moment which Barbara Bolt drawing on Fallon describes as 'Working Hot' (Bolt 2004, p. 159).

This is the fuelled momentum from where unplanned action emerges as it is translated onto the canvas. This places this action in the highly sensory realm which I often refer to as being, *In the Zone*. Intuitive, unconscious, knowing is produced and these automatic responses manifest themselves inexplicably from tacit and unknown sources from within, and these materialize through the action of producing the work.

Bolt explains further:

I suggest that the attention to the productive materiality of the "performance act" enables us to reconfigure our understandings of the work of art. Against the position that a picture is necessarily a

representation, understood in the Heideggerian sense, or that the image-as-sign, bears little or no relation to the referent, will argue that in the fuzziness of practice, there is the potential for a mutual reflection and transmutation between imagining and reality. (Bolt 2004, p. 149)

From an Indigenous perspective I see productive performance instrumental in the creation of artwork and artefacts as informed by ceremony. We do not create alone, as we confer with Elders, family and respected people in our community throughout the process. Creation works hand in hand with ceremony as the production is not solely related to the individual, elements of practice relate to our place in community, identity, culture and that spiritual connection to our ancestors, Country and Dreaming.

My creative work comes from many and varied sources and a lifelong relationship with making and creating as I have worked in the creative process for as long as I can remember. I choose to use oil paint on canvas or linen, as I enjoy the intensity of the pigments and the nature of the paint to touch and feel during application.

Although this is not purely a traditionally used Indigenous manner of creating artwork, I see this as part of the contemporary influences and my development as an artist. I feel that it is a misconception to pay all credit to the west for the technology of painting, when we, as Indigenous people have

continued to use a wide variety of pigments mixed with blood, oils and fats, and have painted on everything in our world, from bodies to rocks, bark, wood and animal hides. This medium is not exclusive to the west. However materials and methods are culturally and historically coded, as they are a part of our own technology and tradition.

The use of oils may be seen as having a connection to the old masters, of a time and place that is centred in western patriarchal tradition, (Barrett 2007, p.11). These assumptions hold within a western European tradition, yet I reject the idea that these materials are patriarchal by historical nature as I gained my knowledge of this medium from my mother and aunt as a small child, and from that time I have strived to make meaning using this medium.

I use manufactured paint is a method of choice. Of the west, Barrett states:

The materials and methods used by the artist are not innocent – they are encoded with historical knowledge and conventions and are therefore inextricably bound to conceptual and theoretical frameworks. (Barrett 2007, p. 11)

Initial development of ideas and images are generated using pencil, charcoal, pen, photography and through numerous trials using a combination of these. This developmental work is an important part of my research. Generally this is recorded in a visual journal and at times through the production of large

brush and ink sketches, which continue to develop throughout this research project. Studio enquiry brings together a broad range of materials, methods and practices all related to working through my research question.

In a cultural sense, I have been shown and encouraged to learn about my environment, the plants and animals, and the natural pigments available and the history of our world. I have had the freedom to explore the many materials available to use in the process of artistic expression, grasses, feathers, wax, shells, spines, teeth, wood and clay amongst other things. I have often used these materials in conjunction with paint, and with newer technologies such as printmaking, photography and computer-generated images.

The style of my work is figurative and impressionistic and I strive to produce images that bring an expression of my loss and grief of what has gone before. I work to produce images that evoke a sense of reinstalment of the voids and gaps in my knowledge of our family and our people. A dreamlike, yet heartfelt telling of who we are and where we have come from, validating our sovereignty and exposing the often unrevealed history of this Country.

Indigenous art making, the art object and interpretation of the creative process cannot be entirely understood within a western framework. As an Indigenous artist, I strive to resolve elements of the colonial impact on our family and on our people, drawing on what Sylvia Kleinert describes as a way

of 'self performatively taking control of representations' (Kleinert 2010, p.5). In developing an interpretive framework to articulate the outcomes of the performative production related to this project, I employ the concepts of the "evocative" and the "effective" articulated in the work of Jillian Hamilton & Luke Jaaniste 2014). This is mediated through Indigenous notions of practice and knowledge production as *ceremony*, where both the evocative and the effective come together to combine the pragmatics of communication with the less communicable and intangible dimensions of aesthetic experience that articulate with spiritual and affective registers of experience. This framework has been developed in order to extend my discussion of the relationship between contemporary Indigenous art as transmission of knowledge and as an extension of cultural ways of being and knowing; this is also to distinguish between Indigenous understandings of art and western art. As a contemporary artist, I choose to explore and reveal that which I have found during and through my research, within the context of the present, as well as of a lost past.

The materials I work with relate in a contemporary way, to an aesthetic from another era, a time of colonial upheaval. At the same time this could be connected to expressing a link with tradition and antiquity. Colonial artists worked in this same medium, yet they also worked with watercolour and gouache all of which involve the use of natural pigments and ingredients. As Barrett suggests:

Today, Indigenous artists demonstrate how both traditional and contemporary forms operate to revitalize and restore culture and Indigenous identity. In the South East of Australia, Aboriginal Australians were subjected to relentless colonisation, resulting in disease, violence and dispossession of traditional lands. (Barrett 2016, p.40)

Aboriginal artists have been categorised as either 'authentic' or 'inauthentic' in terms of their choice of media and methods. Albert Namatjira's work, for example, has been criticised by a variety of people over the decades for its lack of authenticity as Aboriginal art, simply because of the manner in which he acquired different and new skills from Rex Batterbee and from using western materials of watercolour on board. European critics could only translate these works through western view of the landscape, yet Namatjira presented his Country with all of its spiritual meaning in terms of an Aboriginal world view. There is familiarity demonstrated here, he knows every facet of his Country inside and out, and he presents an Aboriginal gaze of the landscape in terms the negotiation of the picture plane and frame depicting a spiritual connection and cultural belonging between all entities on Country. In Ian Burn & Ann Stephen's, *Namatjira's White Mask*, Gulluwuray Yunupingu explains the significance of Country to Namatjira in his works:

We are painting as we have always done to demonstrate our continuing link with our country and the rights and responsibilities we have to it ... But what non-Aboriginal people didn't understand, or chose not to understand, was that [Namatjira] was painting his country, the land of the Arrernte people... No one asked him to name the Country he was painting, or the Dreamings that had made that country important. (Yunupingu cited in Burn & Stephen 1991 p.142)

In relation to the positioning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art.

Hetti Perkins states that:

Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between space' space, which innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'post-present' is part of the necessity, not the nostalgia of living. (Perkins, 2011, p. 302)

McLean (2011) extends Perkin's observations stating that interrupting the performance of the present Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art can be understood as is interventionist.

Indigenous art is an expression of who we are today, we make references to the past, to culture and to tradition and to where we have come from. This

is our story along the never ending continuum and as defined by us in a process of contemporary visual expression.

Barrett discusses the problem related to solving aspects of creating new knowledge through artistic practice:

An elaboration of the subjective nature of the artistic research process can also be found in the principles of problem or action-based learning. A basic premise of such pedagogies is that knowledge is generated through action and reflection. Various approaches to problem-based learning share a number of common features, which are of relevance to creative arts research. (Barrett 2010, p. 5)

In Indigenous pedagogies it is imperative that learners discover many solutions for themselves after first being shown the master skills to perform a task through doing, being and knowing. As Barrett makes the point, studio based research and subsequent knowledge is produced through, 'an heuristic model for practice-based pedagogies' (Barrett 2010, p. 5). For millennia Indigenous art along with oral history has always served an heuristic function the passing down of knowledge crucial to both physical survival and spiritual well-being.

Experience and practice are actions which generate new knowledge, borne from the master skill instruction and observance of passing on ways of doing,

knowing and being as the basis of initial practical and artistic training.

Experiential knowledge is the basis of creative and artistic expression.

### **Materials and Media**

I tend to avoid using acrylic paint as I feel these are so far removed from naturally occurring substances and in addition, their pigments do not reveal the vivid colours of nature when dry. I have always used oils because they hold more opportunities for me to manipulate and create a broad range of effects. In addition to this, I can mix paint with bees wax to create texture and overlay glazes to give translucency in a more convincing way.

This is a practice which has evolved throughout my career as a painter in order to produce some particular surface affects. *Piggery Lake*, 2016 (see figure 37 on p. 218) and *Bird's Eye*, 2016 (see figure 38 on p. 221), show the texture of ancient timbers created by applying wax medium and paint, etching into the semi dry surface and then applying a glaze with pigment over the dry surface to bring out the texture of the wood.

Searching for material and subject matter can be equated with looking for one's artistic voice. My voice is there, yet I must go through the procedure of making and creating development, in order to articulate what it is I have to say. I have accessed many old photographs and documents both from

family collections and archives. These act as a point of reference when it comes to memory and the gaps of knowledge of the past. In a triangulated way, my research evolves through photography, oral history and the process of material image-making. Engagement with these three aspects of my practice is governed by Indigenous epistemology which provides scope, validity and new knowledge in terms of the work produced.

Subjectivity is at the core of artistic expression, and this can be related to the multitude of cultural, political, traditional and experiential perspectives of Indigenous peoples. The research process is also linked to the same view as it would be impossible for anyone to entirely shed the ontology and epistemology of their own cultural stance. It is for these reasons that the acquisition of new knowledge is generated throughout the research and practice methodology which is evident in the whole outcome of practice exegesis and the creation of artistic expression as new knowledge.

Equally important in this research is respect for Country, family and community involving an all encompassing meaning and connection. I could not make this study without the reciprocal respect of all these interrelated entities. Tuhiwai Smith states:

The term respect is consistently used by Indigenous peoples to underscore the significance of our relationships and humanity. Through respect the place of everyone and everything in the universe is kept in balance and harmony. Respect is a reciprocal, shared, constantly interchanging principle which is expressed through all aspects of social conduct. (Tuhiwai Smith 2004, p. 120)

This respect is the relationship between all entities, be they human, plant animal, earth, water or sky. Therefore it is this relatedness and respect between us all which is of prime importance when research decisions are made. Wilson suggests that:

An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all creation ... It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge. (Wilson, 2001, p. 176–177)

### **Making the Works**

In planning the approach to this body of work, it was necessary to consider the various ways in which to develop my studio practice, in order to generate

the appropriate body of work that would produce the desired outcomes or language to reveal aspects of experience that have been masked or lost. My practice is a process brought together from a broad range of places, from what is within, from researching history, photography both new and archival, and yarning with Elders to record oral histories. It is Important that this work comes from an authentic personal location which reflects an Indigenous perspective. My positioning as an Indigenous woman is central to the project and the situated perspectives from which it emerges.

Emancipatory methodologies encompass an Indigenous framework:

The epistemological assumptions of these varied methodologies contend that those who live their lives in marginal places in society experience silencing and injustice. Within the realm of research and its relationship to the production of knowledge, this absence of voice is significant and disturbing. To discuss liberating research methodologies without critical reflection on the university's role in research and producing knowledge is impossible. (Kovach cites Hall 2005, p. 21)

This project necessitates a focus on Indigenous research in relation to Yorta Yorta and Baraparapa people and operates through an Indigenous lens in order to create an appropriate framework.

An Indigenous perspective/theory encompasses an Indigenous way of knowing and Indigenous epistemology as previously defined. This incorporates what Tuhiwai Smith refers to as 'researching back,' indicating a decolonising objective (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, p. 7). This is founded on collectivist research principles and respects the inherent ethics and protocols associated with such principles. This also encompasses an ecological basis that is respectful of the natural world. Finally, an Indigenous perspective values authentic/organic techniques in data collection, (Kovach 2005, p. 28).

Spirituality is at the centre of an Indigenous ontology. Our theories of being and our relationship to the world come together as one through animate and inanimate elements of our world. The animals and plants, landforms and watercourses, the sky and the stars, the forces of nature are one with us. When we pass on we are returned to our Country, our Country is a part of us past, present and future, and as we return to our Country we are there for the future generations.

Aboriginal spirituality is defined as at the core of Aboriginal being, their very identity. It gives meaning to all aspects of life including relationships with one another and the environment. All objects are living and share the same soul and spirit as Aboriginals. There is a kinship with the environment. Aboriginal spirituality can be expressed visually, musically and ceremonially. (Grant 2004, pp. 8–9)

In producing my works I am conscious of this spirituality and the relationship with Country and all which resides in it. The subconscious is at play while performing the act of image making and this connection to the sublime and spiritual presence of ancestors and creation spirits, becomes imbedded in the performance of the works. Brian Martin refers to methexical ontology when referring to the action of producing his works and his connection to Country. Methexis operates as a mode of bringing Country into being:

It is of vital importance to the artist to articulate the relationship to Country, as it is our role to bring the world into existence through our interaction with it. Art is the result of this reciprocal relationship. The immersive experience one has with Country that informs the work and this demonstrates the purpose of Indigenous cultural practices of relaying the ontological *methexical* relationship of Country into the material work. (Martin 2013, p.48)

This immersive experience one has with Country in combination with the presence of Elders relaying oral histories and talking the life of family and past events, while travelling through Country is a precious gift. There is reciprocity which comes through respect and connection to all facets of being part of Country. This encapsulates the past present and future and every entity within in it. The works have an impact on family visually and emotionally, they feel, sense and know, what is there and this assists in

bringing together this whole premise of identity which comes through the works.

The creation of images draws upon all that is memory and physicality. Awareness of elements of that which has been lost, was never too far away, yet it may well have been. It was certainly in my lifetime that I was with my father and grandmother and into which I now continue to delve. The language and attitude of the day was cruel and brutal, excluding people as well as denying them their identity. Fear of this was instilled into children who were institutionalised, so as adults they struggled with identity and just attempted to assimilate and not be seen, in fear of being discriminated against.

Working initially from existing knowledge, I began to put together some ideas with the use of thumbnail sketches in my journal. I gathered family photographs, and the real and often disturbing documents, such as my father's Department of Human Services file and other data from Government records such as the archives accessible through various state Aboriginal Protection Board records, Electoral Commission and Births, Deaths and Marriages. As I visited relatives, these documents travelled with me as a reference to their recollections of the past.

While travelling my Country I recorded notes and sketches into my visual journal along the way. I took many photographs of significant places

connected to family movements around southern New South Wales and Northern Victoria. Visiting family members and yarning about family, their lives, memories and the moments of grief and loss connect us to our shared histories. We visited cemeteries and searched for clues about those who had passed and those whom had been lost along the way.

Kovach uses the term, 'methodologies from the margins,' (Kovach 2005, p. 33) which is where my voice is placed, as many a time I heard the phrase, "fringe dwellers" in relation to our family in the 1960s. The fact that our family had employment and that we all went to school, was ignored.

Martin reveals that Indigenous methodology, is not a linear process:

In many ways, the methodology of Indigenist research is a ceremony in that it has phases, processes, rituals and practices. The Indigenist researcher also requires ritual, as a methodology, to sit amongst and then come alongside the Stories in the ceremony of research.

(Martin 2008, p. 92)

It is difficult to uncover every facet of our family's past and the reasons for many painful events and the forces which were instrumental in separating and dividing our family. As children we did not know why this had happened as we were unaware of government policy in regard to the enforced removal of Aboriginal children into Institutions. It wasn't until the early 1970s that I

remember becoming aware of these policies. My mother told me about my father having been in homes and a Ward of the State, which to me at the time was horrendous to think about. At primary school I was made to feel inferior because my father was Aboriginal and had been a Ward of the State.

After the 1967 referendum I began to see the reports in the media regarding stolen children. I questioned my mother and other family members and they told me this was wrong. It took some time for them to talk to us about our father and grandmother, as these things were not discussed with children in those days.

In my search for the truth I have found some information and yet sadly there is still much which has not been recorded or the files have been lost in the various fires which destroyed many archives during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. There is some sense of healing, in finding some of the information behind our isolation from family and community. I have waited all of my life to feel that I belong and to find my Murray family. As a child I continued to ask the question as to why I had cousins and aunties, great aunties and uncles and great uncles on one side, but not on my father's side. My mother would just tell me that they were up on the Murray somewhere and their name is Murray. For years I spoke to every Aboriginal person I met and asked after them, no one could tell me. I searched Gippsland and Healesville, no related Murrays.

Recording oral histories was an experience that revealed elements of new information about our lives as I was travelling to places where family had formally lived. Knowing the stories and relating to aspects of their lives, I felt as if I were crossing the paths of my ancestors. From this position I was able to feel the strength of their presence in the here and now. Working from this in an artistic manner I could come closer to them and to my own being.

In contemplation of my gathered data, both oral and visual, I could begin the process of producing my responses. Cumeragunja Mission, Aggie's Swamp Speewa, Kyalite, Redgate Station, Balranald Aboriginal Mission, The Island Aboriginal Reserve Balranald, Kia Ora Station Balranald all places where my family lived, hold meaning for me and a special connection. It was important to travel to these places with family and have the time to get close to the landscape involving ourselves in activities such as lighting a fire and cooking, fishing and yarning and catching our own bait. This immersion in Country supports our epistemological perspective as our common ground in terms of doing, knowing and being. This is an essential part of our communication and the sharing of knowledge. In this space we are connected by all which surrounds us and this grounds us in our ontological being. Margaret Kovach puts it this way:

Indigenous epistemology is fluid, non-linear, and relational.

Knowledge is transmitted through stories that shape shift in relation

to the wisdom of the storyteller at the time of telling. (Kovach 2005, p. 19)

It is important to understand that this method of research is culturally appropriate to Indigenous ways of knowing and positioning one's self, based on Indigenous epistemology.

Figuration is evident in these works, yet this is extended into more abstract forms creating ambiguity, where there is often a notion of something else going on apart from what is manifestly depicted. Through the use of paint, I attempt to create another level of perception and another space beyond that which is pictorially present.

This space can be related to what Homi Bhabha describes as the 'colonial space', which gives us an insight into the context of this time in the scheme of history and into modernity:

For the emergence of modernity – as an ideology of *beginning*, *modernity as the new* – the template of this 'non-place' becomes the colonial space. It signifies this in a double way. The colonial space is the *terra incognita* or the *terra nulla*, the empty or wasted land whose history has to be begun, whose archives must be filled out; whose future progress must be secured in modernity. But the colonial space also stands for the *despotic* time of the Orient that

becomes a great problem for the definition of modernity and its inscription of the history of the colonized from the perspective of the west. (Bhabha 2012, p. 362)

This colonial space of which Bhabha speaks, is the basis of those gaps that are a feature of my family's lives. Prior to colonisation, life rolled along in a way that related to tradition, culture and nature in combination with community organisation, lore, law, knowledge connectedness and involvement in the environment. During the subsequent decades came turmoil, war, displacement and oppression from an alien culture that proceeded to erase Indigenous values and beliefs. This was a space in which the settler state began to construct a new history with the intent of excluding the presence of Indigenous peoples. It is this sense of loss that I find emotionally unfathomable. As my Uncle Besley commented on one field work trip in 2014 for this research, and in reference to our people and the colonial frontier, *'By geez ... they would not have known what had struck them'*.

It is this sense of loss as a result of the autocratic colonial state, that I want to capture and translate through my work. In a genre which is in many ways linked to that era, my painting speaks of that period and quotes from that lens. I place myself behind a lens while visiting places such as Aggie's Swamp, I imagine the family there and take myself back to when they sat on a log to talk, sat around a fire to cook or stood up together in front of a

photographer for a family portrait. *Aggie's Swamp*, 2014, (see figure 39 on p 223), where Aunty Aggie Edwards, my grandmother and great uncle sit under the tree in dappled sunlight, is my construction, as I personally experience the serenity of this place and imagine myself back in this era. Archival photographs bring a sense of antiquity through colour, shape and form and the light which, on the edge of the *Dhungala*, (Murray River), is filtered through the ancient red gums onto a dry and leaf littered earth.

Travelling through Country with my Uncle Besley, we would survey locations which revealed a rich evidence of our people, midden sites, burial sites, canoe trees and ring trees. Just experiencing and knowing these places, often beside a beautiful lake or river, we would stand in silence and feel the emptiness of a once populated place. What had happened here, a confrontation, a surprise invasion and massacre on this very spot, is there evidence of our people being rounded up and forcibly detained onto a mission? Now everything is abandoned, just as they left it, and not so long ago, yet our ancestors let us know they are still there. *Piggery Lake*, 2016, (see figure 37 on p. 218), is a work inspired by one of these journeys north of Talpee Station, where this majestic bottleneck Red Gum stands like a monument to past times and past lives.

### **Photography**

Influential to this body of work is the Murray Family portrait taken at Aggie's Swamp, (figure 4 on p. 67). Typical of the era, this image places family

members formally in their Sunday best clothing. My artwork revisits elements of this moment when a colonial photographer organised this family grouping, while parents checked their children for neatness, straightened their shirt and combed their hair. Was this visiting photographer objectifying my family, or were they merely taking a family portrait? It is a closely grouped and warm family image, possibly at a family celebration or some other community event. This image comes from the past, yet it has been carried by family into the present:

The photograph becomes a bizarre medium, a new form of hallucination: so to speak, a modest shared hallucination: a made image, chafed by reality. (Barthes 1984, p. 115)

This atrophic condition related to colonial reality and the continuous eroding of our people through the colonial experience, is something which affects what is seen in gazing over these often myopic representations from the colonial past. Wendy Garden explores photography and how meaning changes through a colonial gaze:

The humanity of Indigenous men and women was often denied by a gaze that largely interpreted ethnographic portraits as specimens of a subhuman race. In the nineteenth century ethnographic photographs housed in archives were subjected to colonial practices that catalogued, labelled and displayed photographs in reductive

paradigms that essentialised difference in stereotypes informed by social Darwinism. (Garden 2011, p. 253)

More often than not the makers of these archival images resisted identifying the subjects photographed, taking all humanity from them and reducing them to specimens of an anthropological study. An example is that of a photographic image of a group of girls institutionalised at Cootamundra Girls' Home, where there is no caption and no names were recorded. It is highly likely that my grandmother Mollie Murray is in this photograph, yet I have no proof. But this was not a happy snap, even though some of the girls are smiling, one of them is showing incredible shyness at having her photograph taken. These images raise more questions about how Aboriginal girls were treated and how they were indoctrinated against going back to their families and communities. David Cubby examines the nature of the photograph and implications for decoding the essence of these images. To those connected to these images an enormous amount of emotion is attached. Cubby states:

Paradoxically, the photograph is fundamentally unnatural even given its iconic and/or indexical representation, its completion ends as an artifice encasing a trace of the real, whereby its image is perceived to "stand for" its referent. (Cubby 2010, p.5)

The photograph is unnatural and signifies an indexical representation, however, so little exists in the form of evidence to our history that we are

trawling archives for any clue to our past. We did not have the cultural capital to access any of these archives in the past and in many ways this access now offers us some compensation and closure in terms of heritage and what has gone before.

Photography offers an indexical image of those from the past as the person must be present at the moment of exposure, for the light to transfer to the film its image. Hence, these are both the real and the commemorative. In many other ways they are all we have of the person and it is this which gives us the emotional experience of the real. The portrait also operates iconically and symbolically since it both resembles, and stands in for the person. In some of the landscape images that emerge from this research, ancestors are represented symbolically by trees and other entities on land and in water. However, indexically the elements in the landscape can also *be* our ancestors and totems. The landscapes thus work symbolically *and* indexically as we learn the symbolic nature and significance of these elements of nature through culture. From an Aboriginal perspective, the works, operate through *all* of these registers to communicate a multitude of meanings and also to evoke memory and affect as aspects of commemoration. Aboriginal spiritual beliefs demonstrate that every element of Country embodies all entities. Artistic expression can reveal ritual transformation though its ability to evoke and communicate these layers of meaning.

In studio practice, I *re-walk* my travels on Country as I work through sketches and small gouache impressions it is part of the ceremony of experience on Country. Journal notes taken along the way enable a personal and emotional return to the moment. Referring to Oral Histories told to me by family members assists in positioning myself in this emotional space. Referral to memory, returns thoughts and images to a time when conversation and events revealed the impact of life's challenges. As Harrison has done, I have used photographic images to prompt memory of those family members I have interviewed.

We might consider that family albums, or researcher-generated visual diaries offer valuable data about personal lives and experiences, forms of subjective understanding and identity construction.

(Harrison 2002, p. 90)

All of this builds on our images of the past and our relationships to family and community. It also relates to place, the knowledge passed on to me from family about cultural and pre-colonial evidence of Aboriginal people in the Country around where I lived and explored throughout my childhood and into adult life. Barrett draws on Bruno Latour in her argument to elaborate on the value of artistic research:

It can thus be argued, that artistic research which draws predominantly on lived experience and more direct engagement with

materials and objects, provides a crucial alternative mode of knowledge production compared with the scientific method described by Latour. (Barrett 2007, p. 118)

Latour refers to what he calls immutable mobiles or secondary data used to science in research. Such data has little relationship to lived, situated experience or exposure of the world.

Artistic practice draws on accumulated skills and problem solving which comes from acquired knowledge and experience. Throughout life we are shaped by our environments, culture, family values and communities. We are conditioned as children to adapt to our habitat and all which is in it and that which presents itself to us. Our values are shaped by our family and community and our skills are honed around what is needed for survival and what is valued.

Being raised in an extended family situation gives one exposure to many and varied skills and abilities. It also gives you exposure to many generations living and working together. Working with tools and materials was taught as a means of survival, learning how to adapt and repair things, learning the nature of materials such as wood, metal, glass, ceramic, paint, fabric, glues, nails, screws and bolts, hinges and latches, gates and fences, axes, chainsaws, firewood and fires. Killing and preparing food, skinning, gutting and filleting, growing plants for food and learning how to propagate them

and growing vegetables from seed. Really life centred around one thing and that was a lack of money and an abundance of expertise. Gender was no barrier to expectations of acquired knowledge and skills in our family.

I feel that this style of upbringing has armed me as artistic researcher, with a broad range of skills and practical knowledge which gives confidence in handling and manipulating tools and materials.

As Barrett suggests Polanyi's theory of tacit knowledge is closely related to what Bourdieu (1990) has theorised as the "logic of practice" or of being "*in-the-game*" where strategies are not predetermined, but emerge and operate according to specific demands of action and movement in time (Barrett 2017, p. 7). In addition to this I believe that much of the artist's knowledge and ability is related to highly refined skills of interpretation and practice which are emergent as the practice is carried out, performed and experienced:

Because creative arts research is often driven by emotional, personal and subjective concerns, it operates both through explicit and exact knowledge, as well as tacit knowledge. A distinctive feature of this approach lies in its capacity to bring into view, particular aspects of experience and reality that have previously been marginalised or unacknowledged. How this knowledge is transmitted is also dependent on the way in which audiences engage with and experience the artwork. (Barrett 2017, n.p.)

Emergent methodologies in relation to practice research bring together many elements of Indigenous knowledge systems. This knowledge which to the west may seem personal and relational, embodies all of the meaningful aspects of Indigenous values. Knowledge is valueless if it comes from a source which is not recognised as one from an Aboriginal perspective. It is not authentic and cannot be relied upon as ethical or culturally sound. Decolonisation of our knowledge systems and history is pivotal to reclaiming our identity and academic validity.

### **Oral History / Yarning**

It is important to draw on theories of auto-ethnography when relating to Indigenous history which has for many years been solely portrayed by the colonizer rather than the colonized. Jennifer Houston states:

Research corrupted perceptions of the Indigenous Other. It is therefore essential that Indigenous people find ways of knowing, of researching, of representation which is free from the constraints and biases of imperialist colonialism. The Indigenous researcher should break away from research practices that have devalued and misrepresented their peoples and subjugated their knowledges.

(Houston 2007, p. 45–46)

In order to gain insight into times past from those family or community Elders who still reside in Balranald where my family have lived for some generations, oral history could give me that lead into some of the gaps in knowledge about our lives.

In order to research other Indigenous peoples who have used yarning as a method of interviewing participants, I looked to Dawn Bessarab and Bridget Ng'andu. Bessarab and Ngandu suggest that, yarning as an Indigenous research method was deliberately employed in semi-structured in-depth interviews to gather information from the participants of their lived experience (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010, p. 37).

In writing her stolen generation story, Mary Terszack a Nyoongah woman from south west Western Australia describes the importance of yarning:

Yarning as a process of making meaning, communicating and passing on history and knowledge...a special way of relating and connecting with the Nyoongah culture. (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010, 2008, p.38)

As Bessarab and Ng'andu have noted as they talked, they could be travelling on a journey either verbally or verbally relating information whilst visiting places of significance and meaning. It is extremely important to understand that:

Yarning is a process that requires the researcher to develop and build a relationship that is accountable to Indigenous people participating in the research. (Bessarab & Ng'andu 2010, p. 38)

As my research involves family members, most of these participants have an established relationship with their researcher. However, there is a different formality required to notifying the prospective participants of my research project and to explain the reasons for my research in relation to the creation of artwork. This involved going through the processes and procedures of Deakin University Ethics Committee and the NSW Aboriginal Ethics Committee and *AIATSIS Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies* (2012). Discussions with family members regarding the project were discussed initially informally with Elders asking for their support and discuss this further with their immediate families.

As an Indigenous researcher, researching my family, I am in a position of advantage in terms of my knowledge and understanding of etiquette and cultural respect when it comes to yarning and the collection of oral histories.

In relation to the acquisition of knowledge we have experiential knowledge which is also practice based, in addition to this knowledge, we also work through tacit knowledge and as Barrett observes knowledge can be understood as being relational in that it binds groups of people together:

Once this is attained however, the learner becomes part of a specific group of people who are connected through shared knowledge that cannot be fully grasped by others who have not learned through practice and experience. We can understand this shared knowledge as “relational knowledge” derived through participatory interaction with objects in the world. (Barrett 2016, p. 4)

The notion of relational knowledge helps to cast light on how art practice continues through viewing of the works and how the art work may be considered as ritual objects through which knowledge, including tacit knowledge is exchanged through participatory practice.

There is respect in families for our skills and this is often proudly acknowledged in the course of storytelling, relating to others the attributes of past ancestors and their respected contributions to family and community. This information asserts itself in this tradition of historical recognition. It is this relational knowledge which is distributed through generations and over time becomes indicative of certain important and valued skills known to exist in particular families. In addition to this certain knowledge is shared at different times of one’s life as learning is a birth to death experience. Knowledge is appropriate at different ages and stages of life.

The concept of relational knowledge as it operates in Indigenous contexts suggests that a more complex approach is required in

engaging with participants involved in research and the need for a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes coercion in Indigenous contexts. (Barrett 2016, p. 4-5)

Participants were very receptive to this form of research and of yarning as they knew this was a traditional way in which we share knowledge and family histories, and a way of making meaning for us in a culturally appropriate and authentic manner.

Authors such as Karen Martin, have written about the value of yarning and recording oral histories as being a cultural methodology appropriate to Indigenous research. Martin often refers to these interviews as, 'messy' and challenging.

It is in my reality and part of my ontology and epistemology that is my Ancestry, my genealogy and identity. The messiness reflects how I have mediated both my cultural conventions and expectations and those conventions and expectations of the academy. (Martin 2008, p. 21)

My yarning or interviewing took place at informal meetings and also during field trips on Country. This acted to place our discussions physically in Country, in addition to this, to situate and add authenticity and context to

the information and as many have identified this is in fact an act of ceremony as Karen Martin observes:

This relatedness occurs across contexts and is maintained within conditions that are: physical, spiritual, geographical, intellectual, emotional, social, historical, sensory, instinctive and intuitive. (Martin 2008, p. 69)

### **Amnesia**

Amnesia in the settler state was initially promoted through a wiping out of Aboriginal people and their practices, beliefs and the infrastructure that was fundamental to these. As Bhabha suggests, colonials had to empty this space first and then they sought to recreate it (Bhabha 2012, p. 362). Marcia Langton calls this, the “erasure” that travelled in the canvas bags of the colonial artists, intent on leaving out any trace of a civilized peoples in order that the colonials could claim the land and maintain what they saw as their own superiority (Langton 2000, pp. 11–16).

This mentality has proceeded through post-colonial times and into the present, as recently as the era of Prime Minister John Howard and his view of what he noted as a ‘Black armband’ version of history. Tony Birch writes of this erasure and amnesia in the post-colonial mind:

The erasure of an Aboriginal history which was supplanted with a pioneering terra nullius narrative created a history erected on a foundation of quick-sand. It is a history which cannot tolerate disturbance as it so easily collapses. (Birch 2013, p. 371)

Selective amnesia forms a huge part of the 'white blindfold' of the settler state. This added to the legends of proud pioneers, tough tenacious explorers and a colonial rhetoric which was nurtured in the folklore of the colony and into the present day. So nurtured was this, that it supported myths of white supremacy and the notion of savagery. Memories were shaped by this rhetoric and the nationalistic pride which perpetuated memory in a version which was tailored to fit colonialism. Memorials, museums, art, architecture and ceremony all uphold and protect memory. These shore up the values of the dominant culture and fiercely defend it under any circumstances. Andreas Huyssen looks at the contemporary focus on memory:

But the contemporary focus on memory and temporality also stands in stark contrast to so much other recent innovative work on categories of space, maps, geographies, borders, trade routes, migrations, displacements and diasporas in a widespread consensus in the United States that in order to understand post-modern culture the focus had to be shifted from the problematic of time and memory

ascribed to an earlier form of high modernism to that of space as a key to the postmodern moment. (Huysen 2000, p. 21)

The temporality of connection to this world is essentially related to culture, spirituality and lore. The expectations and beliefs of an Indigenous person in relation to the past, present and future, are set in a belief based on our connections across all time combined, to Country, ancestors, traditions, totems, spirituality and oral histories. It is also in this sense that practice and Indigenous research as practice, operates to bring the past back into present experience, whilst at the same time extending our understandings of events. The role of Oral history is a crucial vehicle for conducting Indigenous research since it allows us to capture the memories and knowledge of elders who are able to provide account that can correct colonial perspectives. It is to this that I will now turn in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### ORAL HISTORIES

In this chapter I will be yarnning with family and community members in relation to my research question which sets out to fill the voids and gaps in knowledge of my paternal family. This is of prime importance to me as it is to many other Aboriginal people who have been separated from their people, culture and place and have suffered dislocation and alienation for reasons that they do not fully understand.

When we think of an Indigenous epistemology we search for our ways of knowing, the nature of our knowledge and it is here that the importance of gathering knowledge and oral histories from Elders becomes such an integral part of this research. Karen Martin speaks of the ceremony of research as does Shawn Wilson. Martin proposes that when teaching Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars she uses, 'Storywork' as a meta-process for a number of reasons:

In sharing Quandamooka Stories in this way is to make clear their essential place in this research ceremony, the research study and this dissertation. These are stories about what is known, what is being known and what is yet to be known and thus they are grounding, defining, comforting and embracing. (Martin 2008, p. 20)

This 'Storywork' leads me through my research and into the production of a body of artwork, which in turn culminates in the ceremony of commemorative images which are all connected to this and the experiences which are located in and intuitively expressed through the work.

An important element in my research is the use of family photographs, which act as indexical images and hence a direct connection to those who are no longer with us. These images tell us so much about their lives and yet so much is also hidden through the photograph as a framing and freezing device. Importantly however, these images have a strong emotional impact on all family members and hence assist in bringing forth memories of the past. Because images provoke memory, and it is for this reason that they are viewed and discussed during interviews and act as prompts to oral history. My use of photographs aligns with Barbara Harrison's observations on visual methodologies in research:

Visual methodologies can be used to describe any research design that uses any kind of visual evidence, whether produced by researchers or not. In some cases the visual data is simply an adjunct to other more traditional methods of data collection such as interview or ethnographic field work, in others it is a means by which we access data about other phenomena. (Harrison 2002, p. 88)

Word and image work together throughout the research process to produce aesthetic images, and in field work evoking further yarning, narrative and memory.

The lived experiences of family members is precious and an essential asset in the sharing of oral accounts. As a young girl, I was not aware of all of my grandmother and father's history. My grandmother did not speak of personal or family information directly to me when I was a child. Some information was overheard and some of this was quite hurtful as I remember. Now as an adult I have license to talk to Elders and to know some of the truths they now share with me.

Oral History is in accord with the perspective of an Aboriginal epistemology which is essential to the decolonising process a process of taking ownership of our culture and identity as First Nation people. Throughout this research it is essential that Aboriginal voices are heard in order that their stories and accounts of events take their place in academia alongside histories written by non-indigenous scholars. For too long we have been categorised as 'the other', subjected to research designed and tailored to keep us in this category of 'the other' justifying government acts and policies of the past. It wasn't until I was an adult that I understood the importance of reclaiming my scattered family and place of belonging. The spiritual and cultural need to find my Country and kin has been a strong motivation for conducting this research:

For Aboriginal people, land is not only our mother – the source of our identity and our spirituality – it is also the context for our human order and enquiry. Our identity as human beings remains tied to our land, to our cultural practices, our systems of authority and social control, our intellectual traditions, our concepts of spirituality, and to our systems of resource ownership and exchange. (Anderson 1995, p. 15)

Family Oral Histories and stories of times past are all a part of this connection to Country, they create the context for our existence in this place.

Connection to land is achieved through very specific localised knowledge of a region's natural history that is coupled with complex layers of past personal and family experiences, and a deeper connection to the past and therefore to Aboriginal identity via traditional stories and beliefs. This nexus between land and people is ongoing through hunting and gathering and simply being on Country. (Ganesharajah cites Garnett and Sithole, 2009, p. 6)

In Balranald, the Murray family centre exists around our Elders and their families, Aunty Dawn Wolfe (deceased), Uncle Besley Murray (deceased), and Uncle Ray Murray. These are the Elders to whom I have spoken during this research. They have shared their stories of life along the Murrumbidgee and on the shores of Yanga Lake and Talla Lake, along the stock routes

between stations and through the flood country which has fed our people for millennia. This is the Country which after colonisation, my ancestors rode their horses over with pride and dignity, knowing every billabong, creek, canoe tree and ring tree. These are Elders who learned the skills of the old world, building bark canoes, living off the land and raising their families, became well known for their natural ability as horsemen and women. We made do with what was available, something I remember my father calling bush food, as a child this included amazing meals of rabbits, eels, fish and mushrooms.

Oral history is the telling of a story through words, culture and identity. (Vickery 2004, p. 20). It is for this reason I have interviewed members of my family in order to place us in our Country and to value these most honourable Elders in their journey of life. Yarning with Elders has been a valuable experience and backdrop to the development of the artworks in this research.

These are our knowledgeable Elders who have lived a life, often in adversity and many times at the top of their careers using skills they have accumulated along the way. They have made huge steps towards the welfare of our communities from farming to horsemanship, politics to law, education to research, health and wellbeing and have become actively involved in our struggle for equality and recognition. To bring many of these oral accounts into the present, is to examine many things for a second or third time where

the causes and effects are then realised. Light can be shed on some of these relationships and personalities from a more informed angle, and hence some of the gaps are bridged.

Prior to interview, trust and support only come from spending time with prospective interviewees and gaining their recognition of the value and cultural integrity of what you are setting out to do. This research must be of value to our families and communities and bring with it important knowledge and representation which becomes the knowledge of our people. I do not have ownership over these oral histories as they belong to their orator and therefore these must portray their view authentically.

The interview procedure is overall very informal in relation to western standards and it makes use of yarning as it would be inappropriate to have rigid questioning and challenging of ideas in this setting. It is essential that the Elder being interviewed has the control over the interview as it is their knowledge that is being recorded. If they want to digress from a particular topic, they will. They may want to lead into something which they recognise of great importance to one's research. Linda Tuhiwai Smith relates the importance of respect, rights, interests and sensitivities when approaching Indigenous research:

The term respect is consistently used by Indigenous peoples to underscore the significance of our relationships and humanity.

Through respect the place of everyone and everything in the universe is kept in balance and harmony. Respect is a reciprocal, shared, constantly interchanging principle which is expressed through all aspects of social conduct. (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, p.120)

Wilson further explains the essence of knowledge as being relational:

An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational. Knowledge is shared with all creation...It is with the cosmos, it is with the animals, with the plants, with the earth that we share this knowledge. It goes beyond the idea of individual knowledge to the concept of relational knowledge. (Wilson, 2001, p. 176–177)

Walking Country with my Uncle Besley, we talked of memory and how so much has been lost. We were brought up surrounded by a version of history that came from the settler state, it was written in the school readers and cemented into the foundations of settler memorial cairns standing in recognition of the explorers. This history was shaped to create a nationalistic pride in British ancestry and the pioneers, yet it edited out many of the truths of this very recent time and the colonial discourses that fabricated its own version of events. To Aboriginal people, it is so important that we tell our own Oral accounts of what did happen and that the academy see and respect our Oral Histories as valid academic research.

Fieldtrips to Balranald, Vermont and Melbourne gave me the opportunity to interview Elders between 2013 and 2016 and quotes related to participants input are italicised. Other information from the past through yarning with family about family history and situations is conventionally referenced.

**Aunty Dawn Wolfe (nee McCartney, nee Coombs)**



23. Jennifer Murray-Jones, *Aunty Dawn Wolfe*, photographic image.

When living at Kyalite, the family home was just across the road from the Kyalite Hotel. In one of our yarning sessions and during fieldwork for this research, my Aunty Dawn told me about an evening when there were stockmen from all over the district there at the pub:

*They were all out the back in a stockyard with a mongrel horse which, it was said, was unbreakable. The bets were on, but no one could stay on this horse. The money had mounted up and there was quite a*

*collection in the kick. One fella eventually said, "I know, we could get Old Goondah to come across here, he'll be able to break it, let alone ride it to a standstill". Now Old Goondah didn't drink or smoke and never went to the pub, but when the representative came across to get him for the challenge he jumped at it. Old Goondah rode that horse to a standstill to the amazement of the big crowd which had gathered. He was then presented with all of the winnings, which it is said were quite substantial. With all of that he left for home across the road, much to the disgruntled reaction of the punters who wanted to be shouted a drink or more.*

This event relates to my visits to where the old family house was at Kyalite opposite the hotel, it backed onto the banks of the Wakool River. My Aunty Audrey told me that my Grandmother talked of the Indian Hawkers who travelled along all of the rivers in the district selling their wares. The old house has long since been demolished, yet I have wandered over the exact spot looking for objects that could have belonged to them and any clue from the past. The old picture I have of the house was taken by my Grandmother back in the mid to late 1930s when she visited with my Aunty Audrey.

The Murray children attended the Kyalite School just across the road and Aunty Dawn told me what Uncle Freddie, my grandmother's brother, had done when he was there:

*Yeh, Uncle Freddie really liked Quandongs and there was this Quandong tree right next to the school. The Murray kids used to collect them and bring them home whenever they were in season. Well one weekend he was walking down the road from the school towards the house and he was dragging a Quandong tree behind him. His father asked him what the heck he was doing and apparently he said, "Those ruddy white kids are pinchin' all our Quandongs and I have had enough. This'll fix 'em!"*



24. Mollie Murray, *Formally the Murray family home at Kyalite, c.1937* photographic image.

Images from stories such as this and their other former home at Redgate Station are the inspiration for several works in this research. I have visited both of these places and they evoke a feeling of a past that has been kept

from me. Some signs of the past are there, like the giant Peppercorn trees and Black Fig trees where the house at Redgate used to stand. A new big farm machinery shed sits on the site now. The old creek runs behind where the house used to be and today the new main house, with its manicured lawns and beautiful gardens, seems to echo with the sounds of young Murray children who once played there. On the drive into the property from the main gate is a lone grave of a former Aboriginal worker, a stark memorial to farm labour at the turn of the Century. Was this the Murray Pine drop log house from which my Grandmother was taken? This is the last house she remembered as a child and the reason why she travelled all the way out there to Redgate in the 1930s, to take a picture for memory's sake.



25. Mollie Murray, *Formally the Murray Family home at Redgate Station Balranald*, c. 1937, formally part of Canally Station, photographic image, Balranald NSW.

Shearing and itinerate farm work, and seasonally moving from place to place, more stations than I could name, have been the various homes of the Murray family. After leaving Cummeragunja Mission they lived at Moulamein, Aggie's Swamp Speewa, Kyalite, Redgate, Cannally Station and Kia-ora Station. In 1919 my Great Grandmother Lila Lilly Murray (Atkinson) passed away just two years after her last infant William was born. William (1917 – 1922) didn't live beyond four to five years of age. He is buried in the Balranald cemetery with his father. Life went on for Great Grandfather and he soon married young Alice Colgar in 1920, she was eighteen and he was forty-seven years of age. They went on to have another six children.

Now it was important that Great Grandfather get himself "hitched pretty quickly" as he had a big family of children to look after and it would be no time before the Aboriginal Welfare Board would chase him up and start taking his children away. Hence, he did marry and he and his new wife Alice Colgar and family went on living around Balranald for many more years.

## Uncle Ray Murray



27. Jennifer Murray-Jones, *Uncle Besley Murray and Uncle Ray Murray*, 2013  
Sturt Highway Balranald.

Uncle Ray Murray has related some of the events of the past to me in an interview on Country:

*Grandfather's horse's name was Ben and Uncle Fred used to tell me the horse went into the river while he (William Murray) was rippin' rabbit warrens. He had tied up the reins for a moment and he hadn't noticed that the horse had been backing up, as they had caught up, and the horse and all went backwards into the Murrumbidgee. We were camped down in the little tents in the 1960s late 60s, early 70s the river went dry here. I went back and found that horse and cart or what's left of it, it was just flat. Few bones in the bottom of the river. In the Murrumbidgee down six mile, down here past the mission. I never really got to know the old grandfather, like he used to come home, we used to have a block of land, a ten acre block down here*

*where the roo works were. He used to come in there with that horse and cart. He was a shearer, I was young, back in the 1950s I think when he died. Billy Murray, Goondah they called him. I never knew any of my grandmothers. And - his old horse and cart, when he lost that, he went down, he was never the same again. He'd walk from way down there rabbit trappin' and that. Someone used to pick up his rabbits and the buyer used to go down that way, then he'd walk up the town poor old fulla. I don't know what age he was when he died. You don't know hey if Bessy and Mollie were stolen? He must have died young, even on my mother's side I don't remember them.*

This event had a negative impact on Great Grandfather, a very proud and resourceful man who had worked hard all of his life. He had raised twelve children and had brought them all up to be successful adults who have raised their own families proudly. Now he had lost his horse and cart and this had affected him greatly in his senior years. While travelling to Balranald on one fieldtrip occasion, I walked down behind the old shearing sheds at Yanga Station and along the southern banks of the Murrumbidgee. I fished along the bank of the river not far from the mission and peered into the water knowing that many secrets were held in these waters. The remains of my Great Grandfather's horse Ben lay deeply in that water, and I imagine the horror of watching this event happen without any means of rescuing the horse which must have been horrific. My painting *Ben* (2014 figure 35 on p.

214), of the Murrumbidgee River with fallen ancient red gums which cast their shadows over the muddy water, create a grid over the surface as if they were bars entrapping Ben and his cart. There they lie at the bottom of the river, evidence of a man devoted to his horse and reliant on their team-ship over many years. As I walk along this bank I pass the many canoe trees and ring trees which stand in memorial to our people, their skills, their families and their struggles.

## Uncle Besley Murray



28. Russell Adcock , *Uncle Besley Murray on his horse*, 2013 photographic image, Balranald NSW.

Uncle Besley Murray remembers his Grandfather, at his Mia Mia just down the river from The Island Reserve where Uncle Bes and his family lived.

Uncle says that he went down there one day to show Grandfather the pushbike he got for Christmas and Grandfather said, *Now don't you play lendies with that bike alright*. Uncle Besley said that, *with a fire going outside that mia mia, it was as warm as toast inside that hut*.

Thoughts of these times have inspired this creative work and as I search and experience the landscape during fieldwork I note the big river red gums some with canoe scars, and I know that these have experienced these times gone by. There is a form of ceremony involved in producing these images and I

feel that this ceremony will be experienced at the time when these works are displayed at exhibition.

These oral accounts combined with fieldwork, give me a greater vision of life back in Balranald before I was born. Uncle Besley is the son of Sidney John Murray, (my grandmother's brother) and his mother was, Aunty Hilda Xenohbia Stewart. By the time my great Uncle Sidney John married, my grandmother and her sister were gone from the Balranald community. My grandmother was living in Melbourne from all accounts with a husband and two young children, my aunt and my father. These circumstances along with the 'whitewashing' my grandmother endured during her time in institutions, created the gaps and voids in family connection and family history which have evaded us for so many years. In addition to this, many Aboriginal people who were holders of a "Dog Ticket", and were prevented by law from having any connection to family and community, although we know that she did visit certain members of the family in Melbourne.

Talking about my grandmother Mollie, Uncle Bes said that all he knew about his Aunty Mollie was that she and Aunty Bessie just left. But from what my grandmother had said, she was just eleven years old at the time and Bessie was just 8 years old. If this is correct, then they were taken three or four years before their mother died in 1919 at Kia-ora Station. I mentioned to Uncle Besley that this is maybe why Mollie took a photo of Redgate Station in the mid 1930s, was this the last place she remembers? I told him that there

was a woman from the Protection Board, Ms Alice Lowe, who would go around the stations looking for Aboriginal girls to train up as domestics, and take them away with her, promising their parents all sorts of things. Maybe this is what happened. Uncle Bes thinking about all this at Balranald said:

*I just wonder just what happened, she just took off, she never ever got in touch with any of the family again. Even when dad died, (Great Uncle Jack), they couldn't find her. Stewart (Besley's brother) met her once or twice when he was home on leave, 'cos he was very good friends with Aunty Freyda Walpole and she was there when he come home and ah yeh and the rest of 'em they didn't know where she was.*

This does correspond with an event during the war of which my Aunty Audrey has spoken. Aunty Audrey came home on leave from the Army and my grandmother wasn't home. The neighbour said that Mollie had gone to visit Aunty Freyda Walpol in Melbourne. My Aunty Audrey jumped on a train and arrived at the house, her mother answered the door and when she brought her in, she introduced her to her cousin Stewart Murray, Uncle Besley's older brother. He had just announced his engagement to Nora Nichols and Stewart was sitting at the piano in what my Aunty remembers as a beautiful double breasted navy suit. Evident is that these events need to be documented so as to fill the gaps and voids in our past family history. Those who were living at the time have told their memories of the past and as a painter I need to respond to these memories in order to continue the

memories of these times for all of the family to know. This in fact places these works in a position of remembrance and ceremony, to record and celebrate the past and its impact on our cohesion as a family.

Works such as *Talpee* (2014)(see figure 32 on p. 207) are my response to the stories of my Uncles'. While family were living their lives, my grandmother and her sister Bessie were away working as domestics in the homes of white people far from any connection to the family. Grandmother Mollie was very young and vulnerable and it is unknown where she had been working. Later living in Melbourne she married Stephen Jones who worked as a Stevedore at Melbourne docks. He was a bad tempered and cruel man and eventually they parted. With her young children, she was entirely divorced from what the rest of the family were doing and my father was sent to the homes. Meanwhile, back in Balranald the family carried on their station work.

In his book titled *Bes; Best of Two Worlds*, 2015 Claire Gibson and Allan Fox they quote Uncle Besley who said of his brothers:

There were bark canoes that Ron and Stewart had stripped too, to go hunting. One thing with them; you'd pole them along because the water wasn't that deep – might've been a metre or something like that – and going through the lignum they wouldn't make a noise like a tin boat that'd be screeching, from the lignum going along side. They were silent. (cited in Gibson & Fox 2015, p. 33)

At the far north-eastern reaches of Talpee Station near Piggery Lake, an area with a multitude of archaeological evidence of an Aboriginal village, my uncle and I talked about the everyday activities which we imagined going on around us, the activities of people cooking up a meal, hunting, sewing possum skins and weaving baskets. We imagined a game of *marngrook* (football) going on over there on the flat with others cheering them on. The songs and sounds of a corroboree drifting along with the smoke through the air, and the play and laughter of children running after their miniature weapons, retrieving them from the dust. We imagine people fishing in the lake and a few young men building a new bark canoe. All were untroubled until either disease or confrontation arrived on their doorstep.

As we travel through Country north-east of Balranald, Uncle points out places he has documented as burial sites, midden sites, scar trees and ring trees. He describes the ancestors uncovered by the centuries of wind and rain, adults and children lying together in various locations near the large lake and not far from the banks of the Murrumbidgee, all having been recorded as significant by the Aboriginal Heritage Information Management System (AHIMS).

This place is beautiful and bountiful and one can imagine the daily lives of people near this beautiful place. There is one enormous tree which is so massive that it could be many hundreds of years old. A significant tree one would imagine, one grand old man standing among many younger trees in

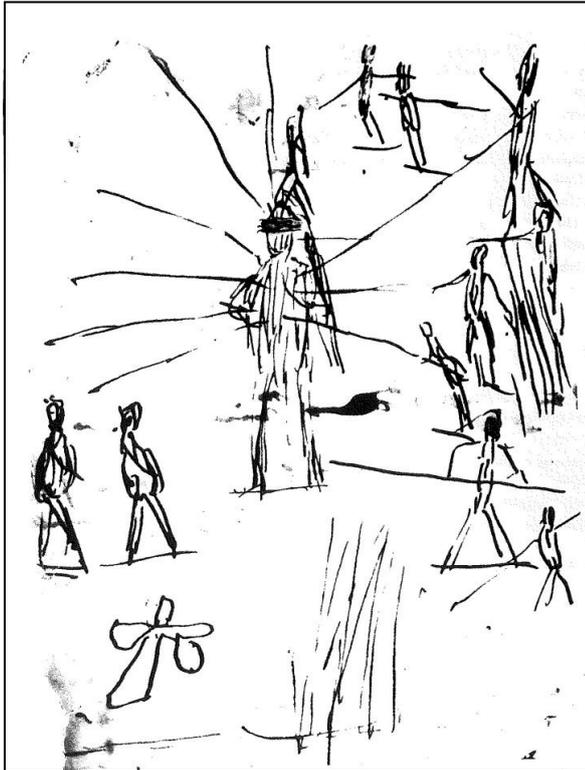
the landscape. This tree is tortured and gnarled with a massive trunk, it has an enormous girth, dwarfing any who stand near it. It must have been a place of ceremony, one could imagine a corroboree performed by the light of fires casting shadows of dancers back onto the trunk with the spit and crackle of the wood burning and smoke drifting up towards its massive spreading arms in the night sky.

This place is populated by our ancestors, their spirits are around us as we both interpret and connect with the past. A deep sense of loss is felt as we walk around this lake knowing that this life as we once knew it, has gone forever. Everywhere in this Country is the evidence of our ways of knowing, ways of doing and ways of being, and this is translated through the process and production of my creative work. *Ancestors* (2017, Fig. 34 p. 212), explores the cultural significance of these trees which have been cross grafted between branches to form windows which have in the past focused on viewing significant and culturally important landmarks.

## Cultural Ways of Knowing

Emergent in any practice are the relationships of skill and culture. In my practice this relates to Indigenous ways to think, *nangarna*, to know, *ngai* and to do, *ngata* (Bowe, Peeler & Atkinson 1997). My translation of human experience are presented in figurative art works, yet it is also important to know that the artistic expression of South Eastern Australia is often figurative in terms of the bark paintings that have illustrated the events of the frontier wars of the colonial period. Andrew Sayers refers to a number of bark drawings collected from the Murray River region:

The narrative art of bark drawings, with its concern to record and perhaps relate specific, notable events, seems to have been common along the Murray River and its southern tributaries. The two drawings that remain in collections today have similar stylistic attributes. It depicts a hunting scene with several hunters and their artefacts, and also a woman with a child and several animals, one with internal patterning. (Sayers 1997, p.105–106)



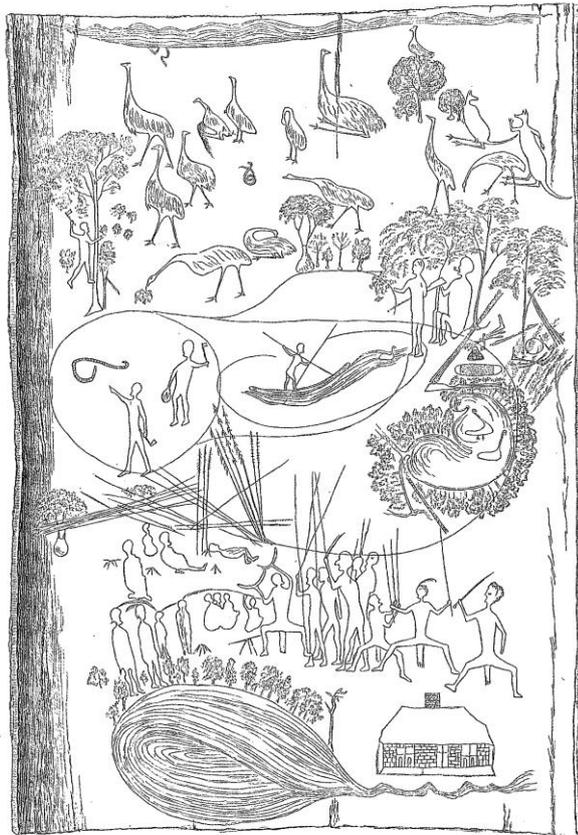
29. Sketch by G A Robinson of a bark drawing seen in a hut on the Loddon River, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1843. Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales. (cited Sayers 1997, p.95).

Chief Protector George Augustus Robinson, recorded finding a bark drawing in a mia mia on the Murray River in 1843 which appeared to depict Major Mitchell's journey with bullock drays, through the district earlier in 1836 (Sayers 1997, p.105). Another is the bark taken from a mia mia at Lake Tyrell c. 1860 from Brough Smyth, *The Aborigines of Victoria* 1878. (Melbourne Museum), Sayers goes on to say:

The Museum of Victoria's drawing is more elaborate, and would appear to tell a more complex story. It was obtained from an Aborigine from near Lake Tyrell, in the Mallee district, sometime prior to 1874. Like the drawings discussed above which tell of the intrusion

of early explorers or overlanders up the Murray River, this one depicts a squatter, his house firmly sited on the shores of an Aboriginal lake. A dance, a ceremony, perhaps a dispute, is caught in action, there are clusters of spears and a warrior lies motionless.

(Sayers 1997, p.106)



30. *Drawing on bark collected from Lake Tyrell, Victoria, Unknown, c. 1860, (Sayers 1997 p. 96).*

It is evident in these works that traditionally, it was important to record historical events which also possibly would have accompanied oral storytelling and the continuity of oral traditions. It is important to note that this tradition of recording events is continued through my body of work as

valuable information from which future interpretation is drawn. My own voice is captured in my works along with intuitive expression and aesthetic purpose.

These drawings taken from the *Dhungala* region (Murray River), bring with them the record of human experience, giving our people a sense of pride and ownership in what has gone before. Because these exist, they confirm our presence, our witness. We know that this “someone” was there at the time of these events and that they recorded their responses to it. The link here is a human response and connection to what has shaped our world. It becomes very powerful and one recognises the links in my works to those of the past in terms of the recording of historical events and sharing our oral histories.

This style of recording narratives of events is in many ways related to my works which also are telling an ongoing narrative of lived experience.

Traditional arts practice along *Dhungala* (the Murray River) was figurative and narrative and was daily practice on our Country. The culmination of my engagement with family on country is thus a crucial element in the way the body of works to be discussed in the next chapter has come together in this research.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ART AS RESEARCH ART AS CEREMONY

#### Art As Ceremony

I walked with Elders and cousins through Country and their presence and commentary have given voice to their knowledge and experience. In our yarning my Uncle Besley told me that:

*I will take you on a journey of your grandmothers past and there is so much to know yet. Don't worry it hasn't finished yet, there is much more to come that I can share.*

In this chapter I will discuss the outcomes from my research and what has been revealed by the creative works associated with the following questions:

- How do the works operate as ceremony and help to reclaim and commemorate our past?
- How do the works articulate an Indigenous world view?
- How do the works help to overcome amnesia and correct history?
- How do the works operate evocatively and hence bring back memories and produce positive affect and emotion – ie bring the past and the ancestors back into the present imaginatively and through sensation?

- How do the works operate effectively to depict objects and events from the past and hence provide a visual narrative of past lives.

The production of this artwork, aims to reveal, reclaim and commemorate our past. This past cannot operate alone, as it is also a connection to the present and will always be connected to our future. In an Indigenous ontology, the works are connected to our Country, identity, culture and beliefs. In essence revealing these artworks is to articulate and create ceremony. Not unlike a performance which engages its audience with Indigenous story and narrative, the works bring knowledge to their audience through the evocative and the effective.

The triangular framework of oral history, photography and practice used in this research, provides a structure which acts to reveal an understanding of Indigenous reality. Denzin and Lincoln identified this triangulation which they believed produced and reveals 'different aspects of empirical reality,' (Denzin & Lincoln 1978, p. 3)

My creative arts practice articulates an Indigenous knowledge of history which comes from an Indigenous lens. In doing so, the works reveal our own version of the colonial experience and presents a view of history which challenges the selective amnesia of the settler state. The works reinstate some of what has been erased by the colonial historians as Langton

observes, from the erasures of artists that were 'carried in a canvas bag'  
(Langton 2000, p.13).

The effective dimension of works together with the evocative, which in turn reveals knowledge at a symbolic level, a more abstract sensory location which relates to an Indigenous ontology.

Speaking of the impetus, questions and aims of the research and how these operate in the forming of contexts, Hamilton and Jaaniste claim:

A fundamental difference in creative practice research arises out of its forming contexts, by which we mean the impetus, motivation or trigger for the research project. (Hamilton & Jaaniste 2014, p. 235)

In describing these contexts, Hamilton and Jaaniste refer firstly, to the "effective" and secondly, to the "evocative" as they believe they are implicated in artistic research. Of the effective they observe:

Because of this impetus, it might be described as a 'problem-based research'. The primary aim of the research is to effect change (make some situation or process more efficient, effective, suitable, usable or sustainable in some way) and the questions that are asked relate to how this might be achieved. (Hamilton & Jaaniste 2014, p. 235)

Hamilton and Jaaniste then consider the evocative aspects of art as practice based research:

On the other hand, evocative research (often aligned with art practice) is driven by individual and wider cultural preoccupations and concerns. (Hamilton & Jaaniste 2014, p. 236)

They continue by stating that; the artefact's evocativeness cannot be empirically measured, for the poetics of the artefact make it irreducible in its meaning (Hamilton & Jaaniste 2014, p. 235). What is evocative in these works is the sensory, emotional and spiritual nature of what is projected by the works. In many ways this is irreducible yet still identifiably present as an adjunct to the manifest as an affect, emotion and sensory experience.

This sensory "bringing back" of ancestors and Country, "the shadows of our ancestors," and their shaping of our Country, is revealed through the works which celebrate their feats and gives greater meaning to our identity. The visual narrative holds meaning on many levels for many Aboriginal families, as it visually articulates and translates our survival and connection to Country. This in turn works to challenge the amnesia of history which has failed to acknowledge our real history. The sensory aspects of these works come from an inner place produced through a practice which inherently articulates these qualities.

The resulting artefact may have no obvious function as an object. Instead, it provides insights into an aspect of human experience (for example, memory, emotion, socio-political concerns, relationships, phenomenology, perception) and the goal of the research is to produce affect through evocation and resonance. This means that the artefact's evocativeness cannot be empirically measured, for the poetics of the artefact make it irreducible in its meaning. (Hamilton & Jaaniste 2014, p236)

The multi-layered aspects of an image convey many meanings, those which are obvious and those which are related to the emotional, all are created from real experience, memory and connection. All aspects inform each other throughout the research, and these relate to this triangulated structure. The works as the final outcome deliver what comes from this research, its validity and its cultural value as knowledge.

Indigenous art and western art differ in terms of what is deemed 'abstract' and what is deemed 'figurative'. In this sense the object or part of an object even a mark can be the ancestor. Every entity on Country is related, so therefore everything must be treated with respect, an ancestor who has passed, may return as their animal totem to say goodbye after passing and gladly be welcomed.

There is meaning in colour, as at times I use red ochre as an underpainting which gives me a sense and relationship to the earth. This comes through the subsequent layers and reveals the warmth of Country. I may use texture and symbolic references to my ancestors through the objects in nature they have fashioned and created in order to reveal a sensory connection to elements I feel hold meaning.

In an Indigenous context the representation of those from the past is true reference, something you may not lightly reconfigure without permission of others or family consent. Photographs and also paintings are the real manifestation of our ancestors. It was their presence which created the image, therefore they are real. I believe strongly that this is a very important aspect of our artistic expression to be articulated and revealed.

The textures of paint, line and shape, tone and hue, evoke memory to related places and times in our past which are associated with experience and knowledge. *Yanga* (2015) (see figure 31 on p. 202) brings together the narrative nature of the works, the realities of the time. This works takes us back to a place and time and suggests and creates many questions. Was there a respectful relationship between the boss and the workers? What was life like out on a station?

I have spent many times going through old photographs with family members and the stories they relate to me from the images is told just like it

was yesterday. From an Indigenous lens this is what I wanted to convey, the evidence of our past on the land. The realities of living where you worked and being a valued member of a team working hard and earning good money. Stories involve tales of workers who came from up north, traditional men who only spoke their own language. Tales of some of the men who were there one day and gone the next because of some reason or another.

Other works refer to evidence of ancestors in the landscape, these carry with them multiple meanings for Aboriginal people. These places are sacred and they must be preserved and protected as valuable parts of our history and culture. They are our ancestors as they are places of their significance and hence our significance, commemorative to memory, time and place as their spirits are connected to these places.

My aim was to share this knowledge of the past and to discover the fabric of these times with equally exposing the sensory aspects of emotion related to our human experience. All of the works bring knowledge of how Aboriginal people have lived and survived throughout the colonial period. The works also reveal the emotional ambiguities which are projected from the works in an evocative manner. This evocative nature of the works is related to the manner in which the actions of the artist speak to the viewer. The rhythm and movement of the brush in relation to the paint application is evident, and this evokes the tactile and personal handling of the medium. The

evidence of the craftsman embedded into the surface of an artefact  
equally speak to the viewer as they tell us much about the act of creation.

My aims have been realised in this research as a journey from conception to research, fieldwork to developmental work and finally studio practice. Not only do the works unpack the intended knowledge, they also speak to each other to articulate identity and ontological values. The works also articulate the notion of Country and how after colonisation this led to movement between neighbouring Countries in order to survive. These are our realities, we could not always remain on our own Country from frontier times onward and into the present.

I am convinced by the presence of the works that I have achieved success in presenting my argument and have demonstrated both effectively and evocatively more than what I set out to achieve. This is the nature of practice led research, development and outcomes emerge throughout the practice and then more emerges through the ceremony of viewing the works in terms of how the works speak to the viewer.

The following analyses of my works will endeavour to bring insight into the performative experience developed through their creation. I will also reflect on the nature of creative expression as it is linked to knowledge. During the creative process it is evident that the image-making is a link to emotion and the senses. Deliberate and experimental handling of materials applied in a

variety of manners expresses these feelings which ultimately are connected to experience. Without the oral history and cultural knowledge that underpins this research, experienced at all stages of this research, this body of work could not have materialised.

This relates to the aims and questions as my intent was to reveal the nature of Indigenous knowledge systems and our ontological world view. Having used this method of research I have had the opportunity for others to experience more than simply words could convey. Images such as this body of work are corollary in relation to the exegesis, yet they are the conveyer of the knowledge.

I have examined the works of other artists studied during the course of this research, in order to identify similarities and differences. My works are painted using oils, yet they are a large format being 112 cm x 137 cm, their size adds to the impact of the images. I am driven by and concerned with the working of the paint, in a very textural manner rather than flat and this has developed throughout the practice. I have incorporated figurative elements and abstract elements together in order to represent the steps away from reality which represent an ambiguity. In each case the works reveal and evoke the sensory through compositional elements and ambience, narrative, paint application and pallet.

Unlike Clarke who works with installation, my works are two-dimensional and confined to the frame of the painting. Dowling works mainly with people and often in a smaller format. Her family are represented as are in my works, yet I take this further when I begin to explore the country and the symbolism of our people, the trees and the waterways. The paint work is a focus as I build up textures with bees wax and oils to represent the tactile nature of our world.

These works are the manifestation of all of the research conducted for this project. The research questions of, what were the voids and gaps in our family knowledge and of where and how I should discover the answers are answered much more than initially envisaged. I was able to identify and compare the differences in western and Indigenous art. Not only is Indigenous art effective and evocative, these things work together. There is also a merging of the notions symbolic and the real or the indexical in Indigenous art. These images become the real as they signify or are the referent of the real person or object.

Maybe we need to rethink the notion of the image as Tim Ingold suggests:

Perhaps it is the very notion of the image that has to be rethought, away from the idea that images represent, on another plane, the forms of things in the world to the idea that they are place-holders for things, which travellers watch out for, and from which they take

their direction. Could it be that images do not stand for things, but rather they help you find them? (Ingold 2010, p. 16)

My research has in many ways, led to images which have allowed the re-discovery of my world and the world of others. It is hoped that the viewer will also see things that lead to their memories and specific events in their lives and the lives of ancestors.

Though closely interrelated, works can be categorised into three groups, landscapes, portraits and interiors. This will be explored as I analyse each of the works individually.

Art as research, art as ceremony, informs and redresses the traumas of the past and the injustices forced upon our people. In turn it also means that we celebrate our identity and events of the past. Research assists in defining the knowledge of the past, recording the events which can be recorded and revisiting them in order to bring this information to life. The artwork is in itself, ceremony; a ceremony of our shared history. In many ways, this is linked to performance, where stories are shared and experienced and then translated into visual forms to be further translated by viewers.

Drawing on Shawn Wilson, Martin relates the notion of research as ceremony, stating that she relates the process of research to 'her own being and reality as an Aboriginal woman' (Martin 2008 p 19). When artistic

expression is created in this context and as an outcome to my research, I identify this also as ceremony. This is then shared and experienced with the community. To observe these works and experience their meaning and commemorative nature, we experience ceremony which relates to cultural knowledge and connection coming together in the ceremony of revealing our emotional and psychological connection to our ancestors. Ceremony is therefore a participatory event which allows us to refer back to, solidify our memories and celebrate our identities as Indigenous peoples. We celebrate this knowledge and meaning together as Indigenous people. It comes from our voice which authenticates an Indigenous view.

In this visual context we bring together our inner spiritual feelings related to who we are and where we come from. We have suffered much loss during our lifetimes, not having language or many spiritual beliefs communicated to us, yet we feel and have always felt our connections. Our emotions and senses are stirred and brought home to us through performance, ceremony, the making of artwork and artistic expression in all of its forms. We feel, we experience and we celebrate as these artistic expressions become new referents of our existence which ceremoniously connect us and situate us.

*Yanga*



31. Jenny Murray-Jones, *Yanga*, 2015, oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm.

*Yanga*, (2015) reveals station life through the textures and colours of rural life. There were never ending tasks to be carried out and jobs had to be done before play. This young girl is beckoned by the red dog to come and play or go hunting, but there are chores to be done. This was reality for many children in the bush, and for Aboriginal station families employed to keep the station going with stock work, laundry, firewood, cleaning and the preparation of food.

In all of this I begin to allow the paint to speak for itself, adding texture, tone, form, line, scuffles of the brush, point and scumbles (overpainting that allows underpainting to come through subsequent layers of paint). This movement can also involve short strokes of paint to create texture in a variety of directions. It can mean fluid lines as in *Yanga* where the washing basket is constructed of the loosely painted woven cane, which constitutes the structure of the basket. There is a very textural feeling here which is experienced through the tactile mode of creating this illusion. Memories are here, I immerse myself in the construction of other things from my past, rusty chicken wire is reminiscent of country properties, used in variety of ways, not just the construction of chicken coops.

Corrugated iron and old tin baths, concrete laundry troughs and a cracked cake of Velvet soap. I feel and smell these elements through memory and they come to me in this way as I paint them, they are a part of my life experience and that of my ancestors. The paint takes on the materials I am bringing together to create meaning, the nature of Yanga Station and the daily lives of people who were all a part of life here, collapsing of the distance between past and present to images and the real.

This open composition reveals many layers, foreground, mid ground and background. There is a sense that there is more going on here than that which is at the surface. Ambiguity and multiplicities are evoked here. In the far distance one is compelled to wonder what sorts of activities are simultaneously going on at the station. This is a place of business and activity

and it is all about people and manual labour. The colours of the land are reflected in the palate, earthy tones, dust and dirt, rusty wire and galvanised corrugated iron.

The framing of the composition is open which leaves much further information to the individual imagination. Within the frame, the corrugated iron blocks a view of what could be happening behind. The shadows and colours are reminiscent of a time gone by in the use of an almost sepia colour pallet, a sombre mood is generated in reflection of the labour constraints upon the child.

In the mid-ground the human aspect speaks of manual skills of farm workers, which have created the building made of timbers sourced on site. There is sweat and muscle involved in this place, teamwork and a collaboration of expertise.

The grid of horizontal and vertical lines interrupted by the various angles of the structure continuing on beyond the canvas, make this open composition suggestive of being just a small portion of what is happening in the place at that moment. The brilliant hot afternoon sun is relieved by the large overhanging verandah, the intensity of this heat is revealed in the background where details are bleached out by its brightness. The ambiguity speaks of the relationship between the known and the unknown, the voids and gaps in knowledge.

Generations of Aboriginal families lived and worked on Yanga from the 1850s to 2008. There are a multitude of stories here and the spirits of those who lived and worked here.

So many experiences lived throughout a colonial past which stretches into the present. Reclaiming the voids of the past is not always delineated by actual truths, yet it is suggested by means of aesthetic image. A moment of memory becomes something in the present. Many aspects of history are thus uncovered through fieldwork, a combination of oral history and the experience of walking Country with Elders which then brings the making of art forth with knowledge to fill the voids.

Speaking in relation to what Morphy has written of Yolngu accounts of the meanings of artworks, that the; “paintings *are* the ancestral beings from the past (Morphy 1991, p. 102)” Ingold states that:

Everything stems from this past, just as every surface form arises from what is already there on the inside. Yet painting is only one of many ways in which ancestral beings can reveal themselves, or make their presence felt. (Ingold 2010, p.20)

The empirical nature of practice led research presents an effective response which in turn shares new knowledge. Creating artwork in order to solve a

particular enquiry, which in my case is to tell of the gaps and voids in my ancestors past, is a mode in which I communicate my findings in terms of sensory observation more than western theory. It is also important to understand that this in essence, is typical of valued knowledge and the transference of knowledge in Indigenous societies. Aboriginal people value the tradition and authenticity of their own knowledge systems which is appropriate in any research carried out as an Indigenous researcher.

The evocative in my work comes from that which is gained through the nature of the artwork, that which is manifest as the practice of creation tacitly evolves during the production of the work. This is the prompting by the work of vivid memories or the sense of things not present or from the past. There is always an evocative sense which emanates from works of art, sometimes it is difficult to pinpoint exactly can be the causation itself, although abstract, the sense is real and adds wisdom to what is being communicated.

*Talpee*



32. Jenny Murray-Jones, *Talpee*, 2015, Oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm.

*Talpee*, is a lonely place in the present, yet it has a life of its own in terms of Country and the spirits who populate this landscape. My painting speaks of a past time when life was fully purposeful for my family, working hard and making a living. There is a stark emptiness in this work, the suggestion that people who were once here were connected to this place, and the many other stations where they had worked. Now abandoned and empty, the souls of those who once were, are still connected to this place.

The textures of the Murray Pine or Red Gum, timber drop log construction of buildings, have the evidence of our hands upon them as do the ring trees and canoe trees which stand strong on Country. The paint represents these features and draws them out of memory.

This is all connected to the time when two young Aboriginal girls were stolen from this world at a station just down the road. We cannot forget the pain experienced by so many and to a degree it is unexplained and the sadness stays with us all today.

There is an eerie emptiness as many Aboriginal people have lived and died here. Many of their graves are unmarked and many were buried where they died. Searching for family graves it is evident that not all were marked as there are many graves of family members who have not been identified. The graves depicted here relate to the fact that some of my ancestors are in these yet to be identified resting places.

This work of an abandoned place where once there was life and activity, evokes a sense of mystery through the dark shadows of the interiors and the stark loneliness created by the empty chair. The verandah posts and window frames create bars which represent the protection the many possible secrets of the inner space. This too evokes mystery of the unknown, what has happened here and what is happening here now. The colours are of the station, its dry earth and in places lush green grass which grows wherever

moisture collects, simultaneously indicative of life and death. There is ambiguity here, clues to a former time and activity, yet it is starkly obvious there is now a stillness reminiscent of death.

At Talpee, no longer is there a need for the number of working hands. The land is leased and mechanised farm machinery has made huge changes to life on the land. Much else remains the same, water is life and this is pumped from the Talpee Creek. Rainwater tanks provide good drinking water and irrigation and stock troughs are fed from either the creek or Talla Lake. Wood stoves are still in use and now often accompanied by bottle gas or electric stoves. Power is a fairly recent addition to some stations.

***This is Where They Wanted Us to Be***



33: Jenny Murray-Jones, *This is Where They Wanted Us to Be*, 2014, oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm.

My Grandmother was an excellent cook and of course this came from living on a station and learning from your mother and aunts. The other more sinister side of this was that she was trained as a domestic and the skills she learned in the institution, would have placed a lot of pressure on her to acquire these desirable attributes as a soon to be domestic servant. This separation hit my grandmother hard as the pain of being removed from family never left her right up until she died.

This work evokes a sense of sadness and the realities of a young girl being responsible for meals and domestic chores and working for strangers without

the love a guidance of her own family. The colours are of a very rural kitchen possibly on a property cooking for the workers. The composition tells of confinement through the boxed-in sense of the horizontal and vertical lines of the fireplace. The brickwork also tells the same story, solid and impenetrable and fortress like. There is an element of mistrust evident here with a cupboard being locked only for access by the master or mistress of the house. There was no trust and little empathy in these places of employment for Aboriginal domestics.

As a servant, she is dressed in formal attire for her station in life, confined to the kitchen and all clean, clad and courteous. The stiffness of the work relates to the starching of all household linen, including the aprons and pinnies. This was a chore which was religiously done in every household in those times, but a task of the hired help only. Great expectation of attention to detail was a part of this regimented life, with any family connection denied. This image evokes a sense of the past, that this person is no longer living, she is frozen in time.

## *Ancestors*



34. Jenny Murray-Jones, *Ancestors*, 2017, oil and wax medium on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm.

Scar trees are the evidence of a canoe being cut from the trunk of large red gums, often these scars could also be carved in traditional patterns in the commemoration of ancestors. Other traces of our ancestors are the ring trees which have had their branches grafted together to form rings or windows from which significant or sacred sites could be viewed and identified, they provided a vantage point of a particular landmark.

*Ancestors* (2017), was my response to finding a similar tree whilst on The Island Reserve, Balranald. This tree held so much in terms of culture and

identity for me, as it had been manipulated through my ancestors' knowledge of horticulture to create these windows. This now dead tree stands beside a creek with its gnarled limbs and many rings, a remnant of our history standing to this day.

The composition reveals the reptile like structure of a grand old tree now denuded of foliage and much more of its character and structure is revealed. The overall form of the dead tree demonstrates life as there is movement in the structure due to its writhing framework. Ambiguity comes from this in terms of life and death, we feel it is living, yet we know it is no longer. To Aboriginal people this is a very sacred site of commemoration, our links to the past are connected and we experience the power of it all.

This open composition suggests more is going on beyond the frame of the work, the nature of the landscape in the background is filled with life, the soft eucalyptus greens, leafy shrubs and lignum, crowd the landscape, forever changing throughout flood and the impact of the seasons. But the tree is captured in time, it is the ancestors and it speaks to us of their lives, their work and their ability to utilize and value everything around them.

The colours of a bright blue sky speak of living of a bright and energetic place filled with meaning. This is the place many of my family lived, on this reserve out of town where they built their own houses and lived off the land, sky and water of the Murrumbidgee. I feel that this work resonates with more effect

or impact than is first experienced. There is mystery and spiritual feelings associated with the work coming from not only the image, but the way in which the action of the paint depicts this place.

***Ben***



35. Jenny Murray-Jones, *Ben*, 2014, Oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm.

*Ben*, (2014) glares from the depths of the river of ancient times flowing through a contemporary world. The Murrumbidgee holds the stories of the many and past events of our ancestors. This river was witness to the loss of my Great Grandfather's horse Ben, who was tragically drowned in the great waters of the Murrumbidgee. This was more than the tragic loss of Ben, as it

signalled loss and forced redundancy for my Great Grandfather, whom my Uncle Ray Murray said, *was never the same again*.

The composition is constructed on a grid of logs creating a structure that evokes a sense of entrapment. There is danger here as the colours of the water suggest that the river is deep and treacherous. These fallen limbs and their shadows create a sense of foreboding which is amplified by the ripples radiating from a point, suggesting that something has fallen into the water or is violently struggling to come to the surface.

There is latent meaning in sun bleached dead grey of the lifeless branches denuded of their bark they lay static in their final resting places. These colours are symbolic of death, yet these solid, old red gum can last centuries before breaking down completely. There is a sombre mood suggested by the colours of olive green and grey, yet the reflection of a blue sky adds ambiguity to this mood and at times you wonder if you are looking down or looking up. The power of this landscape brings me closer to those voids and gaps in knowledge. With every work I am engaging with that which is a part of us all, immersion in this place reveals the nature of what it is to be, as every element of this Country has shaped who we are.

***Murrumbidgee***



36. Jenny Murray-Jones, *Murrumbidgee*, 2014, oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm.

In the water are the images and reflections of all living things belonging to Country. Crazed mud and clay dry in the heat of summer and the leaf litter blows around in the breeze. The many layers of life are here and the evocation of memory of all those who have gone before. I have spoken of the shadows and the dust and grit of ancestors lives past and present in the landscape, this work evokes these feelings for me.

The light is soft and quiet, it can be a peaceful place and yet it is alive with spirits of many lifetimes. As Marcia Langton has states, 'Whereas settlers see

an empty wilderness, Aboriginal people see a busy spiritual landscape, peopled by ancestors and the evidence of their creative feats' (Langton 2000, p. 14).

The composition is a network structured through the form of shadows cast from the old river red gums. There are aspects of this which are reminiscent of a fishing net, yet are the entangled branches high above the river, their shadows cast by a hot sun onto the cool water. The palette is cool but for the scarcely scattered yellow ochre of fallen leaves. Floating leaves and other remnants of the Country drift across the surface, a bird feather or a flying insect tell of the activity of life within.

There are many layers here which create tension as this network adheres to the frame of the work and stretches across the canvas. There is the seen and the unseen rather than a narrative of elements of the real. In many ways this work is abstract, yet it reveals the subtle tensions of coming back to Country and searching for all that it has to tell. Not one image can bring all of the answers to our questions, yet walking Country can give us a knowledge that we belong. These are just some of the many images which fill in those voids and gaps, not just by viewing, but by participating in their creation and going through the ceremony of doing.

*Piggery Lake*



37. Jenny Murray-Jones, *Piggery Lake* 2016, oil and wax medium on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm.

Going up through Murrumbidgee Country with my Uncle Besley across the numerous massive paddocks of Talpee Station, was a memorable adventure. This fieldwork was combined with an Oral History interview. Being on Country where my Uncle had worked and lived for a lifetime was a very special experience for him to share with me.

This old bottleneck river red gum at Piggery Lake, is a very special tree with an enormous presence in the landscape. Its sheer size is overwhelming as it

stands dwarfing the surrounding young trees which against it make them look like saplings. There is something very powerful here, and as suggested by my Uncle, it could well have been a place for ceremony or corroborees as one could imagine this as a powerful backdrop to such events. We stayed around the tree for quite sometime yarning and constructing possible scenarios about this location in times past, before colonisation. Uncle had recorded many significant sites here over the years, middens, burials and scar trees.

I have used wax medium made from beeswax mixed with oil paint to create the textures of this ancient giant. I have scored the thickened paint with a stick to create etched markings on the trunk and branches. This has later been covered this with a glaze using burnt and raw umber to fill in the crevices adding more texture and another layer to the image. This work holds a great deal of importance for me, as my Uncle has now passed on and this image lives on in my memory of him.

The looming and massive presence and the sense of power experienced is overwhelming in its company. The writhing branches are like the limbs of a great deity who holds many secrets of the past. Experiencing the aura of this tree, it is easy to imagine the multitude of events of the past witnessed from floods to bushfires, storms, massacres, and ceremony, the ever changing landscape and its scars.

The monolithic vertical structure is dominant in the composition, as are the upward and outward reaching limbs. There is a sense of this being more than just a tree, as its limbs stretch out at various angles to create dynamic movement with no formal arrangement. They are reminiscent of a multi-limbed creature which has survived a holocaust.

The pallet is cool, grey, green and muted tones of the bush. Warm colours define the living nature of this tree, the red of the river red gum is exposed in the scars and seeping gum on the massive and scarred trunk like the battle scars of an ancient Elder. In the process of creating this work I searched for meaning from my experience of being taken to this place. I knew that this was a special place and my Uncle showed great respect for this monument to the past, its relationship to us and ours to its survival.

## *Birds Eye*



38. Jenny Murray-Jones, *Birds Eye* 2016, oil and wax medium on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm.

Under the massive bottleneck gum are the many limbs which, over the centuries have fallen to the earth leaving behind their scars on the trunk of the tree. It appears that these limbs have 'birds eye' patterning in them, an unusual phenomenon where the timber has numerous pock marks. It is not known what the cause of this figure is, however some theorise it as scarring from regeneration growth nodules which erupt from between the bark and the sapwood after bushfire.

I have worked up the textures in this painting using wax medium made from melted bees wax and mixed with the paint. This gives the paint a thickness

which has then been scored, allowed to dry and then coated with a glaze which settles into the etched scars in the paint. This becomes a very tactile method of giving the surface of the work the feel of this ancient weathered timber and speaks of that which it knows of Country.

Symbolically white is the colour of death and the ghostly white haze over the limb tells of death and regeneration. Evidence of the lifetime of this massive tree is scattered around under its canopy. Fallen limbs are evidence to the endurance and the cyclical nature of this Country and the seasons. The texture and features of the timber are reminiscent of the lined faces of Elders from the past and the weathering of the forces of nature which shape our identity. These are the aesthetic textures of the landscape, the colours and the remnants of that which is shed from the living elements of this Country.

The composition is horizontal in structure yet the fallen leaves lay at every angle in a multitude of layers over each other decomposing over the centuries to feed the earth. Timber has multiple meanings, it provides fire and warmth, tools and implements, weapons and structures, canoes and vessels. Here we have a material essential for our life and wellbeing, a resource which continues to serve us.

## *Aggie's Swamp*



39. Jenny Murray-Jones, *Aggie's Swamp* 2014, Oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm.

*Aggie's Swamp* 2014, tells of a time of love and care, survival and independence for family in a significant place which holds so much memory for those who lived there. The work is representational, yet it speaks of a time when Aboriginal people were not welcome in town. Significant is the way in which the tree is represented, snaking, writhing and twisting like the arms of some creature, the ambiguity here causes an uneasiness. However this one significant tree stands strong, spiritually holding within it the strength and knowledge of our ancestors and our past.

Hamilton and Jaaniste comment on the outcome of artistic research that is *both* evocative and effective:

While the artefact that is produced as an outcome of this type of research may engender an evocative dimension, it can be evaluated – because the principal research goal involves problem solving – in terms of its elegance as a solution and the artefact can be tested in terms of its efficacy (how well it has effected the intended change). Empirical evidence may therefore serve to validate the new knowledge that is invested in the artefact. (Hamilton & Jaaniste 2014, p.234)

This theory fits well with Indigenous Knowledge Systems as part of our philosophy is that knowledge comes from experience, deep listening, sensory observation and the skills or abilities creating art. In terms of contemporary art, we value the ability of our artwork to evoke memory, and to pass on the multi-faceted knowledge and our perspective of history.

This evocation cannot necessarily be measured and evaluated in specific terms because the artefact may have no direct ‘application’ but instead may be purposefully poetic and irreducible in its meaning. (Hamilton & Jaaniste 2014, p.234)

Emerging from the work in this research is for me a renewed connection to Country incorporating our peoples and past journeys across Country. This speaks of my ancestors understanding of our world and crosses into our reality. Painting *Aggie's Swamp* (see figure 39 on p.223) brought emotions of loss and severed knowledge of culture, of curfews which were enforced around towns and enforced detainments onto missions. Yet there was a freedom in this place. Aunty Aggie was a strong and resourceful woman, she prospered in an alien regime with all of her strengths and commitments to continuing culture.

The movement of the tree contradicts the strong verticals as they wind their way organically outwards and upwards. They demonstrate the living aspect, yet the figures are quite the opposite, they represent those who are no longer with us, still they stand proud and strong. The palette is predominantly cool, yet the dappled sun light across the children, hints of the contrast between the cool shade of the tree and its protection from the hot summer sun. There is a shimmer around the figures which again represents the presence and fleeting flicker of these spirits from the past.

This work provides reference to a long past memory of my grandmother's. As a young woman she would have longed for this place after she was removed from her family. This was a place of refuge and safety in the care of parents and Elders. I have a photograph of my father as a toddler behind a

car just like Aunty Aggie's with dry leafy littered ground reminiscent of this area. I imagine him and his sister at this age being taken to visit Aunty Aggie. These are the assumed fragments of family stories which populate my imagination. I am there in the moment of these fractions of time in places where they lived and experienced life. These fragments feed knowledge and prompt research and experiences of locations.

There is a dreamlike sense here, that these figures are placed here from the past. Like cut outs, they have been placed back in the landscape from old family photographs. We know they are no longer living, yet being in this place one feels their presence. Latent knowledge comes from a place which is difficult to define, it is expressed from deep inside where there is a mixture of personal experience, learnt skills and physical knowing. I can compare this to Polanyi's theory of tacit knowledge.

In the preface to his major book *Personal Knowledge*, Polanyi writes:

I regard knowing as an active comprehension of the things known, an action that requires skill. Skilful knowing and doing is performed by subordinating a set of particulars, as clues or tools, to shaping of a skilful achievement, whether practical or theoretical. We may then be said to become subsidiarily aware of these particulars within our focal awareness of the coherent entity that we achieve. (Polanyi 1958, p. vi)

In addition to this, Barrett suggests that in relation to tacit knowledge and Polanyi's theories, that this can then connect to the value of cultural knowledges.

In his influential work *Knowing and Being* (1969) Michael Polanyi asserts that there is an implicit dimension of knowing that he theorizes through notions of tacit and personal knowledge. Polanyi argues that all knowledge is fundamentally tacit since it includes more than what we can tell. Colonisers who either deny or try to capture and commodify such knowledge, put cultural diversity and specificity at risk. (Barrett 2017, n.p.)

The tactile and the visual come together to stimulate the senses visually and through memory and connection to Country. Each individual element physically moves and operates in relation to its own embodied manner, just as each dancer has capabilities unique to themselves, this is demonstrated in an individual material expression and style. Hence creative outcomes are the embodied experiential images that articulate insights that cannot be predicted prior to the realisation of the work.

My studio practice draws on much of my earlier life, memory, stories, experiences and relationships. As an extension of my knowledge, my arts practice expresses internal being and as I grow older, I understand more and

more what *angoorram* is and how we communicate from this perspective which expresses what it is 'to be' (Bowe, Peeler & Atkinson 1997).

Contemporary Indigenous art is an ongoing expression of culture and experience. Our narratives are communicated through art and performance, as mentioned before, these form a valid part of our ceremony and memory challenging the amnesia of mainstream Australian society.

Marcia Langton claims that Aboriginal art expresses the possibility of human intimacy with landscapes:

This is the key to its power: it makes available a rich tradition of human ethics and relationships with place and other species to a worldwide audience. For the settler Australian audience, caught ambiguously between old and new lands, their appreciation of this art embodies at least a striving for the kind of citizenship that republicans wanted: to belong to this place rather than another.

(Langton 2000, p.11–16)

*The Island*



40. Jenny Murray-Jones, *The Island* 2017, oil on Belgian Linen, 112 x 137cm.

The Island Balranald holds great meaning for our family and many other families who have lived there over the years. Ewen Cameron Junior was instrumental in assisting the Aboriginal community in petitioning the Governor of NSW in 1892 for this 140 acres to become a reserve (Hope 2009, p.1). There are many burials on this land which are unmarked and just a few scant remains of other dwellings remain today. The Island is now part of NSW National Parks Yanga Station.

This work speaks of family and of the past, just the remnants of their homes remain, yet significant is that their presence is felt. The hearth of the family

home, the heart of daily life, the stories told, the good and the bad. The meals cooked and the conversations had, all around the kitchen fire. The chair, a remnant of times gone by tells of ingenuity and survival. This painting like many of the others operate ambiguously to evoke a sense of loss and a sense of reclamation. There is always loss over generations, but it is through creative practice that some renewal is made possible, brought into the present and later taken into the future. The colours of this country, the earthy tones of Balranald bush, the spirit of the Country are conveyed here. The composition is an enclosed one, yet there is no horizon and the focus is on those elements of human existence and now its abandonment. This idyllic place and its voices are brought back into the present through my making and viewing of this painting — the sounds of the bush and the Murrumbidgee flowing by, the cockies screeching overhead and the crisp sound of the leaf litter underfoot.

The colours give the sense of warmth of times gone by, yet systematically the dislocation and dismantlement of our people and their lives are recognised in the fallen chimney and scattered bricks. My Uncle Besley spoke of the times he brought ducks he had caught for his mother to cook on that kitchen fire. Families had gardens and fences around their homes, they were resourceful and skilled. They swam their horses across the rivers and creeks or rowed across in a canoe or boat. All human activity here is just a memory but a memory that is sensed and felt in the present moment of viewing. It is this

aspect of evocation that attests to the power of art to reclaim and reveal  
what has been lost.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Filling the gaps and voids in our family history has been the main focus in this research. The how? the why? the when?- and the where from which family members were taken needs to be answered and a better understanding is needed of our family dynamics. Much of this still remains, to a degree fragmented. In addition to this question of voids and gaps, I researched the oral accounts of Elders who hold so much knowledge of the past. Bringing together all which is known and attempting to reveal that which was yet to be known, is a huge task and this also involved researching through Government documents and archives, family photographs and fieldwork, travelling to locations where family had lived. While journeying to these places it was important to sit and contemplate, feel and see what was there. To know and to soak in the feel of Country, to put oneself in a position of familiarity with it. This is an important and meaningful practice as are one's acknowledgements of ancestors and creation spirits. One must ask them for their approval and safety while on Country. Ask them for their welcoming.

Another important question was to develop ways in which the use of artistic practice could translate more than just the story of their lives, but the evocative nature of what it is that has fragmented our lives, when looking back. To bring this to the works, involved research, artistic response in the

form of sketches and photographs, along with the contemplation of putting together works which articulate the affect and emotion of this. Research concerning the “whitewashing” of institutionalised children was of prime importance, in order to fully understand how this was a method of cultural genocide as were the proposed theories at the time of ‘breeding the race out’ through assimilation.

The work that the artwork *does*, is to reveal and present a much deeper response to the questions initially asked and which I now realise articulates an Indigenous ontology. The value of this new knowledge is also related to the overcoming of amnesia and the re-writing of colonial history. This will bring to life the people of our family’s past and humanise them in a way which communicates the many traumas and often pain of their existence from an Indigenous perspective. The power of art to do this comes from an inter-cultural aesthetic which works significantly through each of the works as art becomes an ongoing alternative as a mode of transmission of knowledge.

Identifying the gaps and voids in our lives, researching, yarning, looking, responding and the materialisation of my creative practice, has allowed me to examine the many elements of what it is to be, to know and to do. There are a variety of notions of all of these elements and as an Aboriginal woman the process has brought me into a place of new knowledge. The experience

has engendered a closer connection to all which had evaded us through separation and institutionalisation and the bigotry of the past.

I believe I have demonstrated the power of creative practice and shown how it connects to who we are and where we have come from. Indigenous knowledge and cultural practice have always had this relationship with visual practice and with this, works towards a great understanding of an Indigenous ontology in a broad sense. Relatedness and connection to all entities on Country is visually brought through ceremony to be experienced and contemplated. The words aren't spoken, the stories aren't verbal, yet the meanings are presented through the act of creation and practice, performance and ceremony.

In creating these visual works, I allow myself to inhabit these places in time in order to understand and connect to who I am, this experience being a very powerful one emotionally. Oral histories shared on Country in the company of Elders was an enormously valued experience which in various ways is translated through creative practice. Some information is secret in terms of traditional protocols and these stories are respected knowledge not to be shared. The way in which we look at the world is fundamental to our being and cultural beliefs. Our perspectives of the landscape hold meaning,

memory and for Indigenous people Country is alive with the spirits of our ancestors as Langton has articulated.

The materiality of this body of work and the meaning as a whole are interrelated. We can only respond creatively to what we know and who we are, and with both visual images and words, this research has taken on the task of exploring these gaps and voids to an extent where much is revealed in terms of our identity. Aboriginal art is a continuum and as such, artwork positively identifies us as contemporary peoples with knowledge that transcends all former colonial notions which have in the past disabled and marginalised the value of our expression.

Throughout this research I have examined the work of many Indigenous researchers in order to gain their perspectives of Indigenous knowledge systems. This empirical based practice led research sits well with Indigenous theories of knowledge, as our beliefs and valued knowledge relate well to sensory observation, material practice and experience in order to generate and share new knowledge.

This practice led research is significant for all Indigenous peoples as it presents our voice within a western academy. Working both ways, this allows Indigenous and non-Indigenous people access, understanding and

respect for each other's knowledge systems. I would also envisage that many Indigenous scholars will also look to artistic research as yet another way in which we can hold onto our culture and ensure that our contribution continues to be valued by all.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, P 1995, 'Priorities in Aboriginal health', in G Robinson (ed) *Aboriginal Health, Social and Cultural Transitions: Proceedings of a Conference at the Northern Territory University Darwin, 1996*, NTU Press Darwin, pp. 15–18.
- Arbon, V 2008, 'Knowing from where?', in Andrew Gunston (ed), *History politics & knowledge, Essays in Australian Indigenous Studies*, Australian Scholarly Publishing Pty Ltd, North Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, pp.145–146.
- Attwood, B & Magowan, F 2001, *Telling Stories, Indigenous History & Memory in Australia & New Zealand*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, Australia.
- Barrett, E 2017 (forthcoming) 'Knowledge as Interaction and Intra-action: Problematizing the Notion of "Data" in Creative arts Research' In R Irwin & A Sinner (eds) *Provoke: International Perspectives on Visual Arts Dissertations in Education*, Concordia University Press, Montreal.

Barrett, E 2016, Re-positioning traditional craft: knowledge affect and social identity, in C Pattanayak, (ed), *Repositioning Folklore and Indigenous Knowledge Systems*, Centurion University Press Odisha India.

Barrett, E & Bolt, B 2014, *Material Inventions, Applying Creative Arts Research*, I B Tauris, London, United Kingdom.

Barrett, E 2011, *Kristeva Reframed, Thinkers for the Arts*, I B Tauris, London and New York.

Barrett, E 2010, 'Art as the production of knowledge' in E Barrett, & B Bolt, (eds), *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, pp. 1–13, I B Tauris, London and New York.

Barrett, E 2007, 'Experiential learning in practice as research: context, method, knowledge', *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, vol. 6. no. 2, pp. 115–124  
retrieved 4 November 2015, Deakin University Australia,  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249918879\\_Experiential\\_learning\\_in\\_practice\\_as\\_research\\_context\\_method\\_knowledge](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/249918879_Experiential_learning_in_practice_as_research_context_method_knowledge)

Barrett, E & Bolt, B 2004, *Art Beyond Representation: The Performative Power of Image*, I B Tauris, London and New York USA.

Barthes, R 1984, *Camera Lucida, Reflections on Photography*, Hill and Wang, New York USA.

Bessarab D & Ng'andu B, 2010, 'Yarning about yarning as a legitimate method on Indigenous research', *International Journal of Critical Indigenous Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 37–50, retrieved 29 October 2015, [http://www.isrn.qut.edu.au/pdf/ijcis/v3n1\\_2010/Final\\_Bessarab\\_Bridget\\_IJCIS.pdf](http://www.isrn.qut.edu.au/pdf/ijcis/v3n1_2010/Final_Bessarab_Bridget_IJCIS.pdf)

Bhabha, H 2012, 'Race Time and the Revision of Modernity', *Oxford Literary Review*, vol. 13, no. 1, Chapter 24, pp. 354–368, retrieved 17 December 2014, <http://www.euppublishing.com.ezproxyf.deakin.edu.au/doi/abs/10.3366/olr.1991.009>

Birch, T 2013, 'Black armbands and white veils: John Howard's moral amnesia', The University of Melbourne, *Melbourne Historical Journal*, vol. 25, (1997) , pp 363–372, retrieved 14 May 2016, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy-b.deakin.edu.au/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=098a679c-5242-40f6-a7db-4d11f9af43f5@sessionmgr101&hid=104>

Bolt, B 2004, *Art Beyond Representation*, I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, London UK.

Bowe, H, Peeler L & Atkinson S 1997, *Yorta Yorta Language Heritage*, pp. 79–189, Cherry Graphics, Nottinghill Victoria Australia.

Butlin, N 1983, *Our Original Aggression*, George Allen & Unwin Australia Pty Ltd, North Sydney Australia.

Burn, I & Stephen, A 1991, 'Namatjira's White Mask: A partial interpretation', in M Megan (eds) *The Heritage of Namatjira, Catalogue*, Tandanya, Adelaide South Australia, pp. 249-282.

Cato, N 1976, *Mister Maloga*, St Lucia Queensland, University of Queensland Press Australia.

Clarke, M 2014. *Experimenta Recharge 6<sup>th</sup> International Biennial of Media Art*, retrieved 5 September 2014, <http://experimenta.org/recharge/maree-clarke/>

Creed, B & Hoorn, J 2001, *Body Trade, Captivity, Cannibalism and Colonialism in the Pacific*, Routledge, Pluto Press Australia.

Critchett, J 1998, *Untold Stories, memories and lives of Victorian Koories*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton South Victoria, Australia.

Cubby, D 2010, 'Within an illustrated box: ontology of a photography in demise'. An extract from the exegesis photography: the dominant aesthetic. *Global Media Journal Australian Edition*, vol. 4 no. 2 2010, pp. 1–11, retrieved 20 December 2014, <http://researchdirect.westernsydney.edu.au/islandora/object/uws:10988>

Deakin University Ethics Committee and the NSW Aboriginal Ethics Committee and AIATSIS 2012, *Guidelines for Ethical Research in Indigenous Studies*, AIATSIS Canberra ACT Australia.

Dewey, J 1934, *Art as Experience*, 1980 edn, The Putnam Publishing Group, New York USA.

Denzin, N & Lincoln Y 1978, *Qualitative Enquiry*, pp. 1–4, retrieved 26 September 2016, <http://www.personal.psu.edu/wxh139/Quality.htm>

Family – Australian Museum, 2012. <http://australianmuseum.net.au/Indigenous-Australia-Family>, retrieved 23 February 2014.

Fitzgerald, T 2005, 'History of Education', November, *Archives of memory and memories of archive: CMS women's letters and diaries 1823–35*, vol. 34, no. 6, pp. 657–674, Routledge, Taylor & Francis UK.

Flagg, S & Gurciullo, S 2008, *Footprints: The Journey of Lucy & Percy Pepper*, National Archives of Australia and Public Records Office Victoria.

Ganesharajah, C 2009, *Indigenous Health and Wellbeing: The Importance of Country*, Report no 1/2009 April, Native Title Research Unit, AIATSIS Canberra Australia.

Garbutt, R, Biermann, S & Offord, B, 2012 'Into the borderlands: unruly pedagogy, tactile theory and the decolonising nation', *Critical Arts Projects Language*, vol.26, no. 26, March, pp. 62–81, retrieved 14 July 2014, Routledge Taylor & Francis UK, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy-b.deakin.edu.au/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=296b554e-37bd-41f3-a098-97ac4336734f@sessionmgr4007&hid=4108>

Garden, W 2011, 'Ethical witnessing and the portrait photograph: Brook Andrew', *Journal of Australian Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2, June. pp. 251–264, retrieved 4 June 2015, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy-b.deakin.edu.au/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=ef75f6de-62dc-41fb-a9c0-4d8ca9bbfc49@sessionmgr120&hid=127>

Gibson, C P & Fox A 2015, *Bes; Best of Two Worlds*, Balranald Incorporated, NSW Australia.

Gingold, S 2011, 'Maree Clarke - Ritual and ceremony', *Right Now, Human Rights in Australia*, retrieved 6 July 2016,  
<http://rightnow.org.au/artwork/maree-clarke-ritual-and-ceremony/>

Grant, E K 2004, *Unseen, Unheard, Unspoken: Exploring the Relationship Between Aboriginal Spirituality & Community Development*, Thesis, University of South Australia.

Grenshaw, D A 2008, *Child and Adolescent Psychotherapy; Wounded Spirits and Healing Paths*. Lexington Books, Plymouth UK.

Haebich, A 2000, *Broken Circles, Fragmenting Indigenous Families 1800 – 2000*, Fremantle Arts Centre Press, Fremantle WA Australia.

Hamilton J & Jaaniste L 2014, 'The effective and the evocative: A spectrum of creative practice research', in E Barrett & B Bolt (eds), *Material Inventions, Applying Creative Arts Research*, I B Tauris, London, United Kingdom, pp. 232–255.

Hansen, D 2004, *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*, Art Exhibitions Australia Limited and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

Harrison, B 2002, 'Photographic Visions and Narrative Inquiry', School of Social Sciences, University of East London, *Narrative Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 1,

pp. 87–111, retrieved 10 April 2015, John Benjamins BV., Amsterdam,  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233573967\\_Photos\\_and\\_narrative\\_inquiry](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233573967_Photos_and_narrative_inquiry)

Harvey, K & ACES 2003, *Aboriginal Elders' Voices: Stories of the Tide of History. Victorian Indigenous Elders' life stories & oral histories*, Aboriginal Community Elders Service Melbourne by Language Australia East Brunswick, Victoria, Australia.

Hewitt, J 2013, *Scientists Prove that Fears and Memories can be Inherited via Sperm*, retrieved 1 October, 2014,  
<http://www.extremetech.com/extreme/171990-scientists-prove-that-fears-and-memories-can-be-inherited-via-sperm>

Horn, J 2007a, *Strange Fruit: Testimony and Memory in Julie Dowling's Portrait*, curated by Jeanette Horn, The Ian Potter Museum of Art, Melbourne Australia.

Horn, J. 2007b, *Australian Pastoral, The Making of a White Landscape*, Fremantle Press, North Fremantle Western Australia.

Hope, J 2009, *Camerons at Balranald*, retrieved 28 December 2016,  
<http://newsarch.rootsweb.com/th/read/AUS-NSW-WEST/2009-10/1256962506>

Hosseini, V 2007, *Uncanny Beauty: Interpreting the portraits of Julie Dowling, Strange Fruit: Testimony and Memory in Julie Dowling's Portraits*, Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne, retrieved 3 December 2013, [http://www.emsah.uq.edu.au/awsr/new\\_site/awbr\\_archive/144/uncanny.htm](http://www.emsah.uq.edu.au/awsr/new_site/awbr_archive/144/uncanny.htm)

Houston, J 2007, 'Indigenous autoethnography: Formulating our knowledge, our way', *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, vol. 36, supp, pp. 45–50, retrieved 13 April 2013, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305889181\\_Indigenous\\_Autoethnography\\_Formulating\\_Our\\_Knowledge\\_Our\\_Way](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305889181_Indigenous_Autoethnography_Formulating_Our_Knowledge_Our_Way)

Huysen, A 2000, *Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia. Public Culture*, Duke University Press, pp. 21–38, retrieved 11 February 2016, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy-b.deakin.edu.au/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=6b52befc-1fb6-4c21-a5af-981d0931c9b2@sessionmgr102&hid=119>

Ingold, T 2010, *Ways of Mind-Walking: Reading, Writing, Painting*, Visual Studies, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, pp. 15–23, retrieved 6 December 2016, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14725861003606712>

Ingold, T 1993, *The Temporality of the Landscape*. *World Archaeology*, vol. 25. no. 2. pp. 152–174, retrieved 23 September 2016, *Conceptions of Time and Ancient Society*, Taylor and Francis Group, <http://www.jstor.org>

Kleinert, S 2010, Clothing the postcolonial body: Art, artefacts and action in south eastern Australia, *Design Enquiry*, Issue 2 2010, Australian National University Press, pp. 1–7, retrieved 18 June 2015, <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p212111/pdf/04-clothing.pdf>

Kovach, M 2005, 'Emerging from the Margins', in L Brown & S Strega, (eds) *Research as Resistance*, Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press: pp.19–36, retrieved 6 January 2015, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy-b.deakin.edu.au/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzE0NTkxNF9fQU41?sid=de005302-62fe-4491-8778-bb676adeccf2@sessionmgr101&vid=1&hid=119&format=EB>

Kubler, A 2014, 'Introducing: Daniel Boyd With aesthetically beautiful work that has the power to unnerve, Daniel Boyd's star is on the rise', *Manuscript*, retrieved, 12 January 2016, <http://www.manuscriptdaily.com/2014/08/introducing-daniel-boyd/>

Landon, C 2011, *Black Swan: A Koorie Woman's Life*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, Sydney, NSW, Australia.

Landon, C & Tonkin, D 1999, *Jackson's Track: Memoir of a Dreamtime Place*, Viking Press, Ringwood, Victoria, Australia.

Langton, M 2000, 'Homeland: Sacred Visions and the Settler State', *Artlink* vol.20, no. 1, pp. 11–16.

### **Legislation**

Aborigines Protection Act 1909 No 25, retrieved 23 June 2014,  
[http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num\\_act/apa1909n25262](http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num_act/apa1909n25262)

Aborigines Protection Act 1915 No 23, retrieved 23 June 2014,  
[http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num\\_act/apa1915n2321](http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num_act/apa1915n2321)

Aborigines Protection (Amendment) Act 1918 No 7, retrieved 23 June 2014,  
[http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num\\_act/apa1918n7342](http://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/nsw/num_act/apa1918n7342)

Board for the protection of Aborigines, retrieved 23 June 2014,  
<http://search.records.nsw.gov.au/agencies/559>

Report of the Board for the Protection of Aborigines 1912 / 1913  
Legislative Assembly New South Wales, retrieved 23 June 2014,  
[http://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/digitised\\_collections/remove/23014.pdf](http://aiatsis.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/digitised_collections/remove/23014.pdf)

Lydon, J 2005, *Eye Contact, Photographing Indigenous Australians*, Duke University Press, Durham and London UK.

Martin, B 2013, *Immaterial Land and Indigenous Ideology: Refiguring Australian Art and Culture*, PhD Thesis Deakin University January 2013.

Martin, K 2008, *Please Knock Before you Enter: Aboriginal Regulation of Outsiders and Implications for Researchers*, Post Press, Teneriffe, QLD, Australia.

McLean, I 2011, *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art*, *Writings on Aboriginal contemporary art edited and introduced by Ian McLean*, Institute of Modern Art, & Power Publications, Power Institute Foundation for Art and Visual Culture University of Sydney NSW Australia.

McLean, I 2004, 'Figuring Nature: Painting the Indigenous Landscape', in David Hansen (ed), *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart Tasmania Australia, pp. 122–126.

McPhee, J 2004, 'The symbolic landscape', in David Hansen (ed), *John Glover and the Colonial Picturesque*, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart Tasmania Australia, pp. 110–121.

Mertens, D & Hesse-Biber, S 2012, 'Triangulation and Mixed Methods Research: Provocative Positions', *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, SAGE Publications, retrieved 25 September 2016, pp. 75–79, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1558689812437100>

Moreton-Robinson, A 2004, *Whitening Race, Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism*, Aboriginal Studies Press for AIATSIS Canberra ACT, Australia.

National Health and Medical Research Council 2007, retrieved 30 September 2014, <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/e72>

Neville, AO 1947, *Australian's Coloured Minority: Its Place in the Community*. Western Australia, self-published, (under arrangement with the Commonwealth Literary Fund), Currawong Publishing Sydney.

Nicholls, C 2014, 'Dreamtime and the dreaming—an introduction', *The Conversation*, January 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014, retrieved 3 August 2015, pp. 1–7, <http://theconversation.com/dreamtime-and-thedreaming-an-introduction-20833>

Pascoe, B 2014, *Dark Emu Black Seeds: Agriculture or Accident*, Magabala Books Aboriginal Corporation Broome Western Australia.

Peeler, L 2008, *River Connect, An Aboriginal Oral History. The Cultural Landscape of the 'Flat' Shepparton Mooroopna*, City of Greater Shepparton, Victoria Australia.

Peirce CS 1998, *The Essential Writings*, in Edward C. Moore, (ed) New York, Prometheus Books.

Penney, J 1979, *The Death of Queen Aggie: Culture Contact in the mid-Murray Region*, Department of History, Honours Thesis, La Trobe University, Victoria Australia.

Perkins, H 2011, 'Blak artists, cultural activists – 1993' in Ian McLean (ed) *How Aborigines Invented the Idea of Contemporary Art, Writings on Aboriginal Contemporary Art*, Institute of Modern Art, & Power Publications, Power Institute Foundation for Art and Visual Culture University of Sydney NSW Australia.

Polanyi, M 1958 & 2015, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*, Enlarged Edition. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, pp. xxviii – 428.

Riggs, DW 2007, *Taking up the Challenge: Critical Race & Whiteness Studies in a Post-Colonising Nation*, Crawford House Publishing, Belair, South Australia.

Said, E 1979, *Orientalism*, Vintage Books, New York USA.

Sayers, A 1997, *Aboriginal Artists of the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne.

Schmidt, DJ 2013, *Between Word And Image : Heidegger, Klee, And Gadamer On Gesture And Genesis*, Bloomington, Indiana University USA.

Sontag, S 1973, *On Photography*, Dell Publishing Co. Inc, New York USA.

Stroud, S R 2014, 'The art of experience: Dewey on the aesthetic', *Value Inquiry Book Series*, vol. 275, pp. 33–46, retrieved 11 November 2015, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.ezproxy-b.deakin.edu.au/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=3&sid=f9c8fb54-baa9-444d-a320-c335a37efc29@sessionmgr4009&hid=4211>

Stroud, S R 2007, 'Dewey on art as evocative communication', *Education and Culture*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 6-26, retrieved 6 July 2015, Purdue University Press USA, <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/248167/pdf>

Tourism Australia, Map of Aboriginal Australia (extract, South-Eastern Australian Nations) retrieved 23 December 2016,

[http://www.tourism.australia.com/images/aboriginal-tourism/map\\_largeweb.jpg](http://www.tourism.australia.com/images/aboriginal-tourism/map_largeweb.jpg)

Trounson, A 2016, 'Aboriginal voices in the afterlife of photographs', *Pursuit* The University of Melbourne, pp. 1-12, retrieved 30 November 2016, <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/aboriginal-voices-in-the-afterlife-of-photographs>

Tucker, M 1978, *If Everyone Cared*, Ure Smith Sydney, Australia.

Tuhiwai Smith, L 1999, *Decolonizing Methodologies, Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Zed Books Ltd London & New York, University of Otago Press Dunedin, New Zealand.

Vickery, J 2004, 'Indigenous insights into oral history, social determinates and decolonisation', *Beyond Band aids*. Lowitja Institute Melbourne University Australia.

Wilson, S 2008, 'Can a ceremony include a literature review?' *Research is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, pp, 43-61

Wilson, S 2001, 'What is an Indigenous research methodology?' *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 2001, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 175–179, retrieved 4 June 2014, Research Library.