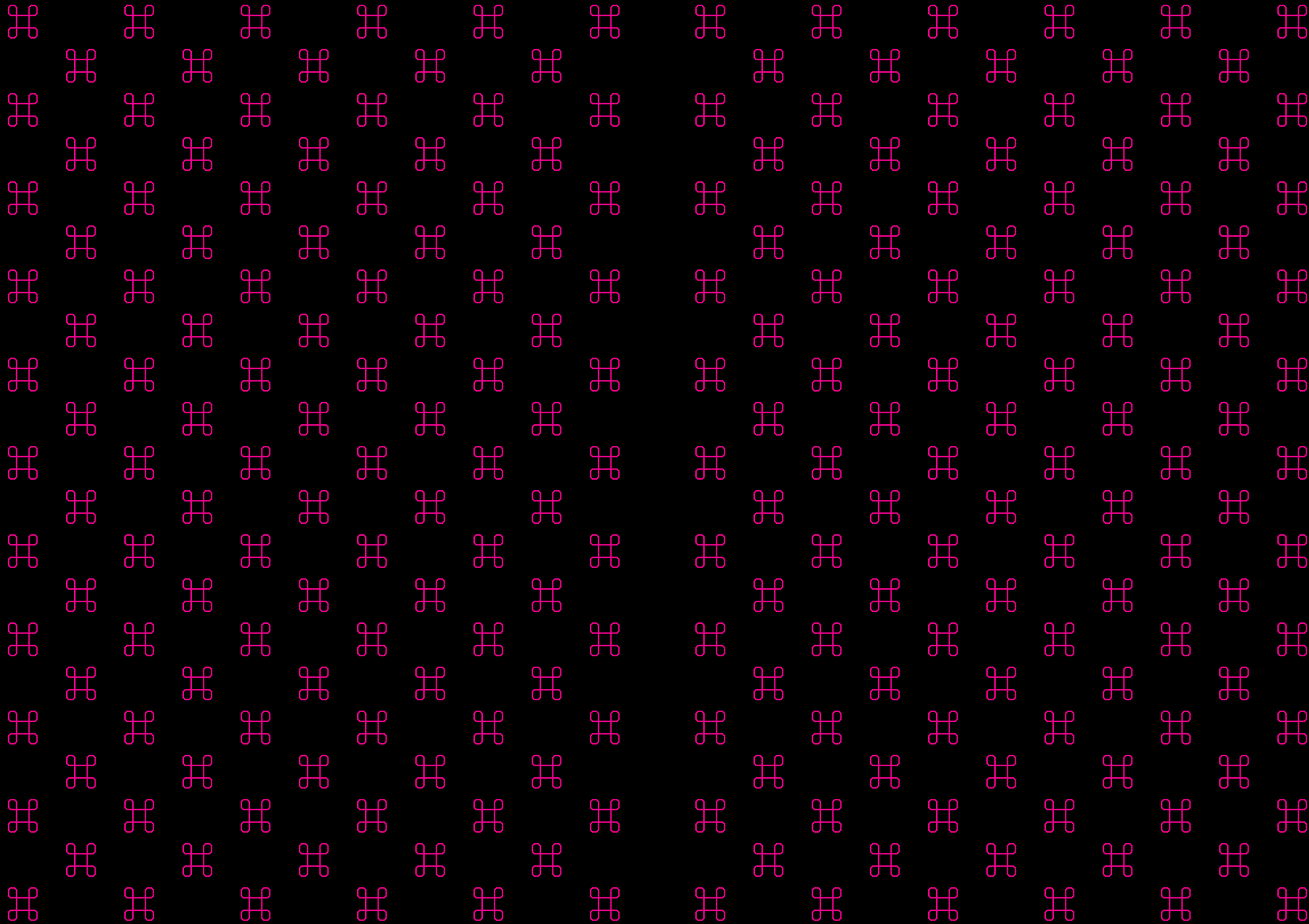


Shadowlife





Shadowlife

CURATED BY DJON MUNDINE OAM AND NATALIE KING

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Shadowlife is a significant exhibition that will assist in developing a deeper understanding of contemporary Australian art and the multiplicities of Indigenous culture in Australia. Curators Natalie King and Djon Mundine OAM have brought together an outstanding collection of contemporary Indigenous photography, moving image and installation by a selection of Australia's most significant artists.

This exhibition will undoubtedly excite and challenge audiences in Asia and Australia. I commend Lesley Alway and Sarah Bond and the team at Asialink for their commitment and vision in supporting this important project and thank Senior Curator Tansy Curtin for her curatorial input and project management.

I take this opportunity to acknowledge the supporters of this exhibition who have assisted in the realisation of this project: the Australia Council for the Arts, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Gordon Darling Foundation and Besen Family Foundation. I also acknowledge the City of Greater Bendigo which owns and operates Bendigo Art Gallery and who wholeheartedly supports our exhibition program.

Bendigo Art Gallery is delighted to be working in partnership with Asialink on the exhibition **Shadowlife** that will tour Asia in 2012 before its display at the Bendigo Art Gallery in 2013.

KAREN QUINLAN
DIRECTOR
BENDIGO ART GALLERY

I have long believed that when you have art you have voice, and that when you have voice you have freedom and with that freedom comes great responsibility.

The history or lack of visible history in Australia has crystallized Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art into an integral and vital part of the reclamation of the truth of our nation's past and our contemporary happenings.

I see that when we Aboriginal and Islander people practise our art, when we tell our truth through our eyes, we tell the hidden truth of our nation's history, we shine a light on our sometimes horrific contemporary happenings and we plant many seeds of hope for our future children. As artists we are also charged with the duty and honour of maintaining and recording our age old cultural practice and the inexorable task of interpreting our contemporary ritual, art and voice. With these artistic actions we are not only responsible with our freedom and voice, we are courageous in our act of dispelling the myth of the 'gently colonised' Australia. We use our sounds, images, symbols and interpretations of the cultural clash, to shatter the imposed stereotyped image that cages our people and issues.

Shadowlife presents photographic, moving image and installation work by Vernon Ah Kee, Bindi Cole, Brenda L. Croft, Destiny Deacon & Virginia Fraser, Fiona Foley, Gary Lee, Michael Riley, Ivan Sen and Christian Thompson who are part of this great artistic voice. Their work calls out for you, the viewer, to see beyond your social engineering, they cry out for you to be vigilant for the many guises of discrimination and for you to locate the inner racist and challenge your own perceptions of race, culture and creed.

When any nation begins the arduous journey of seeing history as a personal truth we begin to cease to live with a nursery version of that history. And we begin to build a country that welcomes us all home. A key part of that journey is to see through the eyes of the artist. I invite you to have the courage to go on this journey with these artists, let go of your inhibitions, challenge yourself and see the world through the eyes of the caretakers of one thousand five hundred generations of storytellers.

RICHARD J FRANKLAND
GUNDITJMARA PEOPLE
© DECEMBER 2011

Conversations with a shadow

When light shines on something or someone, a shadow is always cast. A person can never desert its shadow and a shadow cannot leave its human original. Every shadow has its own presence and absence. And no more so in this continent, Australia, full of ghosts and shadows honeycombing the historical, social, and physical landscape. Each story is a ghost story loaded with shadows – a kind of ‘Scar’¹ story. **Shadowlife** addresses these moments of intensity through the photo/filmic-based practices of nine Aboriginal artists (and one non-Indigenous collaborator).

Frantz Fanon wrote that colonialism and racism are forms of violence embedded in every facet of colonial cultural expression, so subtle and pervasive as to be invisible. To make his point he described the cruel disjunction of a black man (himself) watching the film *Tarzan* (1932) with a black audience in French colonised Martinique, and later watching the same film in a white audience in Paris.²

Conservative thinkers would tell us that new technology is supposedly race, gender, economically, and politically neutral, yet certain inherent features of a technology can shut particular people out from access to it; from knowledge of, or a system of power associated with it. We know how despite its very ‘newness’, a new technology can reinforce the stereotypes it supposedly refutes. Are we making old art with new technology? Art doesn’t exist on its own. It has its own responsibility and asks for a response. What is a shadow if not ambiguous?

When an atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima in 1945, a man sitting on the steps of Sumitomo Bank was vaporized but his shadow image remained ‘burnt’ onto the steps and wall of the building. Things cast no shadow at the point of change, at mid-day.

Events and characters encountered in one’s past remain in our psyche but it’s how we act and react in the present away from this shadow that is important. In Oliver Stone’s 1994 film, *Natural Born Killers*, the character Micky Knox (played by Woody Harrelson) pointing to his own shadow on the wall, blames his parents, history, and society for his violent ‘shadow’ nature.

In the 1940s there was a comic strip character called *The Shade*, who could manipulate shadow with a magic cane, bringing an area into darkness. Aboriginal people in 1980s Arnhem Land, in describing the shadow of a spiritual entity use the English word ‘shade’, meaning to cover, to blind and to darken, in preference to shadow. *Warraw*, a *Djambarrpuynngu* word, refers to ‘shade’ as a fork-stick structure with leafy branches as its roof and walls.

Sacred powerful representations of spirit entities are placed inside and revealed to initiates in revelatory performances. Initiates themselves, seen as sacred objects, are also laid inside this ‘shade’. To shade is to blind or cover, light is its antonym. *Wungguli*, an Arnhem Land *Djambarrpuynngu* word, means spirit and shadow and came to describe a photographic image. In 1960, Aboriginal singer Jimmy Little had a hit song with *The Shadow of the Boomerang*, from the film of the same name. Some painters use shadows to make an object or person appear solid or three-dimensional. When painted shadows are deployed to enhance physical features, personal characteristics come into focus. Since the mid-1980s, Indigenous photographers have become empowered through the use of photography for role-playing, self-representation and affirmation. In **Shadowlife**, each artist portrays familiar figures, whether themselves, family or community members to recast and reinstate shadow stories. Each artist is a storyteller who choreographs their own narrative.

Vernon Ah Kee worked with photography and text-based art from his art school days then moved to portraiture – drawing his forebears and family members – and to video. ‘Rap’ came into being as a tool to ensure that chanting and non-formal English became a ritual of free form poetry by ‘other’ people. *Whitefella normal, blakfella me* (2004) explores language and chanting in a short rap song featuring himself. Biting and black, Ah Kee aerates concerns and emotions from the streets. As it is, the issues expressed aurally are profoundly beautiful, pithy, and poetic. Like an elegiac refrain, catchphrases such as ‘poorfella’, ‘happyfella’, ‘couragefella’ are inscribed over a self-portrait of Ah Kee. Short and punchy, Ah Kee’s slogans take us into the political realm of spoken poetry about social issues and racism.

Bindi Cole’s earlier, *Sistagirls* (2010) series, glamourized the cross-dressing male community of red-light St. Kilda (Melbourne), part of her mother’s world, and the boys of the Tiwi Islands near Darwin to the far north. They were cross-dressers and cross-cultural. The video in this exhibition is more attached to her Aboriginal father’s side and family. *Seventy Times Seven* (2011) explores how the personal and societal meet. In a contentious work, filmed Aboriginal participants including Cole were willing to say “I forgive you” to white Australian society on camera. Filmed at close range, each face fills the cinematic frame while uttering words of forgiveness imbues an intense emotional range from defiance, reticence to sorrow. For Cole, a personal forgiveness for her parent’s shortcomings allowed her to move on – can this be applied to society’s wider historical crimes in the Aboriginal context?

Brenda L. Croft's *Man about town* (2003) photographic series is a beautifully warm, rich reprint homage to her father and a romantic post-WWII time where everyone was a movie star and there was hope for a future. Despite the racism of the 1950s, people took on a responsibility to be happy. Croft associates the mid-1950s with 'prosperity. Naivete. Optimism. The spirit of Marbuk looms large. the dark ogre of white Australia's psyche. Shadow lands...'³ Croft found a box of slides belonging to her father providing a glimpse of his former life. He appears smartly dressed in a deserted Australian city street leaning against a parking meter or debonair in a suit and satchel on the tarmac before a wire fence, his destination unknown. From a bygone era, Croft's memorial gesture of reprinting her father's past is deeply personal and heartfelt.

Destiny Deacon & Virginia Fraser enact urban domestic stories with dolls and everyday objects configured into hilarious yet potent situations. Using dolls, fabric backdrops and props, they tell grim soap operas deftly uncovering stories of racism and persecution with raucous humour. The title, *Forced into images* (2001), is derived from a quote by African American author Alice Walker. Deacon & Fraser unravel how people either live up to and/or reject typecasts. Two children, a young girl and equally role playing boy, are placed in the spotlight, under the camera's eye, in a visual metaphorical 'shade', where they gradually unveil their personalities in play, acting out a kind of revealing transactional analysis. The short moving image novella illustrates Black Elk's poetic sermon reminding us to look to children for the most profound free lessons.⁴

From filming shadow scenarios, the cross cultural duo moved to *Colour Blinded* (2005): a space of harsh yellow light where no shadows are cast and all colour is neutered. Six photographs including three of Deacon's brother, playwright Johnny Harding with a dishevelled doll, were shot on orthochromatic film resulting in a subtle alteration of the accustomed balance between blacks and whites. Viewers entering the space temporarily become part of the artwork as the lights reduce them to monochrome as well. In Paris, Fraser heard one viewer asking her friend in French: "Are we alive or dead?"⁵ Two perspex vitrines packed with polystyrene beads and knitted Gollywog dolls sit within the installation. So many white beads, so dense that the dolls are pressed suffocating and trapped within the clear walls. We hear Harding's voice challenge us from the video – "What are you looking at?" reminding us that staring in this eerie environment is an uncanny experience.

Fiona Foley reinterprets the history of enforced opium addiction in the Queensland Aboriginal community in the 1850s in a poetic video of swaying poppies. Foley traces the ongoing significance of Australia's colonial histories with uncompromising directness. Two colonial histories have remained in the shadows here: the Aboriginal history of Australia and the interaction with Asian societies. Macassan and Chinese explorers and traders regularly visited Australia hundreds of years before European visitors in the 1700s. In the case of the Macassans the visits and trading continued up to 1908. Chinese immigrants came to Australia in great numbers in the 1800s and prospered in various professions and businesses, and yet remained practically invisible in the socio-political life of Australian society.

Philosophers often discuss reality and dreamlike states of being, and 'unbeing'; awareness and sleeping. Do Australians (and most countries in fact) live in a happy dreamlike state ignoring the reality of history to avoid the trauma of the past? Luscious and hypnotic, the video *Bliss* (2006) of colorful flowers belies the insidious history that Foley has uncovered.

The Oyster Fisherman (2011) moves her history stories from ethereal bliss to concrete reality. Early colonists remarked on the especially blue waters of Moreton Bay, the reflection of the blue skies in the mud and water. This river estuary was a paradise of mud crabs, fish, and shellfish of all kind including what are now called Sydney Rock Oysters. Into this paradise entered a beast. Shepherds, sealers, whalers, woodsmen, and oyster fishermen worked on the lower edges of European society and it is that element that, away from the colonial settlement and morality, most often brushed up against Aboriginal society in the colonial contact. Early reactions to kidnapping and abuse of Aboriginal women in this area led to the first hanging in the Moreton Bay colony [now called Brisbane] of Bindahli in 1834 in front of all the tribesmen of the area as an example of colonial power. Foley replays this narrative casting herself as the female protagonist in the promise and innocence of a vivid blue dress set against dramatic characters in colonial attire with props and poses.

'My photography is a way to record the beauty of ordinary men. This beauty is not just a matter of youth or maturity. It's partly about an attitude, a look. The men might exude innocence as much as sexuality. Often it's a kind of beauty that they aren't even aware of – and that attracts me.' Gary Lee, 2010.

Gary Lee began life from Filipino, Chinese, German, Japanese, and Larrakia Aboriginal stories. Any of these path lines placed him in the shadows of Australian society. A trip to India in the early 1980s found him relishing the

anonymity of being himself, as a brown skin Asian man among a brown skinned people, as against being the obvious outsider in a white Australian population. Originally a painter and designer, he moved to critical writing, theatre scripts, and curating before focusing on photography. His ongoing series, *On the verge*, captures youthful semi-clad men in various poses, suggesting intimacy and familiarity. Set against verdant foliage, these portraits of male adolescents who are comfortable in their own skin stare directly at the camera. His practice in photography seeks and pays homage to ideas of ‘male beauty’ that has antecedents going back to Greek and Roman times.

Filmmaking is the true contemporary art form of Aboriginal south-eastern Australian cultural life. Ivan Sen’s *Dust* (1999) feels its way through the contested physical, social, and historical landscape in western New South Wales. Here is a landscape colonized in the fullest sense; in economic agricultural terms in cotton farming, and the social displacement of the original inhabitants. But the land is full of shadows and ghosts that lie just below the surface of everyday life. This short film culminates in a dust storm that brings the troubled characters together in a tumultuous way.

Michael Riley studied photography before moving into filmmaking, and around the early 1980s took to filmmaking more fully. His 1995 *They Call Me Niggaar* sequence comprises an image of Aboriginal curator and friend David Prosser dressed in his new Armani suit. Against a bright red background, an alphabet of sneer and ridicule unwraps itself in the form of collaged derogatory terms. Riley made the statement that for many racists it wouldn’t matter how well he dressed or how successful he was, for them, David would always remain just a ‘nigger’, a shadow of white society! Prosser is in fact from the Gumbaynggirr language group and the irony is that the word Niggaar in Gumbaynggirr means ‘a man, a person, a human being’.

Christian Thompson’s video *Gamu Mambu (Blood Song)* (2010) shows a Dutch national baroque singer performing a song in Bidjara – the language of his heritage, telling traditional tales about the bush and hunting. With English subtitles, Thompson harnesses contrasting iconographies from completely different times and cultures, blending them into magical hybrids. Thompson illustrates how stories of many differing minority cultural groups have value and can be expressed, received, and seriously integrated, ultimately subverting and conflating cultural histories.

Shadowlife embraces still and moving image with all its directness, theatricality and immediacy by confronting stereotypes and acting out scenarios. Shadows, like photographic and moving images, follow us and infiltrate our daily lives but are now an expression we control and project. These shadows comfortingly hover around us, returning us to our past and pointing to our future. Double-edged, they are both protective guardian, and character building as they impart the curse of history.

DJON MUNDINE OAM & NATALIE KING

1. Scar literature or literature of the wounded is a genre of Chinese literature which emerged in the late 1970s, soon after the death of Mao Zedong, portraying the sufferings of cadres and intellectuals during the tragic experiences of the Cultural Revolution and the rule of the Gang of Four. The first exemplar of the genre is generally agreed to be Lu Xinhua’s 1978 story “Scar”, which attacked official hypocrisy and corruption. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scar_literature, accessed February 2012.
2. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox, Grove Press, New York, 2008. (first published 1952)
3. Brenda L. Croft, *Man about town: artist statement*, 2003, unpaginated.
4. John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: being the life story of a holy man of the Oglala Sioux (as told to G. Neihardt)*, Bison Books, USA, 2004.
5. Email correspondence with Virginia Fraser, January 2012.

Vernon Ah Kee

If you as a White man, wish to insert yourself into the Black man's world, with his history, in his colour, and on the level at which you currently perceive him, then know that you will never be anything more than mediocre. You will not be able to involve yourself in the decision-making processes of this land, and you will not have any constructive access to the social and political mechanisms of this land. At times this land will shake your understanding of the world, and confusion will eat away at your sense of humanity, but at least you will feel normal.

WHITEFELLANORMAL. VERNON AH KEE 2004.



(Right & over page)
WHITEFELLA NORMAL, BLACKFELLA ME 2004 (STILL)
Digital video with sound
00:30 minutes
Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a person's face, focusing on the eyes and nose. The skin is a warm, reddish-brown tone. The eyes are dark and looking slightly to the left. The nose is prominent in the center. The text is overlaid on the lower left side of the face.

**blackfella
diefella
whitefella
trick**

Bindi Cole

Forgiveness is a gift you give to yourself. It is a release from the burden of anger and pain. When you choose to forgive, you choose to live in the present and the future instead of the past. It does not mean to forget but it does mean to release and go on.

I was a very broken person. When I look around at my community, the Aboriginal community, I see a lot of broken people. For me to stop being disempowered by the people and events in my life, my parents and my ancestors' lives, I had to forgive. Forgiveness is the way to reclaim power lost. It doesn't happen on it's own, you must choose to forgive.

Everyone in this film is Aboriginal. We are choosing to forgive. Mercy is for those who don't deserve it.

SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN. BINDI COLE 2011.

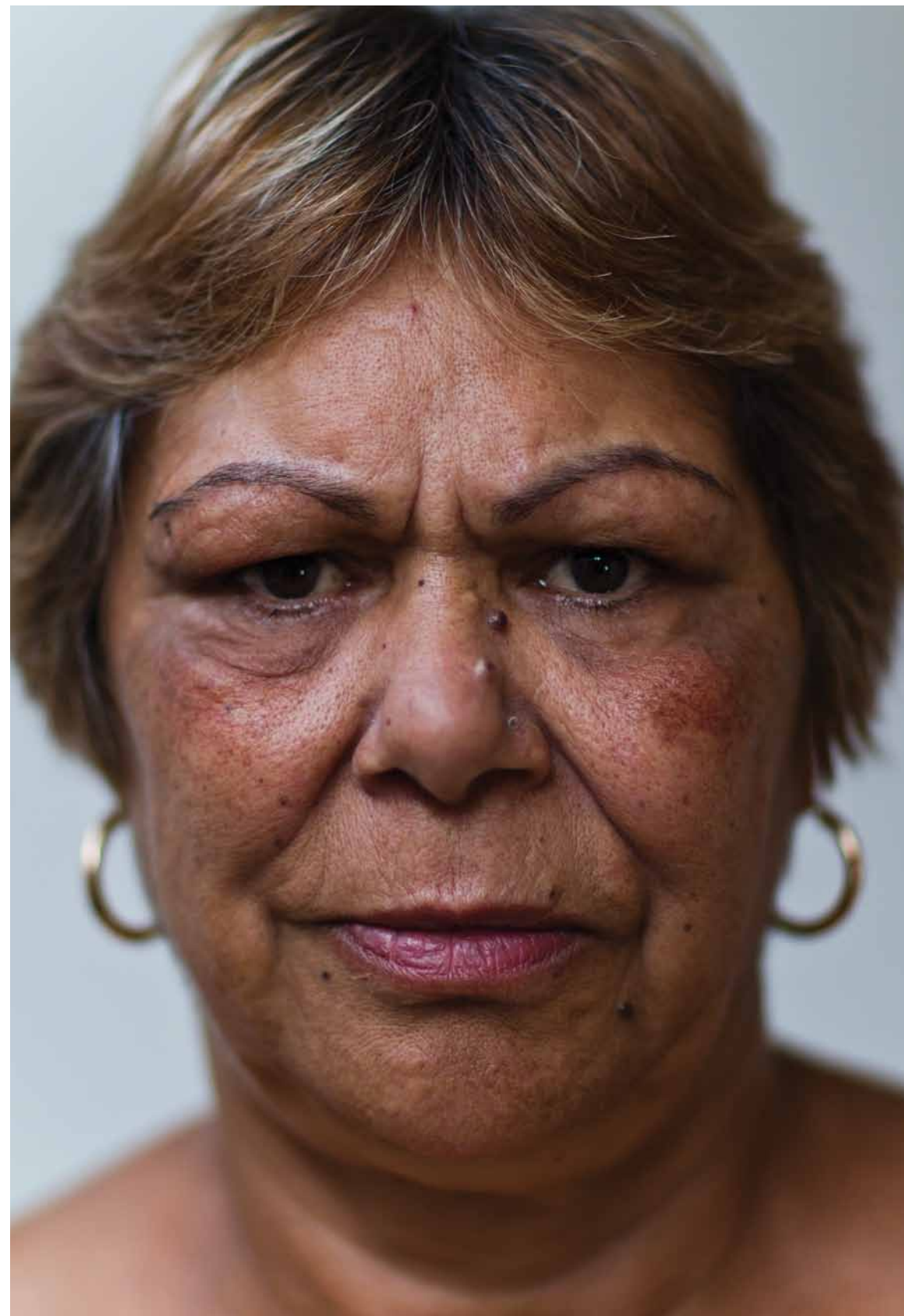
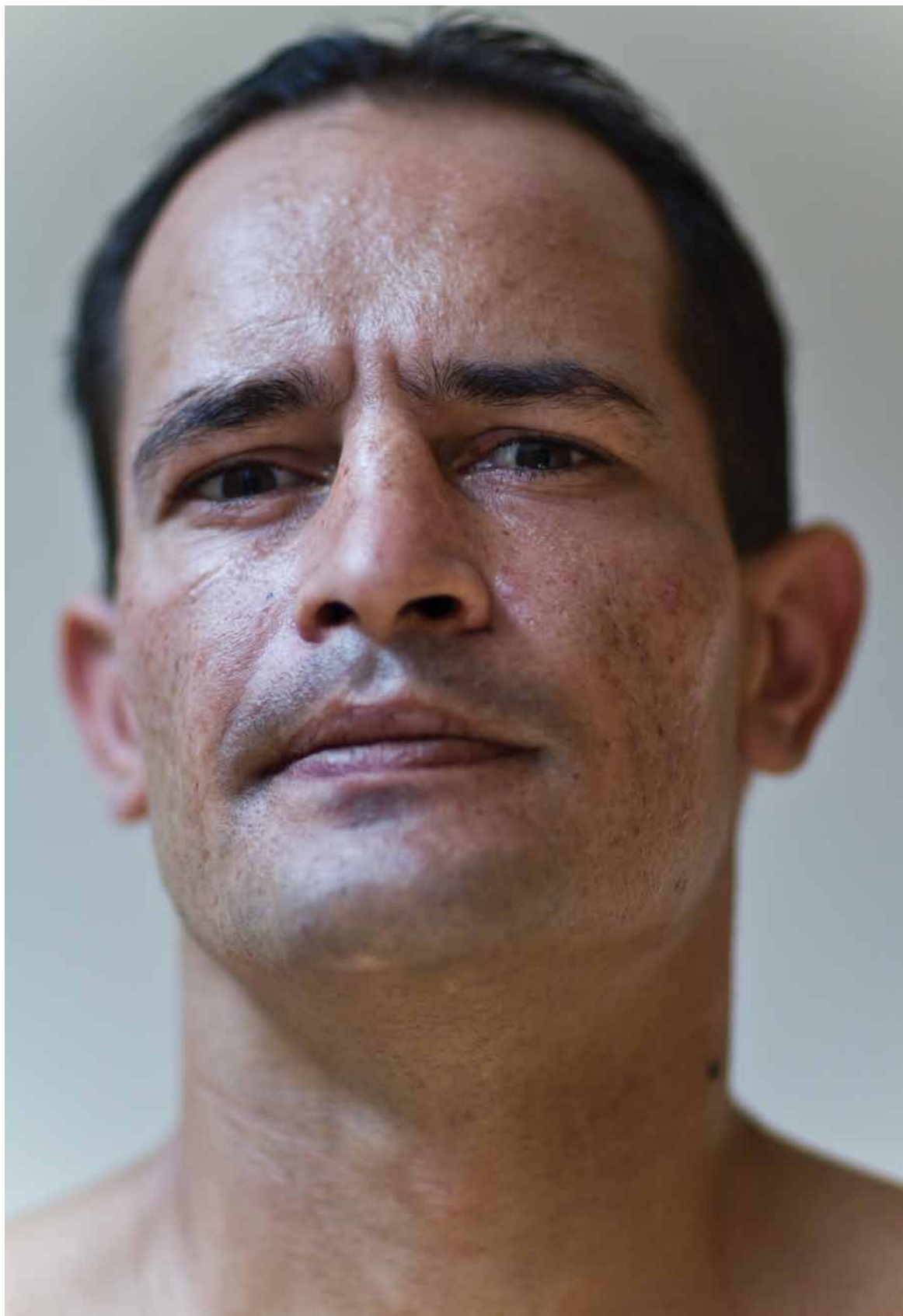
(Right)
WARRE BEAL YALLOCK 2008
Pigment print on rag paper
130 x 94 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne





(Right)
WATHAURUNG MOB 2008
 Pigment on rag paper
 94 x 130 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne

(Over page)
SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN 2011 (STILL)
 Digital video with sound
 10:21 minutes
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne



Brenda L. Croft

These images are drawn from the deep well of my father's life, the part of it unfamiliar to me as his eldest child and only daughter. Seven years ago I assumed the task of packing up the material remains of his life, seventy years or so on this earth.

A small room contained boxes, books and papers tracing his life's journey. Among these things was an old cardboard shoebox, and inside this box, lay an old slide box, dating from the 1950s. Like a set of Russian dolls, within the slide box were a group of slides, from the same roll of film; a tiny vignette into my father's life, half a century ago.

I grew up with regular slide nights on Sundays in my childhood, yet as these were unknown to me and without my father to answer questions, I could only

guess that they had lain hidden since that time. Not from intent, just that they had been put away and perhaps forgotten. Given their content I also surmised that they were taken before my father and mother had met, which was around 1959, 1960, possibly as early as 1956.

So I carried these images around in my mind for the next seven years, returning to them often, and wondering about the city and country-scapes, the period in which they were set and the anonymous people in them, apart from my father. He did not know his family and in his single years travelled extensively along the eastern seaboard, I feel that there is no-one from that part of my father's life to ask the questions that I have carried with me, along with the images.

MAN ABOUT TOWN. BRENDA L. CROFT 2003.

(Left)
A HOSTILE LANDSCAPE 2003 FROM THE SERIES
MAN ABOUT TOWN 2003
Giclee print on rag paper
80 x 119 cm
Edition of 10
Courtesy of the artist and Stills Gallery, Sydney

(Below)
MAN ABOUT TOWN 2003 FROM THE SERIES
MAN ABOUT TOWN 2003
Giclee print on rag paper
80 x 119 cm
Edition of 10
Courtesy of the artist and Stills Gallery, Sydney

(Over page)
COLOUR BAR 2003 FROM THE SERIES
MAN ABOUT TOWN 2003
Giclee print on rag paper
80 x 119 cm
Edition of 10
Courtesy of the artist and Stills Gallery, Sydney





Destiny Deacon & Virginia Fraser

Colour Blinded exemplifies one of several different ways we work together, when we work together. It always begins with each of us thinking our own thoughts. Then there's an occasion, a deadline, a reason to put our heads together. We don't talk much about making work, or discuss ideas and methods, except while we're doing it, and even then it's always brief. A bit of brainstorming then we go our separate ways, maybe several times over a project.

In the case of *Colour Blinded* Destiny was invited to put a work in an exhibition in Melbourne. She suggested doing something with the sodium lights which Virginia had used before in other works, but not with her. Destiny wanted to take black and white photos and Virginia suggested using orthochromatic film because of the way it reads and reduces colour. Destiny wanted to use her brother Johnny as an actor. Virginia offered two wise looking but old fashioned

dolls – one of them rather abused – found at a market. Virginia has a lot of small chairs and we used one or two of them. The rest of the props and sets for the photos and video were just who and what was available where we did the shoot. Destiny took the photos and proposed most of the scenarios for the video, which Virginia shot and edited. Destiny had the idea for the snow storms and Virginia made them work. That's the mechanics of it.

But the other things that go into making something are a result of what we each have been separately thinking, doing, reading and so on between times – current events, chewing over experiences, one's personal history – in contact with materials and media, with each other, and the occasion or opportunity for making and showing work.

DESTINY DEACON & VIRGINIA FRASER, 2012.



(Right & over page)
DESTINY DEACON & VIRGINIA FRASER
FORCED INTO IMAGES 2001 (STILL)
Super 8 film finished on video, DVD format
9:00 minutes
Edition of 20
Courtesy of the artists and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney

(Page 27–28)
DESTINY DEACON
BABY BOOMER 2005
Lightjet print from orthochromatic negative
81 x 111.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist and
Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney





Fiona Foley

I don't see myself necessarily as a political artist. I've worked with different themes at different times in my life – so that at one time I could be working with the opium theme. What I like to do is read and unearth aspects of history, particularly Queensland's colonial history – an area in which the general public is not knowledgeable. I am intrigued about the turn of the twentieth century and what attitudes white Australia held towards Aboriginal people. I read a great deal, and I have a huge book collection. When you read widely, you realise that other people were also in the mix. For instance, there was a strong Chinese culture and tradition in Queensland. Then I start to piece together episodes in history. For example, an Act introduced in 1897 – the 'Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium' – had a huge effect on Aboriginal people in Queensland, and involved them being reigned in and quarantined. Archibald Meston, who was a key player behind the

1897 Act, was responsible for setting up one of the first missions in the southern part of Queensland on Fraser Island. It brought people into these isolated confines, and this was then replicated across the state. So you start to piece together aspects of how people were treated and dealt with, and in the process you come across other stories of brutality that took place here that people don't know about or don't want to acknowledge. You start to understand that many white Australians really don't want to own their own history. For me, what I like to do is work with this material and put it out in the public arena and say, "Look at this. How are you engaging with this aspect of our history?" For a lot of people it is a huge eye-opener. I see my role as an educator.

'FIONA FOLEY IN CONVERSATION WITH ALISON KUBLER', *FIONA FOLEY: FORBIDDEN*, MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SYDNEY, 2010, P. 16.



(Right & over page)
BLISS 2006 (STILL)
Digital video with sound
11:00 minutes
Courtesy of the artist and
Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane





(Left & above)
THE OYSTER FISHERMAN I-XVI 2011
 Digital print on Hahnemühle paper
 Set of 16 images
 60 x 80 cm
 Courtesy of the artist and
 Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane

There is something about young boys soon to become young men who seemingly have the world at their bare feet. This sense of imminence is amplified in a sultry seaside environment such as Bulli, a small town to the south of Sydney, where the ocean and beach life in summer seem so free, where a whole new world awaits – just out of reach, and seemingly without a care.

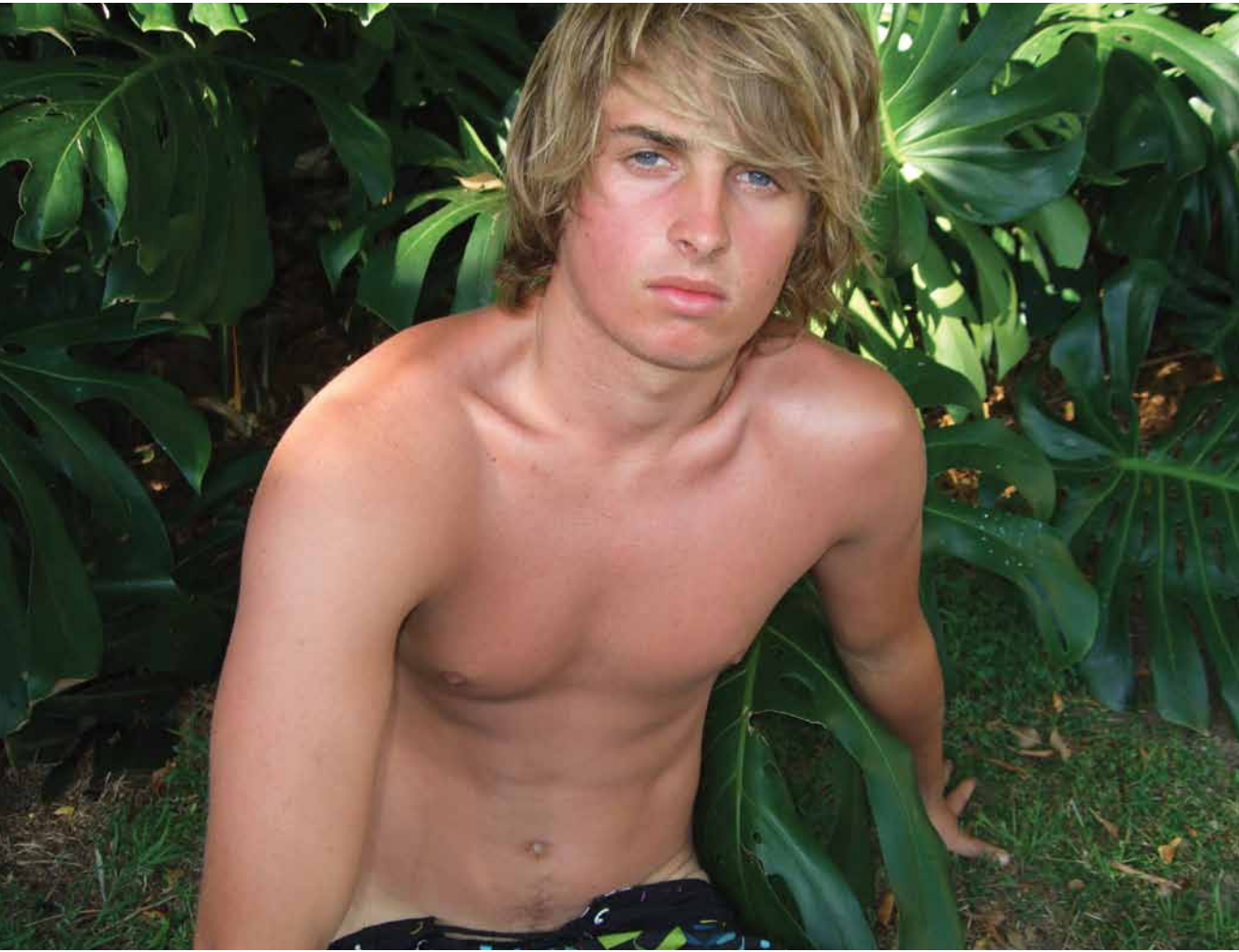
On the Verge was the name I gave to a series of portraits of eight ‘boys’ from Bulli, all good friends and all 17 years of age, except for Tomas who was 18 and the only one of the group who had finished school. As a group these boys were ‘on the verge’ in various ways, mostly as late teenagers on the verge of young adulthood, of finishing school, of independence, about to leave the nest if not physically at least in outlook.

As a group of mates these boys – Callan, Michael, Daniel, Declan, Luke, Paddy, Stefan and Tomas – were all photographed on a glorious summer afternoon, in the Bulli backyard of my sister-in-law (Callan’s mum). My only request was that they be photographed in their swimming bathers/board shorts. I wanted to capture their youthful bodies against a summery green foliage backdrop to heighten their sense of bloom. I shot them one by one and I knew that they had very little experience of ‘modelling’ but that was also part of their attraction as photographic ‘subjects’, part of their budding freshness and innocence which in keeping with the ‘on the verge’ theme was a kind of ‘semi-innocence’. I believe I was able to capture a genuine sense of their attitude, of what their life was all about at this very transient time in their individual development.

The initial *On the Verge* series comprised two portraits each of the boys, and was exhibited in 2010 at Clifton School of Art Gallery, which is very close to Bulli and which is situated literally ‘on the verge’ of a steep coastal cliff. *On the Verge II*, shown in Brisbane (April, 2010, as part of the 2010 Queensland Festival of Photography), and Perth (November, 2010), comprised a selection of one portrait of each of these boys alongside one portrait each of eight boys from Varanasi, India, which I photographed in 2009/2010. By contrast, the Varanasi portraits were taken in the depths of winter although the boys were of a similar age group to the Bulli boys. At the time I was photographing in Varanasi, there were a number of hostile incidents back home in Australia where a number of young Indian men in Melbourne were the apparent targets of racially-based hate crimes (in one case leading to a fatality). My initial intention in bringing the two series of Bulli/Varanasi portraits together was as a kind of cultural bridge in the wake of these ethnic tensions. Both series also represent a continuation of my abiding interest in male portraiture however *On the Verge* is my first photographic foray with an exclusive focus on male youth, often a subject of disdain and dismissal in Australia – along with the sobering reality of high rates of (male) youth suicide rates – rather than one of open investigation, celebration and appreciation as I hope my portraits convey.

On the Verge 3 comprises a new and/or re-configured selection of Bulli/Varanasi portraits. **Shadowlife** includes the selection of Bulli portraits from this series.

ON THE VERGE 3. GARY LEE 2011.



(Right)
TOMAS, 18 FROM THE SERIES *ON THE VERGE 3* 2012
Digital colour print on Hahnemühle paper
52.5 x 70 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Alcastan Gallery, Melbourne;
Harvison Gallery, Perth; Sheahan Galleries, Bulli;
and Woolloongabba Art Gallery, Brisbane

(Over page)
DECLAN, 17 FROM THE SERIES *ON THE VERGE 3* 2012
Digital colour print on Hahnemühle paper
52.5 x 70 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Alcastan Gallery, Melbourne;
Harvison Gallery, Perth; Sheahan Galleries, Bulli;
and Woolloongabba Art Gallery, Brisbane



Michael Riley

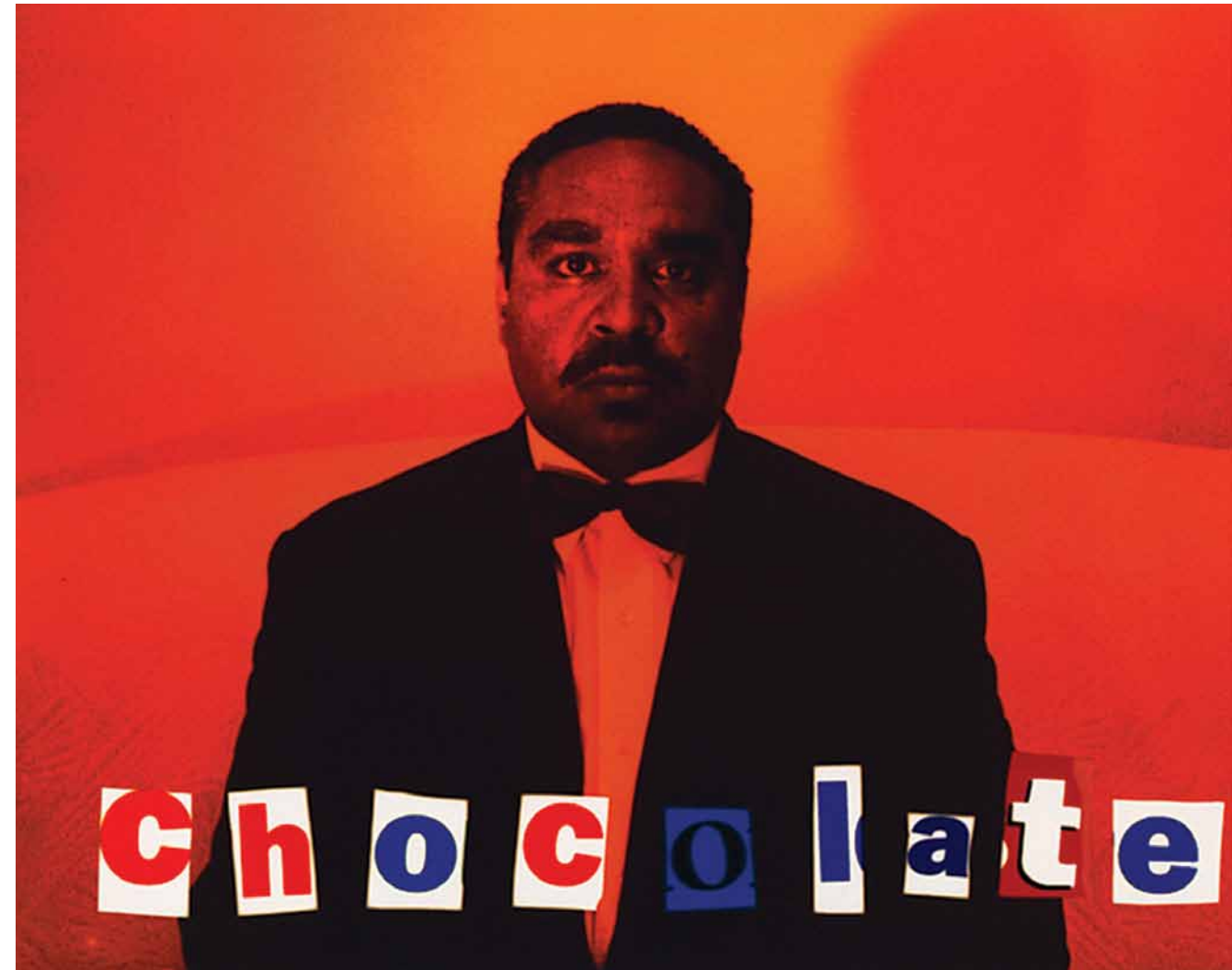
They call me niigarr is reflecting on childhood school days when you used to get called all these names like 'nigger', 'chocolate' or 'sambo', 'vegemite', all these lovely racist names not only the students but the teachers would call you as well. All grown-ups would pat you on the head and call you sambo, so these works humorously look at a lot of those names. *They call me niigarr* is a portrait of a friend of mine, an Aboriginal person in a black Armani suit sitting on a lounge, and he is positioned to reflect what those words are or were, juxtaposing the words and images together.

The work was made by cutting out text from a magazine and organising it like a ransom note. That what that was all about, just a humorous look at those words, names that you used to get called. It's like trashiest whites in the street would put you down because you were black and so you were the lowest of the lowest, you know, these people were actually trash themselves and they think they had the right to do that.

MICHAEL RILEY INTERVIEWED BY HETTI PERKINS
AT THE ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES,
SYDNEY, 2003.

(Right)
CHOCOLATE FROM THE SERIES
THEY CALL ME NIIGARR 1995
Pigment print
31 x 39.5 cm
Courtesy of the Michael Riley Foundation
and Stills Gallery, Sydney

(Over page)
NIIGARR FROM THE SERIES
THEY CALL ME NIIGARR 1995
Pigment print
31 x 39.5 cm
Courtesy of the Michael Riley Foundation
and Stills Gallery, Sydney





Ivan Sen

Placing indigenous stories on screen is something that makes me up as a person, and my history and my family's history. My first creative outlet was photography, and the first thing I did was take photos of my Aboriginal family and the mission where we all came from. In that way it's a personal reflection of my being. So as I moved into film it's just changed art forms. But while I want to tell stories about my family and Indigenous experience, I've also got stories where I just want to inspire the imagination on a universal level.¹

Dust 1999 is set deep within the cotton country way out west. A convoy of cars throws a dust trail into the

dark sky. Leroy, angry with the world for hating his black skin, drives his mother and best mate to weed the back-breaking rows of the cotton fields. They are joined by two white teenagers with their own troubles. Tensions between the two groups emerge as the heat of the day grows. A huge dust storm will bring them together in a way none could have imagined.

IVAN SEN

1. Ivan Sen interviewed by Dan Edwards, http://afcarchive.screenaustralia.gov.au/newsandevents/afcnews/converse/sen/newspage_284.aspx, accessed January 2012.

(Right & over page)
DUST 1999 (STILL)
Digital video with sound
25:00 minutes
Courtesy of the artist and the
National Film and Sound Archive, Australia





Christian Thompson

I had been imagining *Gamu Mambu (Blood Song)* for a long time, sitting in the recesses of my mind, it took over a year to come to fruition. When I lived in The Netherlands I produced a significant back catalogue of songs I had written in Bidjara. I asked my Father once “do we have many songs left?” My Father replied with a simple “no”. I thought to myself “I’m not having this!” and so I began writing songs and creating melodies. Often on my way home in Amsterdam I would go to the opera as it was next to my apartment, I would get the cheap student seats and curl up in the dark and lose myself in the most extravagant productions, is was like what everybody said the opera would be, a moving, visual, emotive, otherworldly spectacular feast...People really were crying and it was hard not to lose yourself in the characters and to feel their love, longing and pain, I kept thinking that they were like birds that everything was sung and there were no place for words here...I guess *Gamu Mambu (Blood Song)* is a window into a moment in my life, a time capsule caught in song, like a bower bird I am constantly collecting things to add to my shrine, to build my house. I see my physical movement in the world as somehow symbolic

of my artistic development. These video and sound installation works are vignettes of emotions, reflections on distance and realisations of kinship. They seem to find me rather than the other way around, the melodies come so intuitively and I feel I can transmit emotion and sing with ease when it is in Bidjara, it has an innate and infectious lyricism. When you leave home, home will come and find you and each song I wrote came to me in a clear concise vision, the same way my photos and videos come to me as well, it’s an unconscious process...I think of this work as a self-portrait in some ways even though I am not in it and it is this kind of manifestation of culture within culture that interests me, things that sit beneath the surface of popular culture. The work was first presented at the 17th Sydney Biennale *Beauty of Distance: Songs of Survival in a Precarious Age*. It was displayed in a bombed out house on Cockatoo Island, as I walked around the island watching patrons traipse from one pavilion to the next I would hear people humming the melody to my song, I thought to myself, it’s alive, it’s forever and it is now.

GAMU MAMBU (BLOOD SONG).
CHRISTIAN THOMPSON 2011.

(Right & over page)
GAMU MAMBU (BLOOD SONG) 2010 (STILL)
Digital video with sound
2:30 minutes
Courtesy of the artist and
Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne







Vernon Ah Kee

BORN INNISFAIL, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA 1967;
KUKU YALANDJI, WAANJI, YIDINJI AND
GUGU YIMITHIRR PEOPLES.
LIVES AND WORKS IN BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA.

VERNON AH KEE WAS BORN IN INNISFAIL, NORTH QUEENSLAND IN 1967 AND HE IS OF THE KUKU YALANDJI, WAANJI, YIDINDJI AND GUGU YIMITHIRR PEOPLES. HE HAS BEEN LIVING IN BRISBANE FOR OVER TWELVE YEARS. HIS ART IS PRIMARILY A CRITIQUE OF AUSTRALIAN POPULAR CULTURE, SPECIFICALLY THE BLACK/WHITE DICHOTOMY.

AH KEE COMPLETED A BACHELOR OF VISUAL ARTS (HONS) AT THE QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF ART, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY, BRISBANE, MAJORING IN DRAWING AND SCREENPRINTING IN 2000. HE COMPLETED A DOCTORATE OF VISUAL ARTS – FINE ART FROM THE QUEENSLAND COLLEGE OF ART, GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY IN 2007. HE IS A MEMBER OF PROPPERNOW INDIGENOUS ART COLLECTIVE.

AH KEE REPRESENTED AUSTRALIA AT THE 2009 *VENICE BIENNALE* IN THE EXHIBITION *ONCE REMOVED*. OTHER RECENT GROUP EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE *REVOLUTIONS: FORMS THAT TURN*, BIENNALE OF SYDNEY 2008; AND *PUTSCH, PROPPANOW GROUP*, TANDANYA NATIONAL ABORIGINAL CULTURAL INSTITUTE, ADELAIDE, 2010. RECENT SOLO EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE *TALKWALKTALK*, MACKENZIE ART GALLERY, CANADA, 2009, AND *CANT CHANT*, INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART, BRISBANE, 2007 AND *TOURING* 2009–10. IN 2009, THE INSTITUTE OF MODERN ART PUBLISHED *BORNINTHISSKIN*, THE FIRST MAJOR PUBLICATION DEVOTED TO AH KEE’S PRACTICE. HIS NEW FOUR CHANNEL VIDEO INSTALLATION, *TALL MAN*, WAS EXHIBITED AT EXPERIMENTAL ART FOUNDATION, ADELAIDE, 2011.

HIS WORK IS INCLUDED IN PUBLIC COLLECTIONS INCLUDING THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF CANADA, OTTAWA; THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA; NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA, MELBOURNE; THE ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, PERTH; THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SYDNEY; AND THE QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY, BRISBANE.

Vernon Ah Kee is represented by Milani Gallery, Brisbane, Australia.



Bindi Cole

BORN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA 1975;
WATHAURUNG PEOPLE.
LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA.

BINDI COLE WAS BORN IN 1975 IN MELBOURNE. SHE IS OF ENGLISH, JEWISH AND WATHAURUNG DESCENT. COLE COMPLETED A DIPLOMA OF APPLIED PHOTOGRAPHY, NORTHERN MELBOURNE INSTITUTE OF TAFE, MELBOURNE AND A BACHELOR OF VISUAL ART (FINE ART), BALLARAT UNIVERSITY.

COLE HAS PARTICIPATED IN NUMEROUS GROUP EXHIBITIONS INCLUDING *INHERITANCE*, AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY, SYDNEY; *JUST CAN’T GET ENOUGH*, LINDEN CONTEMPORARY ART CENTRE, MELBOURNE; *SUSTAINABLE FUSION REACTIONS*, COLOUR FACTORY GALLERY, MELBOURNE ALL 2009; *A TIME LIKE THIS*, MARGARET LAWRENCE GALLERY, VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS, MELBOURNE 2008 FOR WHICH COLE COLLABORATED WITH ABORIGINAL SCULPTOR LORRAINE CONNELLY-NORTHEY AND WRITER JIRRA LULLA HARVEY, 2009; *HEART STRONG*, THE KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST, MELBOURNE, 2007. SOLO EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE *SISTAGIRLS*, NELLIE CASTAN GALLERY, MELBOURNE AND THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR PHOTOGRAPHY, SYDNEY 2010; *NOT REALLY ABORIGINAL*, CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY, AS PART OF THE 2008 NEXT WAVE FESTIVAL, MELBOURNE.

COLE WAS AWARDED THE 2009 VICTORIAN INDIGENOUS AWARDS, DEADLY ART AWARD FOR AJAY, A WORK FROM HER PHOTOGRAPHIC SERIES *SISTAGIRLS*. IN 2007 COLE WAS A FINALIST IN BOTH THE WILLIAM AND WINIFRED BOWNESS PHOTOGRAPHY PRIZE AT THE MONASH GALLERY OF ART AND THE NATIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY PORTRAIT PRIZE. COLE WAS A PARTICIPANT IN THE 2009 INDIGELAB RESIDENCY PROGRAM. COLE CURATED *NYAH-BUNYAR (TEMPLE)*, 2010 MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL EXPLORING ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY IN CONTEMPORARY URBAN AUSTRALIA. HER WORK IS HELD IN THE COLLECTION OF THE ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, PERTH AND THE KOORIE HERITAGE TRUST, MELBOURNE.

Bindi Cole is represented by Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne, Australia.



Brenda L. Croft

BORN PERTH, AUSTRALIA 1964; GURINDJI/MALGNIN/
MUDPURRA PEOPLES.
LIVES AND WORKS IN ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA.

BRENDA L. CROFT WAS BORN IN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA IN 1964 AND SHE IS OF THE GURINDJI/ MALGNIN/MUDPURRA PEOPLES. SHE RECEIVED A BACHELOR OF FINE ARTS (PHOTOGRAPHY) FROM THE SYDNEY COLLEGE OF THE ARTS IN 1985, A MASTERS OF ART ADMINISTRATION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY IN 1995 AND AN HONORARY DOCTORATE IN VISUAL ARTS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY (SYDNEY COLLEGE OF THE ARTS) IN 2009. A FOUNDING BOARD MEMBER OF THE BOOMALLI ABORIGINAL ARTISTS CO-OPERATIVE, CROFT WAS THE SENIOR CURATOR OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA IN 2002–2009 AND IS CURRENTLY LECTURER, INDIGENOUS ART, AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, ADELAIDE.

CROFT HAS HELD NUMEROUS EXHIBITIONS IN AUSTRALIA AND OVERSEAS. GROUP EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE *HOMELAND (HEIMAT)*, CONTEMPORARY ART CENTRE OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, ADELAIDE, 2009; *VISUAL SOVEREIGNTY: INTERNATIONAL INDIGENOUS PHOTOGRAPHY*, CN GORMAN MUSEUM, CALIFORNIA, USA, 2009; *HALF LIGHT: PORTRAITS FROM BLACK AUSTRALIA*, ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SYDNEY, 2008; *BRILLIANCE: A WORLD OF SHIMMER, RARRK AND GLITTER*, ABORIGINAL ART MUSEUM, UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS, 2007; *LIGHT SENSITIVE: CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN PHOTOGRAPHY FROM THE LOTI SMORGON FUND*, NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA, MELBOURNE, 2006; *WITNESS*, MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SYDNEY, 2004.

CROFT’S WORK IS HELD IN MANY PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS INCLUDING THE ABORIGINAL ART MUSEUM, UTRECHT, NETHERLANDS; THE ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SYDNEY; THE ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, PERTH; THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA AND THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF VICTORIA, MELBOURNE.

Brenda L. Croft is represented by Niagara Galleries, Melbourne, Australia and Stills Gallery, Sydney, Australia.



Destiny Deacon & Virginia Fraser

BORN MARYBOROUGH, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA 1957;
KUKU AND ERUB/MER PEOPLES.
LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA.

BORN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA;
LIVES AND WORKS IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA.

DESTINY DEACON WAS BORN IN MARYBOROUGH, QUEENSLAND IN 1957 OF KUKU (FAR-NORTH QUEENSLAND) & ERUB/MER (TORRES STRAIT) PEOPLES. DEACON WORKS AS AN ARTIST, PHOTOGRAPHER, PERFORMER, VIDEO-MAKER, WRITER AND BROADCASTER. DEACON HAS PARTICIPATED IN NUMEROUS GROUP EXHIBITIONS INCLUDING *REVOLUTIONS THAT TURN – FORMS THAT TURN*, BIENNALE OF SYDNEY, 2008; *CULTURE WARRIORS: THE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS ART TRIENNIAL '07*, NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA, 2007; *HIGH TIDE: CURRENTS IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN ART*, ZACHETA NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WARSAW, POLAND & CONTEMPORARY ART CENTRE, VILNIUS, LITHUANIA; *POINTS OF VIEW: AUSTRALIAN PHOTOGRAPHY 1985–95*, ART GALLERY OF NEW SOUTH WALES, SYDNEY, 2006; *FACES IN THE CROWD*, WHITECHAPEL, LONDON & CASTELLO DI RIVOLI, TURIN, 2004; *YOKOHAMA TRIENNALE: MEGA WAVE – TOWARDS A NEW SYNTHESIS*, YOKOHAMA, 2001; *BIENNALE OF SYDNEY 2000*, MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SYDNEY; *BEYOND THE PALE – CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS ART*, 2000 ADELAIDE BIENNIAL OF AUSTRALIAN ART, ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, ADELAIDE, 2000; *THE SECOND ASIA-PACIFIC TRIENNIAL*, QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY, BRISBANE, 1996; *MISTAKEN IDENTITIES: AFRICUS – THE 1ST JOHANNESBURG BIENNALE*, MUSEUM AFRICA, JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA, 1995; *TYERABARRBOWARYAOU 2*, THE 5TH HAVANA BIENNIAL, HAVANA, CUBA; MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SYDNEY, 1994.

DEACON'S SURVEY EXHIBITION, *WALK & DON'T LOOK BLAK*, TOURED TO THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SYDNEY; ADAM ART GALLERY, WELLINGTON,

NEW ZEALAND; TJIBAOU CULTURAL CENTRE, NEW CALEDONIA; TOKYO METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY, TOKYO; AND THE IAN POTTER MUSEUM OF ART, MELBOURNE, 2006–4.

VIRGINIA FRASER WAS BORN IN MELBOURNE WHERE SHE CONTINUES TO LIVE AND WORK AS AN ARTIST, CURATOR, WRITER AND EDITOR. SHE TRAINED FIRST AS A JOURNALIST BEFORE RECEIVING A BACHELOR OF MEDIA ARTS WITH A DOUBLE MAJOR IN FILM AND PHOTOGRAPHY FROM PHILLIP INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, MELBOURNE AND A MASTERS OF FINE ART BY RESEARCH FROM THE VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS, MELBOURNE. IN COLLABORATION WITH DESTINY DEACON, FRASER HAS PRODUCED SEVERAL WORKS SHOT ON SUPER 8MM FILM AND FINISHED ON VIDEO INCLUDING *MATINEE* 2003 SHOWN AT THE *ADELAIDE BIENNIAL OF AUSTRALIAN ART*, THE ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, ADELAIDE, 2004; *MEETING POINT*, NEUER BERLINER KUNSTVEREIN, GERMANY, 2003; WHITECHAPEL GALLERY, LONDON AND CASTELLO DI RIVOLI, TURIN, 2005; *JUMP* 1999 SHOWN AT *THE MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL BIENNIAL*, MELBOURNE, 1999; *FORCED INTO IMAGES* 2001 SHOWN AT *DOCUMENTA 11*, KASSEL, GERMANY, 2002; ARCO, MADRID, SPAIN, 2002; *YOKOHAMA TRIENNALE*, JAPAN, 2001; *I THOUGHT I KNEW, BUT I WAS WRONG*, AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE MOVING IMAGE, MELBOURNE; SSAMZIE SPACE, SEOUL, SOUTH KOREA; NANYANG ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS, SINGAPORE; JAMJUREE GALLERY, CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY, BANGKOK; BEIJING MILLENIUM MONUMENT, CHINA, 2004–6. A NUMBER OF JOINT WORKS WERE PRESENTED IN *DESTINY DEACON: WALK & DON'T LOOK BLAK*, MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SYDNEY; ADAM ART GALLERY, WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND; TJIBAOU CULTURAL CENTRE, NEW CALEDONIA; TOKYO METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF PHOTOGRAPHY, TOKYO AND IAN POTTER MUSEUM OF ART, MELBOURNE.

Destiny Deacon is represented by Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, Australia and Galleria Raffaella Cortese, Milan, Italy.



Fiona Foley

BORN MARYBOROUGH, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA 1964;
BADTJALA PEOPLE.
LIVES AND WORKS IN BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA.

FIONA FOLEY IS AN INFLUENTIAL ARTIST, CURATOR, WRITER AND ACADEMIC. BORN IN MARYBOROUGH, QUEENSLAND OF THE BADTJALA PEOPLE, FOLEY HAS TAKEN AN ACTIVE ROLE IN PROMOTING INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND SHE WAS CO-FOUNDER OF BOOMALLI ABORIGINAL ARTISTS CO-OPERATIVE, SYDNEY IN 1987. FOLEY HAS PARTICIPATED IN NUMEROUS GROUP EXHIBITIONS SINCE 1984 INCLUDING *A GENEROSITY OF SPIRIT: RECENT AUSTRALIAN WOMEN'S ART*, ANNE & GORDON SAMSTAG MUSEUM OF ART, ADELAIDE, 2010; *KATE CHALLIS RAKA AWARD 2008 FINALISTS*, IAN POTTER MUSEUM OF ART, MELBOURNE; *POWER AND BEAUTY: INDIGENOUS ART NOW*, HEIDE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, MELBOURNE, 2008; *NO LAUGHING MATTER*, HOOD MUSEUM OF ART, DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, NEW HAMPSHIRE, USA; *GLOBAL FEMINISMS*, BROOKLYN MUSEUM, NEW YORK, USA, 2007; *PRISM: AUSTRALIAN CONTEMPORARY ART*, BRIDGESTONE MUSEUM OF ART, TOKYO, 2006; *OUT THERE*, SAINSBURY CENTRE FOR VISUAL ARTS, NORWICH, UK, 2006; *THE AMERICAN EFFECT*, WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, NEW YORK, 2003.

FOLEY'S SURVEY EXHIBITION, *FIONA FOLEY: FORBIDDEN* WAS HELD AT THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SYDNEY AND THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND ART MUSEUM, BRISBANE 2009. SOLO EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE *STRANGE FRUIT*, OCTOBER GALLERY, LONDON 2006; *RED OCHRE ME*, CASULA POWERHOUSE ARTS CENTRE, SYDNEY, 2006; *PIR'RI – MANGROVE*, QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY, BRISBANE, 2001. SHE HAS PRODUCED PUBLIC COMMISSIONS FOR THE STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND, BRISBANE MAGISTRATES COURT, PARLIAMENT HOUSE AND THE MUSEUM OF SYDNEY AMONGST OTHERS.

Fiona Foley is represented by Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane, Australia and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne, Australia.



Gary Lee

BORN DARWIN, NORTHERN TERRITORY, AUSTRALIA 1952;
LARRAKIA/KARAJARRI/WADAMAN PEOPLES.
LIVES AND WORKS IN CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA.

GARY LEE IS AN ARTIST, WRITER, ANTHROPOLOGIST AND CURATOR OF THE LARRAKIA/KARAJARRI/WADAMAN PEOPLES. LEE IS CURRENTLY A PHD INDIGENOUS RESEARCH FELLOW AT THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER STUDIES. GROUP EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE *GAYME*, COUNIHAN GALLERY, BRUNSWICK, MELBOURNE, 2010; *MORE THAN MY SKIN*, CAMPBELLTOWN ART CENTRE, SYDNEY, NATIONAL TOUR; *HAND IN HAND*, BOOMALLI ABORIGINAL ARTS CO-OP, SYDNEY, 2008; *TELSTRA NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART AWARD*, MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY OF NT, DARWIN; *TERRITORIAL*, 24HR ART NT CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, DARWIN 2007, AND CANBERRA CONTEMPORARY ART SPACE, CANBERRA; *OTHER APT*, RAWSPACE GALLERIES, BRISBANE, 2007; TOGART CONTEMPORARY ART AWARD (NT), PARLIAMENT HOUSE, DARWIN, 2006; *BILLIAMOOK*, CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY GALLERY, DARWIN 2005; *LOVE MAGIC: EROTICS AND POLITICS IN INDIGENOUS ART*, S. H. ERVIN GALLERY, SYDNEY, 1999. SOLO EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE *MAAST MAAST*, 24HR ART NT CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, DARWIN, 2008. HIS WORK IS HELD BY THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA, MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY OF THE NT, DARWIN AND PRIVATE COLLECTIONS.

Gary Lee is represented by Alcaston Gallery, Melbourne, Australia; Harvison Gallery, Perth, Australia; Sheahan Galleries, Bulli, Australia; and Woolloongabba Art Gallery, Brisbane, Australia.



Michael Riley

BORN DUBBO, NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA 1960;
DIED 2004.
WIRADJURI/KAMILAROI PEOPLES.

MICHAEL RILEY WAS BORN IN DUBBO, QUEENSLAND IN 1960 AND HE WAS OF THE WIRADJURI/KAMILAROI PEOPLE. HE STUDIED PHOTOGRAPHY AT TIN SHEDS GALLERY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY IN 1992. HE LIVED AND WORKED IN SYDNEY AS A PHOTOGRAPHER AND FILM MAKER AND WAS A FOUNDING MEMBER OF THE BOOMALLI ABORIGINAL ARTISTS CO-OPERATIVE.

RILEY HELD NUMEROUS EXHIBITIONS AND PRODUCED A NUMBER OF FILMS AND DOCUMENTARIES. GROUP EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE *POETIC JUSTICE – 8TH ISTANBUL BIENNALE*, ISTANBUL, TURKEY, 2003; *MERIDIAN: FOCUS ON CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN ART*, MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SYDNEY, 2003; *IMAGES: CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHS BY ABORIGINAL ARTISTS*, ABORIGINAL ART MUSEUM, UTRECHT, THE NETHERLANDS, 2004; *NATIVE TITLE BUSINESS: CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS ART*, QUEENSLAND MUSEUM, BRISBANE, AND NATIONAL TOUR, 2002; *BEYOND THE PALE: ADELAIDE BIENNIAL OF AUSTRALIAN ART*, ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, ADELAIDE, 2000; *ANOTHER COUNTRY*, ART GALLERY OF NSW, 1999; *RE-TAKE: CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PHOTOGRAPHY*, NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA, 1998; *NAIDOC '86 EXHIBITION OF ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER PHOTOGRAPHERS*, ABORIGINAL ARTISTS GALLERY, SYDNEY, 1986.

RILEY'S RETROSPECTIVE, *MICHAEL RILEY: SIGHTS UNSEEN* WAS EXHIBITED AT THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA IN 2006. HIS WORK IS HELD IN SEVERAL COLLECTIONS INCLUDING THE NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA; THE ART GALLERY OF NSW, SYDNEY AND THE QUEENSLAND ART GALLERY, BRISBANE.

Michael Riley continues to be represented by Stills Gallery, Sydney, Australia and The Michael Riley Foundation.

Michael Riley 1997 colour photograph.
Courtesy of the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.



Ivan Sen

BORN NAMBOUR, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA 1972;
GAMILAROI PEOPLE.
LIVES AND WORKS IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA.

IVAN SEN WAS BORN IN NAMBOUR, QUEENSLAND IN 1971 AND HE IS OF THE GAMILAROI PEOPLE. SEN STUDIED PHOTOGRAPHY AT GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY, BRISBANE AND ENROLLED IN A SERIES OF SHORT FILM CLASSES. HIS FILMS HAVE WON NUMEROUS AWARDS INCLUDING THREE AUSTRALIA FILM INSTITUTE AWARDS. HIS FIRST FEATURE LENGTH FILM, *BENEATH CLOUDS* 2002, WON GLOBAL ACCLAIM, SCREENING AT THE 2003 SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL AND WINNING THE PREMIERE FIRST MOVIE AWARD AT THE 2002 BERLIN FILM FESTIVAL AND THE 2002 BEST DIRECTOR AWARD AT THE AUSTRALIAN FILM INSTITUTE AWARDS. IN 2009, THE MESSAGE STICKS INDIGENOUS FILM FESTIVAL HELD AT THE SYDNEY OPERA HOUSE SAW THE WORLD PREMIERE OF SEN'S *FIRE TALKER*, A DOCUMENTARY BIOPIC ABOUT POLITICAL ACTIVIST AND ABORIGINAL FOOTBALLER, CHARLIE PERKINS. IT PREMIERED AT THE 10TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE MESSAGE STICKS INDIGENOUS FILM FESTIVAL. SEN'S SECOND FEATURE-LENGTH FILM, *DREAMLAND*, SCREENED AT THE 2010 MELBOURNE INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL.



Christian Thompson

BORN GAWLER, SOUTH AUSTRALIA, 1978;
BIDJARA PEOPLE.
LIVES AND WORKS IN OXFORD, THE UNITED KINGDOM.

CHRISTIAN THOMPSON WAS BORN IN GAWLER, SOUTH AUSTRALIA IN 1978. A BIDJARA MAN OF THE KUNJA NATION FROM CENTRAL WESTERN QUEENSLAND, THOMPSON WORKS AS A CONTEMPORARY ARTIST, FREELANCE CURATOR AND WRITER. HE STUDIED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND, THE ROYAL MELBOURNE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY AND DASARTS, AMSTERDAM SCHOOL OF ARTS. IN 2010, HE WON THE INAUGURAL CHARLIE PERKINS SCHOLARSHIP AND IS THE FIRST ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN TO BE ACCEPTED INTO OXFORD UNIVERSITY, WHERE HE IS UNDERTAKING A DOCTORATE OF PHILOSOPHY IN FINE ART.

THOMPSON HAS HELD NUMEROUS SOLO AND GROUP EXHIBITIONS IN AUSTRALIA AND INTERNATIONALLY. GROUP EXHIBITIONS INCLUDE *TELL ME TELL ME*, MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, SYDNEY, 2011; *SOLO, MODERN ART OXFORD*, OXFORD, UK, 2011; *CLOSE ENCOUNTERS*, PLUGIN CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY ART, CANADA, 2011; *THE BEAUTY OF DISTANCE – SONGS OF SURVIVAL IN A PRECARIOUS AGE*, THE 17TH INTERNATIONAL BIENNALE OF SYDNEY, SYDNEY, 2010; *ANDY AND OZ: PARALLEL VISIONS*, THE ANDY WARHOL MUSEUM, PITTSBURGH, USA; *CULTURE WARRIORS*, NATIONAL INDIGENOUS ART TRIENNIAL, NATIONAL GALLERY OF AUSTRALIA, CANBERRA; *RAISED BY WOLVES*, ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA, PERTH, ALL 2007; *TERRA INCOGNITA*, GERTRUDE CONTEMPORARY ART SPACES, MELBOURNE, 2006; *SPIRIT AND VISION*, KUNST DER GEGENWART SAMMLUNG ESSL, VIENNA, AUSTRIA, 2004; AND *CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL ART*, ABORIGINAL ART MUSEUM UTRECHT, NETHERLANDS, 2004.

Christian Thompson is represented by Gabrielle Pizzi Gallery, Melbourne, Australia and Chalkhorse, Sydney, Australia.

Curators

DJON MUNDINE OAM

Djon Mundine is a member of Bundjalung people of northern New South Wales. He has an extensive career as a curator, activist, writer, and occasional artist. Mundine has been involved in the visual arts since the late 1970s, working as Art Advisor at Milingimbi, Maningrida and Ramingining in the Northern Territory from 1979–95, with the majority of this time spent at Ramingining (1983–95), a small community in Central Arnhem Land located around 400 kilometres east of Darwin. While at Ramingining, Mundine initiated The Aboriginal Memorial (1987–88), a significant installation of 200 hollow log coffins or poles now held in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. In 1995, his last year at Ramingining, Mundine was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his services to the visual arts. Since that time he has worked as a curator and academic while he continues to be involved in collaborative art projects.

In 2005–06 he undertook a residency at the National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku) in Osaka, Japan as a Research Professor in the Department of Social Research, prior to which he was Senior Consultant and Curator of Indigenous Art at the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. He has taught at the National Art School, Canberra and has held curatorial positions at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. More recently, he was Indigenous Curator – Contemporary Art at the Campbelltown Art Centre where he mounted the *Sunshine State – Smart State* and *More Than My Skin* exhibitions. He is currently a PhD candidate at College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, Sydney.



NATALIE KING

Natalie King is a curator, writer and the inaugural Director of Utopia @ Asialink – a roving visual arts project for the Asia Pacific region. She has completed a Master of Arts from Monash University, Melbourne. She has curated exhibitions for numerous museums including the Singapore Art Museum, National Museum of Art, Osaka, Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne and Melbourne Festival. She curated Destiny Deacon's survey exhibition *Walk & don't look blak* for the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Adam Art Gallery, Wellington; Tjibaou Cultural Centre, New Caledonia; Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography; and the Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne. She is a correspondent for *Flash Art International* and has written for *ARTit* (Japan), *Art and Australia*, *The Age*, *British Art Monthly*, *Art World*, *Art Asia Pacific*, *Artlink* and *Australian Art Collector*. She was the curator and editor of *Up Close: Carol Jerrems with Larry Clark, Nan Goldin and William Yang* at Heide Museum of Modern Art as the recipient of an Australia Council grant. King has published interviews with Ai Weiwei, Joseph Kosuth, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Tacita Dean, Massimiliano Gioni and Kathy Temin. In 2011, she guest edited an issue of *Broadsheet* magazine (with Larissa Hjorth) and a special issue of *Artlink* on Surveillance (with Virginia Fraser).



List
of
works

<p>VERNON AH KEE Born Innisfail, Queensland, Australia 1967; Kuku Yalandji, Waanji, Yidinji and Gugu Yimithirr peoples. Lives and works in Brisbane, Australia.</p> <p><i>WHITEFELLA NORMAL, BLACKFELLA ME</i> 2004 Digital video with sound 00:30 minutes Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane</p> <p>BINDI COLE Born Melbourne, Australia 1975; Wathaurung people. Lives and works in Melbourne, Australia.</p> <p><i>WARRE BEAL YALLOCK</i> 2008 Pigment print on rag paper 130 x 94 cm</p> <p><i>WATHAURUNG MOB</i> 2008 Pigment print on rag paper 94 x 130 cm</p> <p><i>SEVENTY TIMES SEVEN</i> 2011 Digital video with sound 10:21 minutes Courtesy of the artist and Nellie Castan Gallery, Melbourne</p> <p>BRENDA L. CROFT Born Perth, Australia 1964; Gurindji/Malgnin/ Mudpurra peoples. Lives and works in Adelaide, Australia.</p> <p><i>A HOSTILE LANDSCAPE</i> 2003 FROM THE SERIES <i>MAN ABOUT TOWN</i> 2003 Giclee print on rag paper 80 x 119 cm Edition of 10</p>	<p><i>MAN ABOUT TOWN</i> 2003 FROM THE SERIES <i>MAN ABOUT TOWN</i> 2003 Giclee print on rag paper 80 x 119 cm Edition of 10</p> <p><i>INSPECTION DAY</i> 2003 FROM THE SERIES <i>MAN ABOUT TOWN</i> 2003 Giclee print on rag paper 80 x 119 cm Edition of 10</p> <p><i>COLOUR BAR</i> 2003 FROM THE SERIES <i>MAN ABOUT TOWN</i> 2003 Giclee print on rag paper 80 x 119 cm Edition of 10 Courtesy of the artist and Stills Gallery, Sydney</p> <p>DESTINY DEACON & VIRGINIA FRASER Born Maryborough, Queensland, Australia 1957; KuKu and Erub/Mer peoples. Lives and works in Melbourne, Australia; Born Melbourne, Australia; lives and works in Melbourne, Australia.</p> <p><i>COLOUR BLINDED</i> 2005 Installation, lightjet prints from orthochromatic film negative, golliwog dolls, polystyrene and Perspex cubes, low-pressure sodium lamps, video with sound Dimensions variable</p> <p><i>FORCED INTO IMAGES</i> 2001 Super 8 film finished on video, DVD format 9:00 minutes Edition of 20 Courtesy of the artists and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney</p>	<p>FIONA FOLEY Born Maryborough, Queensland, Australia 1964; Badtjala people. Lives and works in Brisbane, Australia.</p> <p><i>BLISS</i> 2006 Digital video with sound 11:00 minutes</p> <p><i>THE OYSTER FISHERMAN I-XVI</i> 2011 Digital print on Hahnemühle paper Set of 16 images 60 x 80 cm Courtesy of the artist and Andrew Baker Art Dealer, Brisbane</p> <p>GARY LEE Born Darwin, Australia 1952; Larrakia/Karajarri/ Wadaman peoples. Lives and works in Canberra, Australia.</p> <p><i>CAL, 17</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>ON THE VERGE 3</i> 2012 Digital colour print on Hahnemühle paper 52.5 x 70 cm</p> <p><i>DANIEL, 17</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>ON THE VERGE 3</i> 2012 Digital colour print on Hahnemühle paper 52.5 x 70 cm</p> <p><i>DECLAN, 17</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>ON THE VERGE 3</i> 2012 Digital colour print on Hahnemühle paper 52.5 x 70 cm</p> <p><i>LUKE, 17</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>ON THE VERGE 3</i> 2012 Digital colour print on Hahnemühle paper 52.5 x 70 cm</p>	<p><i>MICHAEL, 17</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>ON THE VERGE 3</i> 2012 Digital colour print on Hahnemühle paper 52.5 x 70 cm</p> <p><i>PADDY, 17</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>ON THE VERGE 3</i> 2012 Digital colour print on Hahnemühle paper 52.5 x 70 cm</p> <p><i>STEFAN, 17</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>ON THE VERGE 3</i> 2012 Digital colour print on Hahnemühle paper 52.5 x 70 cm</p> <p><i>TOMAS, 18</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>ON THE VERGE 3</i> 2012 Digital colour print on Hahnemühle paper 52.5 x 70 cm Courtesy of the artist and Alcastan Gallery, Melbourne; Harvison Gallery, Perth; Sheahan Galleries, Bulli; and Woolloongabba Art Gallery, Brisbane</p> <p>MICHAEL RILEY Born Dubbo, New South Wales, Australia 1960; died 2004. Wiradjuri/Kamilaroi peoples.</p> <p><i>BOMBA</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>THEY CALL ME NIIGARR</i> 1995 Pigment print 31 x 39.5 cm</p> <p><i>CHOCOLATE</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>THEY CALL ME NIIGARR</i> 1995 Pigment print 31 x 39.5 cm</p> <p><i>DUSTY</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>THEY CALL ME NIIGARR</i> 1995 Pigment print 31 x 39.5 cm</p>	<p><i>GOLLIWOG</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>THEY CALL ME NIIGARR</i> 1995 Pigment print 31 x 39.5 cm</p> <p><i>LICORICE</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>THEY CALL ME NIIGARR</i> 1995 Pigment print 31 x 39.5 cm</p> <p><i>MARBUCK</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>THEY CALL ME NIIGARR</i> 1995 Pigment print 31 x 39.5 cm</p> <p><i>NIGGER</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>THEY CALL ME NIIGARR</i> 1995 Pigment print 31 x 39.5 cm</p> <p><i>NIIGARR</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>THEY CALL ME NIIGARR</i> 1995 Pigment print 31 x 39.5 cm</p> <p><i>SAMBO</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>THEY CALL ME NIIGARR</i> 1995 Pigment print 31 x 39.5 cm</p> <p><i>VEGEMITE</i> FROM THE SERIES <i>THEY CALL ME NIIGARR</i> 1995 Pigment print 31 x 39.5 cm Courtesy of the Michael Riley Foundation and Stills Gallery, Sydney</p> <p>IVAN SEN Born Nambour, Queensland, Australia 1972; Gamilaroi people. Lives and works in Sydney, Australia.</p> <p><i>DUST</i> 1999 Digital video with sound 25:00 minutes Courtesy of the artist and the National Film and Sound Archive, Australia</p>	<p>CHRISTIAN THOMPSON Born Gawler, South Australia, 1978; Bidjara people. Lives and works in Oxford, The United Kingdom.</p> <p><i>GAMU MAMBU (BLOOD SONG)</i> 2010 Digital video with sound 2:30 minutes Courtesy of the artist and Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi, Melbourne.</p>
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SHADOWLIFE

CURATORS

Djon Mundine OAM and Natalie King

ARTISTS

Vernon Ah Kee, Bindi Cole, Brenda L. Croft, Destiny Deacon & Virginia Fraser, Fiona Foley, Gary Lee, Michael Riley, Ivan Sen and Christian Thompson.

BANGKOK ARTS & CULTURAL CENTRE

1 March – 29 April 2012

Bangkok, Thailand

KAOHSIUNG MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

16 June – 12 August 2012

Kaohsiung, Taiwan

NANYANG ACADEMY OF FINE ART

25 August – 30 September 2012

Singapore

BENDIGO ART GALLERY

13 April – 28 July 2013

Bendigo, Australia

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The curators would sincerely like to thank the artists for their magical and shadowy contribution to this exhibition and Virginia Fraser for her invaluable insights into our essay.

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Front cover:

Destiny Deacon *Man & Doll (b)* 2005

Inside back cover:

Michael Riley *Sambo* from the series

They call me niigarr 1995

