



Dyarra Murrama Guwing
The Sun Setting Red



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Barbara McGrady

Nadeena Dixon

Carmen Glynn-Braun

Co-curated by Rachael Kiang & Kyra Kum-Sing

4 November – 5 December 2020

Proudly Sponsored by **Lane Cove** Council and **URM** Group.

Cover image: Barbara McGrady, *Kerry Johnson Dance Group. Eora Journey, Bara, Tarpeian Precinct Lawn, Royal Botanical Gardens*, 2018, Giclee print, hand lacquered. Unique. 78x138cm. Photography by Jennifer Brady.

Left: Nadeena Dixon, *Seven Sisters Travelling Dilly Bag*, 2020, hand-woven hessian with acrylic paint. Dimensions Variable. Photography by Bianca Couchman.



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Foreword

Since time immemorial Aboriginal people have continued to maintain their traditional knowledge and cultural practices when caring and protecting their country.

Dyarra Murruma Guwing exhibition gives you an insight into the matrilineal perspective and concerns when caring for country and the environment. The exhibition title *Dyarra Murruma Guwing* means 'the sun setting red' in Gadigal language. When developing the title for this exhibition we wanted the audience to see the visual representation. In recent times, Australia has seen drought, bush fires, pandemic and the effects of climate change.

The artists featured in *Dyarra Murruma Guwing* are Barbara McGrady a Gamilaroi/ Gomeri Yinah (Woman) from North West NSW and Southern Queensland, Nadeena Dixon a Wiradjuri, Yuin and Gadigal Dharug-Boorongberid and Carmen Glynn-Braun Southern Arrernte, Kaytetye and Ammatyerre nations across Central Australia. As First Nations Women, the artists share their knowledge and visual stories around their relationship people between and the environment from a holistic perspective.

In today's society which is mostly patriarchal, our role as Aboriginal women is to continue challenging institutions through creating dialogue in order to be represented on an even playing field.

As a Traditional Owner and Practitioner, I have vast experience in Matrilineal law, ensuring all facets of women's business is enshrined in the presentation and adaptation of contemporary Aboriginal performance, art and life today. Maintaining that strong connection and presence, between the very old and the new.

This teaching has been handed down through the generations since time immemorial. As a Practitioner it is part of who I am. It is part of what I do and practise today, under the presence, guidance and directions of senior knowledge holders within my bloodlines. My work may seem as one but I am just a vehicle entrusted to honour that matrilineal input is included in today's society.

Maintaining the ecological interaction between earth, water, sky, people and spirit are aligned as one with the environment.

When caring for country and environment, it is important to look at our own behaviours around the preservation and protecting of land.

Adopting traditional methods of cultural burning practices and access to clean water are vital elements of environmental protection.

Finally, I would like to thank everyone involved in this exhibition especially the artists Babara McGrady, Nadeena Dixon and Carmen Glynn-Braun and also my co-curator Rachael Kiang and the team at Gallery Lane Cove + Creative Studios.

Kyra Kum-Sing

Malera Bandjalan & Mitakoodi

Co-curator

Decolonising the Anthropocene and Aboriginal Women Artists

Sometime in late 2018, an exhibition idea exploring human-environment relations began to germinate. It was a natural progression from research I undertook a number of years ago into environmental art of the ecological and activist persuasion, as well as an exhibition I co-curated on the ecological impact of urban living. Art on climate change and sustainability gained currency in the late 2000s, following the humanities' embrace of the Anthropocene¹ concept which identifies humans as the primary agents impacting climate and the environment. On my part, it was overdue to depart from the previous course – to engage Aboriginal artists and collaborating with a First Nations curator to present their views on the degradation and preservation of our natural environment. The impetus for this is two-fold. First, the universal logic of Anthropocentric thinking largely disregards systemic colonial and racial inequalities, which in turn instigates urbanisation, deforestation, resource depletion and eco-system destruction. The second driver was the unfortunate 2019–2020 bushfires in Australia, a terrible season for New South Wales in particular, where the intensity and extent of the fires were unprecedented. This gave rise to a sense of urgency for a creative response to this crisis.

In seeking out collaborators, my inclination was to involve female artists and a female co-curator. Part of this stems from the alignment of women, Mother Earth and healing but more pertinently, to emphasise the importance of Aboriginal matrilineal perspectives of land care as a holistic approach to the problem of environmental degradation and climate change. In privileging the voices of Aboriginal women artists, *Dyarra Murruma Guwing*'s assertion of matrilineal knowledge differs from a western construct of feminism. As First Nations scholar Dr Crystal McKinnon, a Yamatji woman, writer and academic articulated at a recent lecture² "So white feminism pits culture over nature, that is why white feminism will always exclude Indigenous people worldwide."³ For Aboriginal women (and men), the self is inextricably linked to the earth, land and community; culture and nature are one. This is vastly different from the western tendency to compartmentalise, separating body from the land and highlighting the individual over community. Aboriginal women's foundation of strength lies in their community and connection to country.

While the three women artists in *Dyarra Murruma Guwing* all come from different clans, 'mobs' and generations, their stories about human-environment relations are rooted in a common standpoint of non-division between humans and earth, nature and culture. Through various mediums of contemporary expression drawing on each artist's cultural traditions, they present a picture of hope, healing and vitality. Barbara McGrady's photographs of women dancing as rituals to connect with the land, Nadeena Dixon's enmeshing of traditional weaving with animation projections and Carmen Glynn-Braun's multi-faceted light installation may differ stylistically but their materiality's sensorial intimacy and immediacy – earthy lacquered paper, hessian interspersed with vivid digital colour, LED lights with red soil, coalesce into a space of calm, an antidote to eco-anxiety brought about by our climate condition. To mitigate environmental damage, a way forward is to decentre the human, to regard ourselves as an interconnected species-node in a vast, diverse eco-system. Critically, we must ensure the inclusion of First Nations' cultures in discussions of the Anthropocene and adopt Aboriginal approaches to environmental responsibility. Preservation of nature will follow once respect is engendered.

Rachael Kiang

Curator

¹ The Anthropocene was a term first coined and popularised by atmospheric chemist Paul J. Crutzen in the early 2000s.

² Held at National Gallery of Australia, part of the *Know My Name* conference

³ Gina Fairley, "Decolonising Feminism: A First Nations Perspective", ArtsHub article 13 November 2020.

Barbara McGrady

Gamilaroi/Gomeroi

As a Gomeroi Yinnar photographer, it has always been my responsibility to bring our stories into the public domain, to connect and engage audiences with images through a black lens. For most of my life, I have documented the diversity of Aboriginal experiences: politics, sport, dance, song, community, family. Nginyaningy Maran Yaliwaunga Ngaara-li (Our Ancestors Are Always Watching)

I capture positive images to show us as we really are performing our culture, to show our performance and connecting us to land and culture. It provides an insight into what it means to be a First Nations person surviving and thriving in a colonial world.

Biography Barbara McGrady is a Gamilaroi/Gomeroi Murri Yinah (Woman) from North Western NSW and Southern Queensland. As Australia's first Aboriginal female photojournalist, she is a champion of true stories and histories of the Aboriginal experience. Her deeply engaging photos reveal intimate knowledge of the conflict between two worlds – that of Aboriginal culture and connection to country and the contemporary Australian way of life. This has been informed by what her family suffered – the women taken away to Cootamundra Girls Home while the men were sent to work as indentured labourers. As a photographic artist and activist, she depicts the achievements of Aboriginal people, an empowering assertion of identity and pride, with an infectious, uplifting energy. McGrady is the recipient of the National Indigenous Human Rights Anthony Mundine Courage Award for social documentary photography (2014) and the Solid Screen International Award for Indigenous Women in Film and Photography for Photo Media documentation (2015). Her photographic works were recently presented at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and Campbelltown Arts Centre as part of the 2020 Biennale of Sydney, NIRIN.





Barbara McGrady, *Dyarrra Murruma Guwing - The Sun Setting Red*, 2020, 11 suspended Giclée prints, hand lacquered, installed at Gallery Lane Cove + Creative Studios. Photography by Jennifer Brady.

Nadeena Dixon

Wiradjuri/Yuin/Gadigal (Dharug-Boorongberigal)

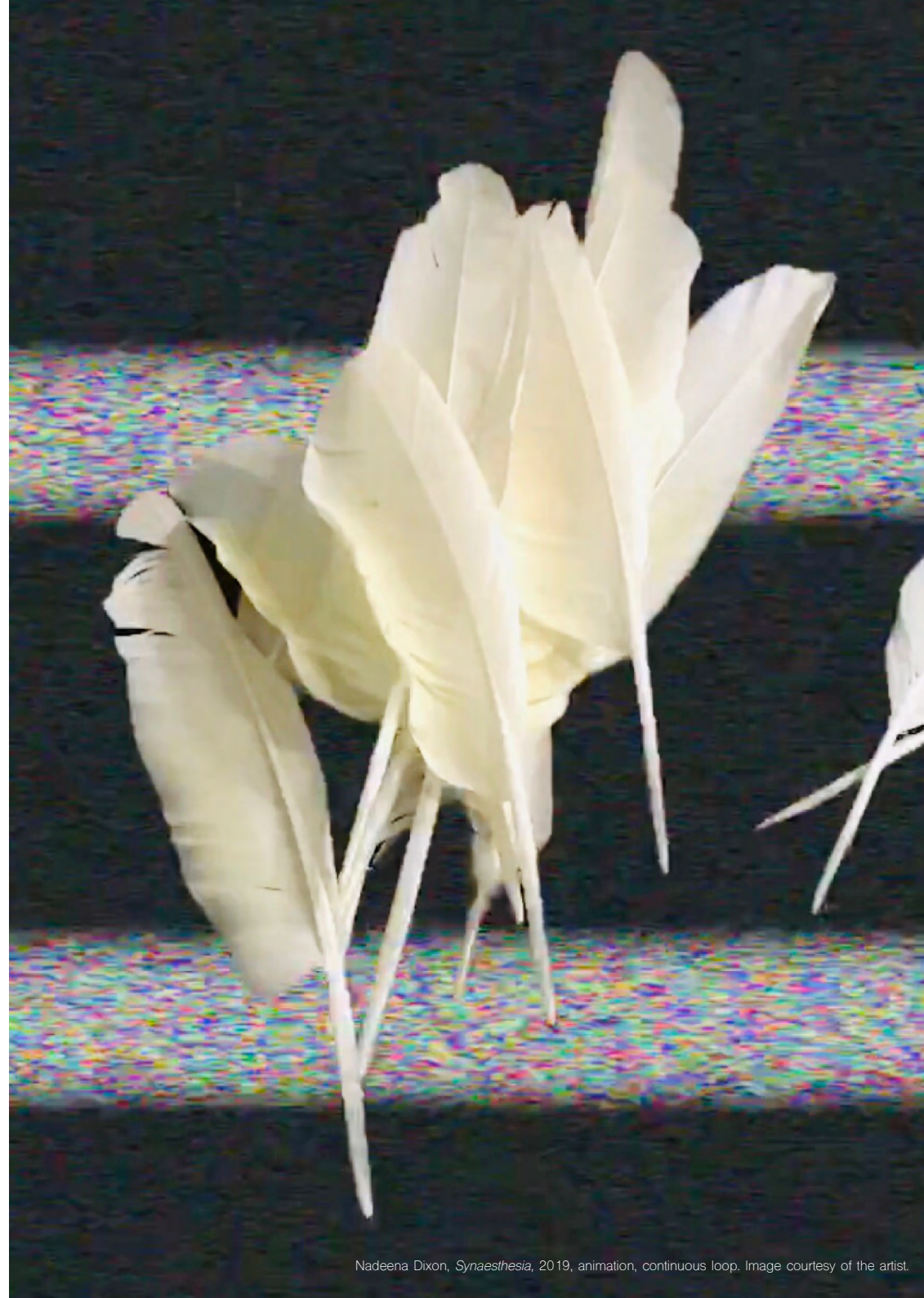
The series of artworks presented in the exhibition respond to Aboriginal Women's Cultural Traditions and connection to country .

Through the creation of Dillybags, I am connecting today's generation of Aboriginal women to the cultural practices of generations of grandmothers before. Traditionally, Dillybags hold an important place within Aboriginal Cultural cosmology as a resource gathering object connected to seasonal foods, medicines, weaving and ceremonial usages.

The use of Hessian reflects cultural resilience and an adaptation of practices incorporating specific Aboriginal design thinking that reflects women's connection to country and the environment. A woman's Dillybag plays a vital role in her ability to collect resources required to do women's work – fibres for weaving ,Bushfood for wellbeing ,medicines and ochre for ceremony to ensure women continue to maintain cultural responsibilities.

Within my digital animation works, I am creating story worlds specific to the Sydney basin Gadigal Saltwater Aboriginal Culture that transports the viewer into an alternate reality which blurs the lines between worlds. I invite the community to step into the space held within story worlds that unfolds to reveal Aboriginal ancestral creation stories.

Nadeena Dixon is a Wiradjuri, Yuin and Gadigal (Dharug-Boorongberigal clan) Indigenous Multi disciplinary Artist. Her practice encompasses Printmaking and Multi Platform Production including Photography, Animation, Video and Sound Works. Recognised as a master weaving practitioner within Indigenous Australian textile traditions, Nadeena has a strong focus on creating fibre sculpture works, incorporating object making within Indigenous symbology reflecting Indigenous knowledge. She has an extensive background as a specialist Indigenous cultural practitioner, teacher and program producer, working within Indigenous key educational bodies and Australian cultural organisations to develop core Indigenous arts and cultural program outcomes. She received an Australian Design Honours from the Australian Design Centre in 2017. Nadeena is a Facebook International Artist Alumni, being the first Aboriginal Artist in residency with the Facebook A.I.R Program.



Nadeena Dixon, *Synaesthesia*, 2019, animation, continuous loop. Image courtesy of the artist.



Nadeena Dixon, *Gatekeepers*, 2019, painted fence posts; *The Women's Journey*, 2020, hand-woven hessian with acrylic paint; *Marks on Country*, 2020, acrylic paint on fabric strip. Installed at Gallery Lane Cove + Creative Studios. Photography by Jennifer Brady

Carmen Glynn-Braun

Arrernte/Kaytetye/Anmatyerre

The gently clustered luminous orbs of 'My Mothers Keeper' is part of a sculptural light series that celebrates First Nations women's trans-generational resilience and pays homage to matrilineal knowledge. The glowing orbs, lit from within, positioned as weighted down moons highlight the importance of moon cycles as accurate guidance for fertility & environmental seasons. The orbs demonstrate the continuation of knowledge sharing through their intricate markings of place with patterns using red earth collected from my homelands in Central Australia. The collection and process of painting using earth from my homeland raises the importance of preserving First Nation's land management and the imperative of continuing and celebrating culture.

Carmen Glynn-Braun is a First Nations Artist stemming from the Eastern Arrernte, Kaytetye, and Anmatyerre nations across Central Australia. Glynn-Braun has lived a dual life, growing up between Alice Springs and Sydney since the age of eight and is currently based at Artspace Woolloomooloo, as part First Nations emerging artists collective Re-Right. Glynn-Braun's artistic practice employs a trans-disciplinary approach, working across a wide variety of mediums. Her work predominantly explores the lived experiences of Aboriginal women translated through gentle and experimental approaches to materials and form. She seeks to share the often untold and concealed stories of Aboriginal women through exploration of transgenerational narratives, derived from familial stories.



Carmen Glynn-Braun, *My Mother's Keeper*, 2020, detail, acrylic and mixed media on light orbs, soil.
Photography by Bianca Couchman.



Carmen Glynn-Braun, *My Mother's Keeper*, 2020, detail, acrylic and mixed media on light orbs, soil.
Installed at Gallery Lane Cove + Creative Studios. Photography by Bianca Couchman.



Dyarra Murruma Guwing - *The Sun Setting Red*, 2020, exhibition install at Gallery Lane Cove + Creative Studios.
Photography by Jennifer Brady.

Acknowledgements

Our thanks first and foremost to the artists of the exhibition – Barbara McGrady, Nadeena Dixon and Carmen Glynn-Braun who were committed to the vision of this project to present the knowledge and voices of Aboriginal women practitioners on a topic so critical for our time.

Thank you to co-curator Kyra Kum-Sing for the wonderful collaborative process, insights and camaraderie. It has been a most joyful creative journey.

A special acknowledgement to Troy Tom Psomotragos for his technical wizardry evident in the unique finish of Barbara McGrady's photographic works.

We are grateful for the financial support of **Lane Cove Council** and **URM Group**, without which the exhibition and public program event would not be possible.



List of works

Barbara McGrady

*Djaadjawan Dance Group,
Homeground, Opera House*
2017
giclee print, hand laquered
Unique

*Women's Healing Together, NAIDOC,
Sydney*
2018
giclee print, hand laquered
Unique

*Buja Buja Butterfly, 100 Women
Dancing Event, Sydney*
2019
giclee print, hand laquered
Unique

*Unity Dance Circle, Homeground,
Opera House*
2015
giclee print, hand laquered
Unique

*Wagana Dance Group, Dance Rights,
Sydney*
2017
giclee print, hand laquered
Unique

*Women's Healing Dance Circle,
NAIDOC, Sydney*
2018
giclee print, hand laquered
Unique

*Djaadjawan Dance Group, Yabun
Festival, Sydney*
2017
giclee print, hand laquered
Unique

*Rhonda Grovener & Nadeena Dixon,
Healing Our Spirit Conference, Sydney*
2018
giclee print, hand laquered
Unique

*Kerry Johnson Dance Group, Eora
Journey, Bara Tapeian Precinct Lawn,
Royal Botanical Gardens*
2018
giclee print, hand laquered
Unique

*Jannawi Dance Group, Homeground,
Opera House*
2015
giclee print, hand laquered
Unique

Warrior, Yabun Festival, Sydney
2017
giclee print, hand laquered
Unique

Nadeena Dixon

Seven Sisters Travelling Dilly Bag (1-3)
2020
Hand-woven hessian with acrylic paint

The Women's Journey (1-4)
2020
Hand-woven hessian with acrylic paint

Marks on Country
2020
Acrylic paint on fabric strip

Gatekeepers
2019
Painted fence posts

Dillybags Butterfly
2019
Animation

Gadigal Fisherwomen
2019
Animation

Burujarra Butterfly Waomen
2019
Animation

First Sunrise
2019
Animation

Garrigarang Country
2019
Animation

Synaesthesia
2019
Animation

Carmen Glynn-Braun

My Mother's Keeper
2020
Acrylic and mixed media on light orbs,
soil

