

CONNECTIONS SPACE

Songspirals 2022



Songspirals, exhibited at the University Gallery, Callaghan
23 September - 26 November 2022

This document was prepared, designed and published on Awabakal lands. We acknowledge the unceded lands on which we work and we pay respect to all Elders past, present and emerging

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Cover image: Ms D Yunupingu, Laramirri Whale 2016, Etching 1/20, reproduced courtesy of the family and Buku Larnggay Mulka, Yirrkala.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
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"And the songs spiral on,
because they always do.
There is always more,
connecting to other clans,
spiralling out across Arnhem
Land and across Australia as
they are passed from one clan
to the next."

Gay'wu Group of Women, 2019

WELCOME



Nhämirri nhe, warami, giinagay, how are you and welcome to the Connections Space at Songspirals: Yolngu women sharing and nourishing milkarri.

We begin by acknowledging the Pambalong Clan of the Awabakal people on whose lands we are creating these new connections and nurturing existing ones. We pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging and to Country itself.

We are Gay'wu Group of Women, an Indigenous and non-Indigenous, human-more-than-human research collective connecting across Bawaka, Gumbaynggirr, Dharug, Awabakal and Worimi Countries. We have created this Connections Space to extend an invitation to you to come into relationship with us.

You are invited to join us in the Connections Space as we continue our journey of Songspirals. Here you will find generous sharing from wonderful friends and collaborators we have connected with in other places, including Dharug Ngurra and Gumbaynggirr Country. Through these connections we have grown stronger in our purpose of looking after Country, ourselves and each other.

You will also be invited to share your own connections through weaving, spirals and reflection activities. We hope that you will leave some of your reflections with us so that the spirals can continue to grow.

Gay'wu Group of Women





IMAGE

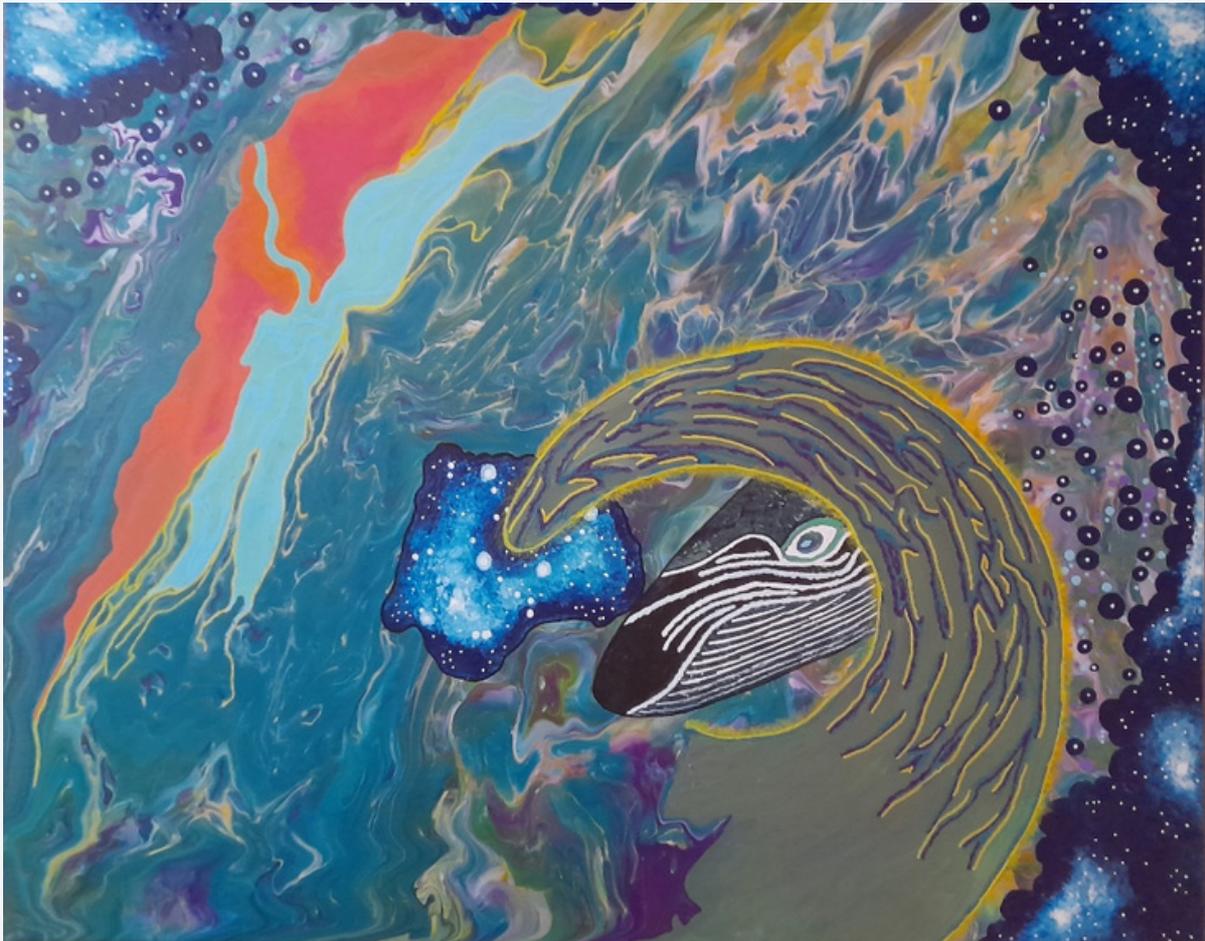
Corina wayali gili Norma

dyuguma – dilly bag, date unknown

Raffia weaving

SPIRALLING INTO THE NEW DREAMING

We are in a time of remembering what our responsibilities are in order to bring in great change.



NEEYAN SMITH

In the Gumbaynggirr Dreaming the Two Sisters made the sea to clear the land of the wrong doing. A sacred lore was broken. After the Two Sisters finished their Creation Act, they formed into the Pleiades.

This painting shows the Pleiades and a bridge coming from this place, guiding those who walk it, to the sea, where we will be reborn with new responsibility and purpose.

The sea is Gaagal in Gumbaynggirr and is Gumbaynggirr people's totem. In this painting, Gaagal represents our journey through a special time, a special ceremony, the

place and time where we remember responsibilities as human beings belonging to mother earth, responsibilities of caring for one another, the earth and all living things. Gurruija, the whale, sings her song to remind us, and to guide us to our new homelands, where together we become one.

When you look at this painting, allow yourself to see the world from a different place, not how we physically see the world. Imagine being in a place somewhere out there in the unknown, perhaps as if we are in the galaxy with our Ancestors.

"As we sing, we are connecting, remaking, and when we arrive at a place we sing towards the next place, connecting with it, remaking it. Forever."

Gay'wu Group of Women, 2019



IMAGE

Neeyan Smith

Creation Energy, 2022



IMAGE

Venessa dyubi gili Possum

gubawalingurra - relational, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

EUCALYPTUS DREAMING IN THE AGE OF SOLASTALGIA

FABRI BLACKLOCK

Eucalyptus Dreaming in the Age of Solastalgia is an installation of large silks hand dyed with Eucalyptus leaves and other natural plant-based materials. The work responds to interest and debate of the Herbarium collection (National Herbarium of NSW) together with Aboriginal knowledge of Australian native plants and their significance in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

In the age of Solastalgia, maintaining sustainable natural environments is essential to our survival and our relationship with place. Privileging Aboriginal ontological and epistemological knowledge and utilisation of Eucalyptus, together with the Herbarium's collection of knowledge, the installation extends on my practice led research and knowledge of Australian native plants as dyes and their role in sustainability and wellbeing. My

work privileges Aboriginal ways of being, knowing and doing as central to solving the effects of climate change and maintaining the environmental sustainability of the Australian landscape.

Focussing on the Eucalyptus the installation is relevant and timely in contributing Aboriginal knowledge to Critical Plant Studies in the age of climate change. The work aims to create understandings about Eucalyptus and its important role in the Australian ecological system in providing a habitat, food, medicine, and wellbeing.

Credits:

Dr Chels Marshall Aboriginal Cultural Systems Ecologist

Micklo Jarrett Aboriginal Elder





IMAGE

Lex buran gili Dadd and Gumung Phil Shepard

yarra – gum battle axe, 2012



IMAGE

Corina wayali gili Norman

guman marriyang garabara - casarina and emu ceremony, 2012

"When we talk about spirals there are different types of spirals. There can be small spirals within a place, within certain elements in our environment, or people, from immediate family to wider family...to clans, to tribes. Not just in the people but also in our elements, in our environments, from water to plants and animals.

When I talk about the spirals of the people, the spirals are not only physical but spiritual as well ...spiritual also in the way that it is structured in the gurrutu system. "

Merrkiyawuy Ganambarr-Stubbs, 2021

SPIRALING CONNECTIONS

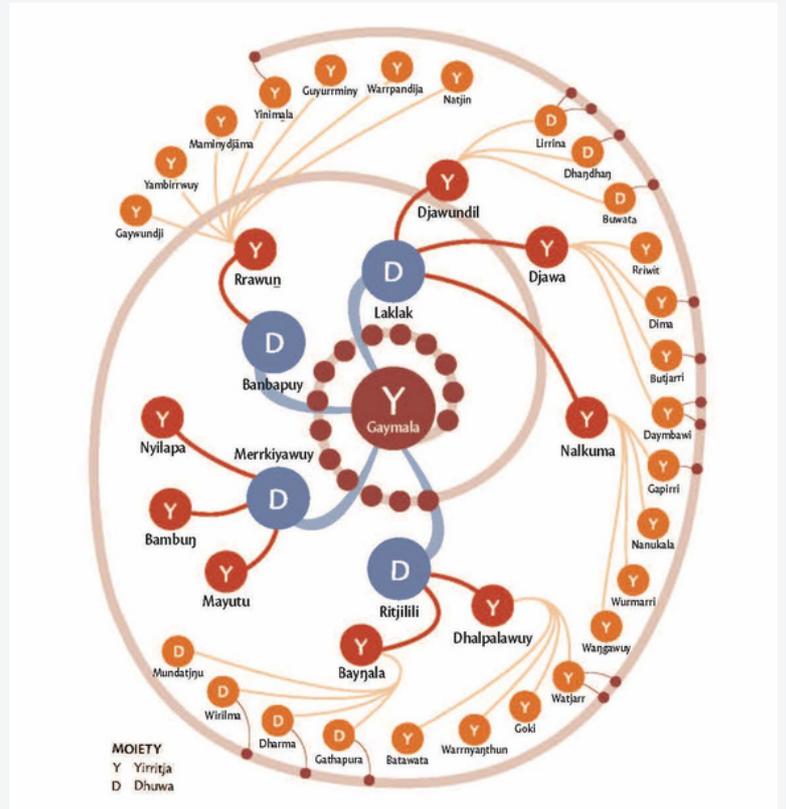
The ripples of songspirals link people to each other and with/as Country through gurrutu. Gurrutu is kinship. It binds Yolŋu people, and those who are placed within a Yolŋu world, in a more-than-human network of love, relationship, obligation and care. Gurrutu is our connections and day-to-day life. There are many aspects of gurrutu. Gurrutu are Yolŋu family relationships that spiral through the generations. Through gurrutu, Yolŋu people know how we/they are related to other humans and non-human beings.

As Banbapuy Ganambarr explains:

It's very important because that is how the songlines go, that is how we are related. It's a recursion of a pattern. So every fourth generation it goes back to our mother, or our grandparent, and that happens because it is in the kinship, where the spiral is connected to people. It's a map of how we are related to people.

The songspirals hold and are gurrutu, our connections to each other, to and as Country.

Bawaka Country et al. (2022)



IMAGE

Gurrutu diagram of Gaymala's daughters
Source: Gay'wu Group of Women, 2019

We invite you to share your own connections in the Connections Space through the weaving, spirals, and reflection activities offered. You can also use the page opposite to document your reflections. Think about what Country/s you live on or are connected to in some way. You might wish to add words, reflections, drawings to the spiral that represent your connection to these places.

FURTHER REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

- Has anything in the exhibition particresonated with you?
- Have any of your perspectives changed?
- Did anything surprise you?
- How might you reciprocate the sharing that has been offered?
- In what ways might you integrate what you have learnt into your life?





IMAGE

Corina wayali gili Norman

gburu dangura - kangaroo dance, 2017

Kangaroo skin with burn design

WHERE'S DOLLY DREAMING?



JO ANNE REY & MARK PARRY

This creative production was poetically inspired by the real-life history of one of the Blacktown Native Institution's (BNI) first seven children sent there when it opened in 1825. It was the second phase of the intentional removal of Aboriginal children from their families and communities in order to be 'civilized' and prepared for domestic service futures (for the girls) and labouring (for the boys), so they would be useful in the new world that Governor Lachlan Macquarie (after who Macquarie University is named) saw as fit for them.

Her name was Ann Randall. She was firstly institutionalised at the Female Orphan School at Parramatta, in 1822, when she was 6 years old, and then transferred to the BNI when she was 9. Ann Randall is the three times great-grandmother of Jo Anne Rey, one of the two artists who created this poetic/visual piece.

Ann Randall's story is interwoven with Dharug colonial presences, places and people. She was the child of Fanny Randall, daughter of Black American First Fleet convict John Randall and his relationship with Kitty, of Dharug Ngurra.

It is not known exactly why Ann was admitted to the Orphan School and then transferred to the BNI.

Perhaps it was because she was 'illegitimate', being the child fathered by William Brown. It is known however, that Fanny later ended up leaving her first husband, John Aiken (another black convict), and settled with William Brown having another family with him. It is one of their descendants, John Brown, after who the third site of the poem is named: Brown's Waterhole, located at the meeting place of what today is known as Terry's Creek and Lane Cove (Turrumburra) River.

Ann was sent to the home of Robert Cartwright who was a reluctant carer and wrote she should be returned to her mother for her 'wicked' ways. It is not known what happened to Ann until much later when she partnered with George Smith (Holmes) and then later settled with Charles Young. She lived most of her life at Wilberforce until a late age. She has many descendants from both partnerships.

One of her Young descendants informed Jo that it was Ann who began the family tradition that the children should have a 'black Dolly'. Although this story was unbeknown to Jo at the time, she bought 'Black Dolly' for her first child in the 1980s, and Black Dolly continues for the grandchildren today.

ARTISTS

Fabri Blacklock

Associate Professor Fabri Blacklock's family are Nucoorilma/Ngarabal people from Tingha and Glen Innes and Biripi people from Dingo Creek in New South Wales, she also has English and Scottish ancestry. She is Associate Dean Indigenous at the Art, Design and Architecture Faculty and a Scientia Research Fellow at UNSW Art and Design, Sydney. She is also an artist, historian, curator and educator who is passionate about improving equity in education for Aboriginal people and is committed to embedding Aboriginal research methodologies, pedagogies and perspectives into mainstream education. She is a textile artist who encompasses environmentally friendly arts practices utilising natural dyes from Australian native plants to hand dye natural materials. Her practice involves the revival and teaching of NSW Aboriginal women's artistic practices like possum skin cloak making, dyeing and weaving.

Lex buran gili Dadd

Lex buran gili Dadd is a Dharug Man with a sincere dedication to supporting cultural opportunities for all. He is highly committed to teaching and making cultural objects with different types of woods, gums and resins. He enjoys sharing knowledges and values to all ages. For example, he often provides cultural emersion days on Country and has co-authored several publications including Buran Nalgarra: An Indigenous-led model for Walking with Good Spirit and Learning Together on Darug Ngurra (2021). The collection of artefacts on display carry life stories, being used for practical purposes, "...guman bundi was made from wood that was found at the Dhurbang - river, after the floods in 2020."

Corina wayali gili Norman

Corina wayali gili Norman is a Dharug woman, focussed on igniting Dharug Dhalang (the Sydney Language). She has a Master of Indigenous Languages Education (MILE) and is currently a candidate in a Master of Research, Revitalisation of Indigenous languages. Her cultural art incorporates diverse expressive materials including natural fibres, seeds, feathers and more. These are collected on Country or sourced ethically, a process bringing cultural knowledges and values. For example, marriyang - Emu feathers, speak to Dharug Songlines, "...my wadanguli guwiyang wadi is a fire stick I have used on Country. My dilly bags are often personal gifts and when I am making them, I am always thinking and tuning in to the spirit of the person."

Mark Parry

Mark Parry is an educational video producer and learning designer. He has worked collaboratively with creative artists, researchers, academics, teachers, students, and community members across a broad range of subject areas and educational sectors to produce video and other creative media-based educational resources.

Venessa dyubi gili Possum

Venessa dyubi gili Possum is a Dharug artist. She has a Bachelor of Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art (Honours) and is a candidate in a Doctor of Philosophy in Fine Arts and Crafts. Her cultural methodology is revealing ngaya gubuwali birang relational values “...we are being ngaliya – us’ together, where everything is connected. We are walking together, growing values, weaving dreams, and carrying these dreams in our coolamons.” She uses diverse mediums including painting, photography, video, bush dye and more. gubawali ngurra is a recent painting igniting her methodology as her ancestral Ngurra (Country), having many waterholes. These waterholes are a glimpse of sky country, reflecting infinity.

Jo Anne Rey

Dr Jo Anne Rey is a Dharug post-doctoral researcher in the Indigenous Studies Department of Macquarie University and a member of the Centre for Global Indigenous Futures. Her work is focused on localised relationality for sustainable futures, including bringing Indigenous biocultural practices, such as cultural fire for healing, back to what are now urban areas.

Neeyan Smith

Neeyan Smith is a Gumbaynggirr woman with a strong connection and relationship with her ancestors and Country. Neeyan integrates her responsibilities as Gumbaynggirr custodian with her skills in painting, sharing her place and point of view in connection with her Gumbaynggirr knowledge systems and stories. A key focus in her work has been supporting her Elders in passing down knowledge through the generations. Neeyan believes Gumbaynggirr wisdom offers to a way of being with each other that can lead to a sustainable future - socially, environmentally, culturally and economically.

Thank you

In our language we say buku-wekam to honour those who have helped us bring Songspirals: Yolŋu women sharing & nourishing milkarri to life. Living, breathing, nurturing Country – thank you for shaping and enabling everything we do. We honour Country and all those who have shared with us and supported us as we have worked to create this exhibition.

Thanks to Gillean Shaw, the University Galleries at the University of Newcastle, and the Discipline of Geography and Environmental Studies, School of Environmental and Life Sciences (University of Newcastle) for supporting, promoting and hosting the exhibition.

To Will Stubbs and Joseph Brady from Buku-Larrŋgay Mulka Yirrkala Art Centre for their support, experience, and assistance. To Andrea Magill for her research and writing contributions.

We thank the artists, Fabri Blacklock, Lex buran gili Dadd, Corina wayali gili Norman, Mark Parry, Venessa dyubi gili Possum, Jo Anne Rey, and Neeyan Smith who have generously shared their work and connections for the exhibition and the Connection Space. Thanks to Lauren Tynan for use of her instructional weaving videos.

Thanks to the School of Social Sciences, Wallamattagal Campus, Macquarie University for support and the Macquarie University Art Gallery and Collection and private lenders for sharing their works for exhibition.

To the Australian Research Council for funding our work together and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for supporting the exhibition.

