



Acknowledgement

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We would like to respectfully acknowledge the Southern Yamatji Peoples who are the Traditional Owners and First People of these lands. We would like to pay our respects to the Elders past, present and future for they hold the memories, the traditions, the culture and the hopes of the Southern Yamatji Peoples.

Front and back covers: Charmaine Green and Mark Smith, UNRAVELLING: ARCHIVES 1, 2019 (detail), woodcut print, collage, glitter on paper, 90 x 60cm.

The Alternative Archive is a series of state-wide exhibitions inviting local curators and artists to respond to their social contexts, exploring archives, and cementing the role of artists as recorders of social and cultural history. Creating a contemporary visual archive of regional Western Australian arts practice, The Alternative Archive draws together 13 galleries, 27 curators and 180 artists to document a dynamic anthology of how regional artists relate to the people, homes, towns or regions they know so well; in short it seeks to unpack narratives of place.

Artists are recorders of social history, the creators of cultural capital in any community and their creative output is central to understanding our sense of identity, place and community. In Geraldton, 12 artists have come together to explore the myths, legends and tall tales that surround the accessibility and absence of certain histories in the Midwest's social and political landscape. Craig Allsop, Helen Ansell, Marina Baker, Zac Bruce and Ellen Broadhurst, Julie Dowling, Charmaine Green and Mark Smith, Roy Merrit, Ellen Norrish, Marianne Penberthy and Mark Smith and Jason Stacey imagine other ways of being and parallel histories where truths are told and agency is maintained.

The Alternative Archive exhibitions share a title and over-arching theme, yet each create a locally specific record. They provide a peer feedback platform for artists to engage with history, storytelling and local mythology, as well as personal and communal memory. The vision for *The Alternative Archive* is to create a visual archive of contemporary work responsive to local people, issues and realities that invite viewers to connect on a fundamental level to the familiar, intriguing, new, subverted and repositioned stories of regional Western Australia.

This project is highly significant for Western Australia, engaging an unprecedented number of regional artists in a collaborative and unique cultural project that highlights the creative vibrancy of our regions.

The Alternative Archive is presented by Connect to the Creative Grid, an initiative of the Regional Arts Partnership Program supported by the State government, Country Arts WA and the Australian government's Regional Arts Fund. A survey of the state-wide exhibitions will be held at John Curtin Gallery in May 2020 and aims to increase understanding of the arts ecology, practices, and conditions of regional art making in Western Australia.

ANNA LOUISE RICHARDSON. Lead Curator, The Alternative Archive When Eve York, Director of Geraldton Regional Art Gallery, asked me in May 2018 if I would be interested in being involved in the project called *The Alternative Archive* as curator the concept struck me as simultaneously terrifying and exciting. Our exhibition would be one of many around the state that would follow the same brief and open at different times in 2019.

It was an incredible opportunity, to curate a show without any prior experience and to be mentored in the process. I have volunteered and worked in galleries and museums since 2002 and here was a chance to do something that I knew would be difficult but unique, and unlikely to come my way again.

I read the brief that artist and independent curator, Anna Louise Richardson had written. I really liked it. If I hadn't connected with it, I would not have gone beyond that point.

In the period I was considering my answer for Eve, Reconciliation Week happened and then NAIDOC week. This brought up a lot of emotions. Thinking of archives makes me think of history and history makes me think of the past. Our past here in Australia is a nightmare. There is some good, but a lot of damage has been done. We like to paint a consolidated, tough, noble, righteous history. The less palatable details of Australian colonial history are often left out.

I saw the project as an opportunity to bring some light to the other histories in our town and region. Not the ones that

dominate and are popular. I felt the land held so many untold stories, so many layers of history: traditional history, occupation, and now contemporary life was happening over those very spaces. By bringing light to some of these stories I think we can better understand the present and maybe the possibilities for the future.

I was also reading False Claims of Colonial Thieves by Charmaine Papertalk Green and John Kinsella at the time. In one of the poems 'Hawes God's Intruder' both poets talk about churches designed by John Hawes, a celebrated architect and priest whose churches and buildings pepper the region. One in particular is the beautiful Our Lady of Mt Carmel church of Mullewa.

This is an interesting church out in the middle of nowhere, displaying lots of European elements. Built in Romanesque style, oversized gargoyles lean out, bright white domes topped with crosses gleam against the blue sky, arches and pillars in intricate stone evoke mediaeval monasteries. A myth has gathered around this church that John Hawes built it single handedly. It seems to be an attractive myth that people willingly embrace. However, many other hands helped construct this church.

So, I invited a selection of artists to explore alternate stories of our lives on this land, inviting them to uncover concealed details from within our community that don't get a lot of attention.



The Alternative Archive brief was the perfect framework to approach this subject. I am very proud of the artists and the works they have produced.

Helen Ansell looks at traditional language lost in colonisation, particularly in relation to the names of plants and wildflowers. Her colourful paintings intimating the sadder story of a language colonised.

Charmaine Green and Mark Smith interrogate myths through the use of collage, and revisit a print of the Geraldton St Francis Xavier Cathedral, once a Yamaji campsite. Their works are powerful reclamations of traditional spaces "Our artworks interrogate [...] myths which have seen Yamaji become invisible in their own ancestral lands".

Roy Merrit has created two long scarves in his signature 'Daisy Chain' stitch which represent the wildflowers that bloom around Mullewa where he grew up.

Ellen Norrish explores a quirky, private collection of tins that is open to the public, a personal community archive. Her representational style will have you smiling as you recognise tins from your own past faithfully rendered in oils.

Craig Allsop shares stories and portraits from residents of the old Mingenew Reserve, a government created construct that was indicative of control of Yamaji lives at the time.

Marianne Penberthy tackles her own relationship to land and the colonial past creating a personal archive, 'An Offering'.

Jason Stacey and Mark Smith, emerging artists, explore parallel stories of growing up in the same community but from the perspective of different cultures. They were mentored by Lizzy Robinson, printmaker.

Marina Baker explores the hierarchy of control of archives in a series of fascinating paintings 'White Construct' based on her time as Collections Manager at New Norcia.

Zac Bruce and Ellen Broadhurst examine the mythology of Hutt River and the country Australia through film. "What is a country but a shared fiction? An idea so embedded in our mental fabric that it appears natural, preordained, an irrefutable Truth."

Two of Julie Dowling's works have been selected to join this exhibition. Julie, a Badimaya artist with family links to the region, was a natural fit in *The Alternative Archive*. Her works explore the lives of her people and the repercussions of colonial and post-colonial decisions on First Nation People.

Here you have The Alternative Archive: Truths, Myths and Legends of the Midwest.

The Alternative Archive would not have been possible without the support of The Creative Grid.

Living on the Mullewa fringes Became my people's place When a colonial township emerged Like a pimple in the wildflowers

Foreign church structures rose
Dominating the landscape
Family showed me the quarry
From which the rocks were taken
Building the Whiteman's worship place
Mullewa Reserve nearby
Along the Mullewa – Morawa Road
Aboriginal hands helped build that temple
Their energy and sweat is in them rocks
Their heart is in them rocks
Hawes didn't do it on his own

Wonder if that is written anywhere? As a child I peered into that Curious why gargoyles watched the entry Frightened to look at the statues inside

CHARMAINE GREEN Excerpt from "Hawes- God's Intruder" From the book False Claims of Colonial Thieves By Charmaine Papertalk Green and John Kinsella

- CRAIG ALLSOP •
- HELEN ANSELL •
- MARINA BAKER •
- ZAC BRUCE AND ELLEN BROADHURST IN COLLABORATION
 - JULIE DOWLING •
- CHARMAINE GREEN AND MARK SMITH IN COLLABORATION
 - **ROY MERRIT** •
 - **ELLEN NORRISH** •
 - MARIANNE PENBERTHY •
 - MARK SMITH AND JASON STACEY IN COLLABORATION



MINGENEW RESERVE, LOOKING NORTHWARDS

[detail] 8" x 10 " Gelatin silver print



KATHY JACOBS 2019 10" x 10" Gelatin silver print

The Mingenew Aboriginal reserve was established in 1938 and eventually disbanded in 1972. The Aboriginal reserve system in Western Australia operated under a segregationist government policy context that sought to control all aspects of the social lives of Aboriginal people - where they lived, who could live with them, whose custody their children were in, who they could marry, where they were at what times and so on.

Alfred Farrell, who used to live on the Mingenew reserve, recalls that prior to the establishment of the reserve there were many traditional camps in the area, stating that 'People would camp by the spring or near Depot hill. There were other camps at the base of Mingenew hill and out by the showground'. Reg Brockman, who also formally lived on the reserve, sums up the government approach to Aboriginal affairs when he says 'It's all about the regulation of Aboriginal peoples lives'.

So why don't we know much about this history? Driving around the Midwest or even just around Geraldton it's hard to find references to this history in public spaces, nor does it seem to loom large in the public consciousness. Some fifty years ago the anthropologist WEH Stanner coined the phrase the 'Great Australian Silence' in reference to the 'forgetfulness' of history in relation to Aboriginal people in this country. As those after Stanner came to understand it's more than forgetfulness, it's an active and conscious process of forgetting. That is sometimes how history and its archive is created. But what of those who hold the alternative archive, the alternative history of the Midwest? The writing of this history, at least in the Mingenew reserve instance, comes from the activism of its former inhabitants, who like Reg says, 'want to preserve what's at the reserve, the memory of what took place there'.

These oral history collections tell just a small part of the large and complex history of Aboriginal reserve life in Mingenew by those who once grew up there with their families and extended kin. But it's important to note that there were many other Aboriginal families who were out in the Mingenew region and on the reserve who are not represented here. Kathy Jacobs outlines this in her oral history as a part of the exhibition. The reason for their omission was due mainly to time constraints, and the usual limitations imposed upon these sorts of projects. As such what is presented here is a fragment of the stories held by Aboriginal people who relate to the Mingenew reserve.

All of the community members represented in this exhibition expressed a desire to preserve the history of the old reserve, to document what went on and to show how it relates to peoples' lives today. Despite the hardship and seemingly unimaginable conditions, all of these former reserve members actively seek to protect the old reserve and share its history with the broader community. As former reserve member Michael Edwards puts it - 'Mingenew is home. That's my spirit. That's my family connection. And that's why I want to protect it.'





ORIGINAL PHOTO FROM THE MULLEWA FLOWER SHOW

MULLEWA FLOWER SHOW 1 3 x (70cm x 70cm) installed as a set Acrylic on canvas



MULLEWA FLOWER SHOW 2 3 x (70cm x 70cm) installed as a set Acrylic on canvas



MULLEWA FLOWER SHOW 3 3 x (70cm x 70cm) installed as a set Acrylic on canvas

"On nearer view, [I] found the buds much more beautiful than the full blown flower—I regret they have assumed a yellow hue, but are lovely and elegant even in Death. The Native name is 'Danja'—and I rather think it will turn out to be a Hakea." (Georgiana Molloy, 14th March, 1840)

In the 19th Century, Molloy's practice was to send Western Australian seeds and specimens to fellow Botanist James Mangles, who in turn distributed them to botanical authorities in England and Europe.

Such networks were responsible for the colonization of Aboriginal people through naming, as English botanists such as John Lindley replaced the Noongar names for plants, with scientific (Latin) names which in turn contributed to the wider loss of Noongar language.*

I wanted to explore the idea that instead of white colonialists believing that they "discovered" and named Australian native flowers, that they instead learnt the Indigenous names (as well as other information about plant uses such as medicinal etc.) from the original inhabitants of Australia and adopted local Aboriginal names.

In response to this concept, I painted a set of three artworks based loosely on my own personal photographs of the Mullewa Wildflower show, but using native Wajarri/Yamatji naming/labelling instead. After painting the works I discovered that I could only trace half of the names that I needed, hence why three are left blank.

* Australasian Journal of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology, Vol. 5, 2015/2016 Photography by Ross Dehoog.









WHITE CONSTRUCT 21 x (20cm x 20cm each) Oils on oil canvas boards

As the former Museum Collections Manager for New Norcia, I was fortunate to have access to the New Norcia Archives, a repository of the records, ledgers, photos and correspondence of this Spanish mission, established 130km north east from Perth in 1847. Both the monastic tradition of the Benedictines and the bureaucratic dictates of colonial administration have ensured the unique content of this archive, accessible on request to the Archivist and the Abbot, for the research of academics and the many Aboriginal people who seek their genealogies and family records.

New Norcia was established by Bishop Salvado with the express intention of engaging with Aboriginal people. It became an 'orphanage' for Aboriginal children and a workplace for families – many of WA's Aboriginal families have history there. Although I could access the space of the archive, and for collection reasons research the content, it is the physical control of the material that I depict in this painting. The presences and absent access of the outsider echo within a tight methodology of hierarchical control.





WE'RE STILL HERE [detail] Video

What is a country but a shared fiction? An idea so embedded in our mental fabric that it appears natural, preordained, an irrefutable Truth. Yet when we step back to inspect the different parts that make up the whole, what do we get? A few tall tales, stitched together with fewer True Events, woven under the sky of all things lost, unrecorded and unknown.

Why then do we cling to it, this tarted up potato sack, this sad, tatty dream? Are we deranged? Or just desperate to belong? Maybe something else altogether?

The Principality of Hutt River is an independent nation situated 100km north of Geraldton, WA. Since its foundation 50 years ago, The True History of Hutt River has remained hidden.

Filmed and written in collaboration with Tom Rogers and Ellen Broadhurst.



IDYA (TAKING) (detail) 39.5cm x 50cm Acrylic, mica gold and plastic on canvas



BIBAGUBAYA (BECOMING QUIET) 90cm x 120cm Acrylic, mica gold and plastic on canvas

Julie Dowling is a Badimaya First Nation woman who paints the heart and soul of her country. In dazzling, bejewelled canvases European Arts history is referenced while Badimaya context and symbolism surfaces, shifting the ground between subject and object, empowering the faces and figures depicted within, and foregrounding the injustices that continue to affect her people. Julie's works are both political and personal, celebratory yet profoundly sad, moving the viewer to question and take action.

From 1989 to 1995 Julie studied at Western Australia's premier Arts schools and colleges, culminating in the award of an Honorary Doctorate in Literature from Murdoch University in 2002. Since her first solo exhibition at Fremantle Arts Centre in 1995, Julie has earned a substantial national and international reputation as an artist of extraordinary vision, exhibiting at International Art Fairs, numerous Biennales, and in significant exhibitions at state and national galleries across Australia. She has had more than 20 solo exhibitions, in 2017 showing 'Yagu Gurlbarl (Big Secret)' in collaboration with Yamaji Art at the Geraldton Regional Art Gallery.

[Bibagubaya (Becoming Quiet)] is a painting about the last fluent speakers of First Nation languages. In the pictographs around the elder are trees with the spirits of those she used to talk with in her language going to their ancestor spirits just as they reach for her also above her head.

A living language has its own understanding of life with unique insight into the universe.

When a language disappears all humanity is diminished.

[Idya (Taking)] is about when as a young girl most First Nation people begin to realise the disparity of wealth and prosperity gained through theft by colonial white people and exactly how much wealth there is in other ways within First Nation families.

Julie's paintings exhibited within The Alternative Archive: Truths, Myths and Legends of the Midwest express stories of injustice and loss, yet of extraordinary resilience, beauty and cultural survival, despite the odds.



Our data and knowledge are carved deeply into the rocks, caves, trees, rivers, waterholes, ceremonial grounds, night sky, artefacts, campsites, walking tracks, bushfoods, song lines, story's, dances, sacred places and our very existence as Yamaji. Our archives extend thousands of years beyond museums, libraries, churches and government records.

In the Western world archives are generally viewed as manmade objects such as libraries, museums, books, field notes, government records and so forth. These archives have been constructed for the Western world through Western patriarchy lens.

UNRAVELLING: ARCHIVES 1
56cm x 76cm
Woodcut print, collage, glitter on paper



UNRAVELLING: ARCHIVES 2 (detail) 56cmx76cm Woodcut print, collage, glitter on paper



WE REMEMBER – OUR BARNA! 2016 (detail) 120cm x 90cm Woodcut print block, ink

These archives can and do create myths, for instance the "Terra Nullius Myth" and the "Hawes Myth". Our artworks interrogate both myths which have seen Yamaji become invisible in their own ancestral lands – creating conversations of visibility. The "Hawes Myth" passed on to tourist and church visitors alike that "Hawes built the churches himself". We question this and want to generate conversations of the local Yamaji and non Yamaji helping to build these grand structures on our landscape. Our narrative is to tell a story of reclaiming, decolonising and re positioning the nameless Yamaji who helped to build these colonial religious structures whilst being displaced from their traditional sites.

The poetry of stone / Belongs to not one man / To be worshiped / Like a bronze deity / Step lightly on that / Rock of knowledge / For it can crumble with lies Widbala / gurlatharrayimanha (ignoring not wanting to know) / Widbala / gurlgabunthu (deaf) Widbala / gurlgabunthuwimanha (not listening unable to hear) / Widbala/Guru walhi (eyes that no good) / Widbala / Yurulbagu (ignorant not knowing).

Then there is the worldwide "Terra Nullius Myth" of Australia being no man's land – empty and vacant for the taking is to be made visible for what it is – a myth created for the taking of lands. Our conversation is to keep visible that at time of invasion/settlement these lands existed living Yamaji people with songs, dances, religions and a society swepted away by ethnocentrism.

Our people have not / Been buried within / The memory of this land / For they exist through /Us their descendants / We remember and we / Will make visible for all Yamaji / Malga garrimanha (standing strong and firm) / Yamaji / Wanggajimanha (yarning) / Yamaji / Nganhu thubarnmanha (we are straightening story out) / Yamaji / Ngurra Yungarra (One's own country) Yamaji / Garrimanha (standing together).

We aim to reclaim the traditional spaces of our ancestors who had been displaced from their ancestral sites. We are from the Yamaji Nation with traditional connections to the Midwest and Murchison, and draw on knowledge and memory inherited from ancestors and journeys into Western archives to decolonise and challenge.



POM POMS AND PAPER DAISIES 2 x (50cm x 3m) Wool



PAPER DAISIES (detail) 50cm x 3m Wool



He grew up in a house of 16 kids. There were 70 kids at the school he went to in the town and one teacher.

He loves making things, when he stopped working, he thought about the knitting he had been taught when he was young, and he made a tea cosy.

As a kid he walked everywhere. He'd walk with his friends 5 or 6km to the waterfall for a swim. White and black together.

He worked on the night cart with his uncle. He was 12 years old. One night near the cemetery it was like he was pushed, under the cart wheels he went. His pelvis was fractured. He woke up in hospital after a family friend picked him up in a sulky and took him to hospital. Three months lying down. Healed really well.

Loved his life. Great life but a hard life. No running water, no gas, no electricity.



POMPOMS (detail) 50cm x 3m Wool



GREEN LADY AND HER YELLOW CANARY 14cm x 10.5cm Oil on board



WHITE DUCK 14cm x 11cm Oil on board



TWIN PUPS 14cm x 11cm Oil on board

An artist has an important role in communicating a community's voice through the creation, interpretation and maintenance of public records. Seeking inspiration from local history, storytelling, collections and communal memory, my arts practice re-presents archives back to the community in an accessible and contemporary format. This kind of cultural output is essential to a community's self-awareness of identity and place.

I am most interested in a community's amateur collections, or found collections. Instances where members of the public take it upon themselves to curate and preserve records outside of what is deemed of historical value by cultural heritage institutions.

Found collections are found in any community, much like artists, these keen hobbyists have a passion for an overlooked aspect of everyday life. A community's interpretations and interactions with these collections can be very broad, but are generally approached with nostalgia or novelty.

The Tin Heads is an ever-growing collection of 10,000 tins owned by retirees Margaret and Robert Gaston. The couple display the tins in a large shed on their farm in Waggrakine, a suburb on the outskirts of Geraldton in Western Australia's Midwest region. It is an impartial collection that accepts all tins, excepting only double ups.

With the consent of the Margaret and Robert, I have reproduced selected tins with thick oil paint, taking great care to document not only the tin's packaging, but the metal's wear, dents and overall patina. The paintings collectively create an indirect and unconventional portrait of Margaret and Robert, and it is my hope that the works portray an authentic sense of kitsch, care and community in regional Australia.



AN OFFERING Scale variable Gauze, found metal objects, adhesive, tannin, cotton thread



AN OFFERING (detail) Gauze, found metal objects, adhesive, tannin, cotton thread

From 2014 until 2016 I took my studio out into the landscape for extended times to work directly onto the ground. I did this to develop my personal relationship with place. I realised that I was living unconsciously on the surface of the land, even though my practice was to create work within and about landscape. I was looking for deeper connection.

This unconscious living included understanding our history from a white perspective and being stuck somehow in that narrative. I had some knowledge of our collective histories but until now did not understand how that was affecting my personal sense of belonging to this place. This meant coming to terms with aspects of my personal experience of living in Australia on land which had a deeper history that was not knowable from an Anglo Australian perspective. When histories are hidden realities become obscured. It seemed that I couldn't truly belong without an awakening to truths. The urge to mend surfaced whenever I went into these landscapes. I realised that this urge was deeply imbedded in my psyche. I could only begin with myself - there was no other way to address this absence.

I saw fences as divisions of a whole, dividing into portions, which was like only experiencing a fragment of possibility. Each time I visited I wanted to embed stitches into the ground as a gesture toward mending what seemed to be unamendable. I wrote on the ground, and to the ground using a paste of flour and water in a tomato sauce bottle. I wrapped a wire fence with gauze bandage. I thought about how this strong metal wire was a barrier dividing mine and yours. I sifted flour onto the ground and watched the soft powder float onto the red surface like a stark white dust on red land. I thought about invisible survey lines carving land into states. I saw scraps of metal on the ground from bygone times and recent times. The rusty metal left iron sulphate wounds on my white, sterile, gauze swabs. This collection and work became my own archive of an alternate way of seeing.



LAND ARCHIVES 90cm x 60cm Woodblock & ink on paper



LAND ARCHIVES (detail) 90cm x 60cm Woodblock & ink on paper

Using wood carvings, we will create a new work based on *The Alternative Archive* theme. Each image will be broken into halves, one side reflecting traditional Yamaji methods and the other side reflecting contemporary methods. By using this method, we will tell the viewer a combined story of the past and the present and how they relate to the Midwest region.

We will tell the story of two school friends from different cultures sharing the same community and now sharing oral histories, memories and archives transcending beyond the walls of a library, museum or archival vault. The artists will create two new works responding to their community environment which they both live, drawing on personal relationships with their community through stories handed down or lived experiences.

The land holds the historical, personal and cultural stories waiting to be awakened and shared. Sometimes, these stories sit in books, colonial records or on the land itself. The artists, both from different cultural backgrounds will bring together memories telling the viewer a story of the past and present and how they relate to the Midwest region. Mark Smith as a Yamaji man will draw on oral histories/customs of the Yamaji peoples and archival references of Aboriginal sites of significance in the City of Greater Geraldton. Jason Stacey will pay homage to his personal, historical and cultural stories as a non-Aboriginal man growing up and living in the same community and region.

The visual interpretations of these narratives from oral history and lived realities will communicate to tell an historical story of local sites that Yamaji used to gather, fish and cook resources by traditional methods - vine net fishing in the Chapman river and creation of the shell middens in Bluff Point. The historical will collide with the contemporary cultural coexistence with the gathering of similar resources using current practices. Methods such as diving, the crayfish industries and line fishing. The narratives of two men living in the same community with different stories to tell being stitched together to create a contemporary archive.

Information and source materials have been collected from a range of mediums including, documented writings, past experiences, stories passed down, site visits and photos. Mark and Jason were supported by Lizzy Robinson, Printmaker.



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