

dis/possession

Identity and Sense of Place

Artwork Labels

dis/possession: Identity and Sense of Place

dis/possession represents the Gallery's thinking about how we engage with the State Art Collection and find ways to display it that remain responsive and relevant to the contemporary moment.

This exhibition is drawn entirely from the collection and centres on the juxtaposition of two significant works by two Australian artists: Mervyn Street's *Bull ride* and Hans Heysen's *Droving into the light*.

Painted approximately 100 years apart, each offers a view of rural Australia that reflects the preoccupations of the artist at the time of the work's making. Mervyn Street, a Gooniyandi artist from Fitzroy Crossing, worked as a stockman at a time when the impact of the pastoral movement was being fully felt by Western Australian Kimberley Indigenous communities. German-born Hans Heysen lived and worked in the Adelaide hills during an era in which Australia as a young nation continued to be positioned as a locale of opportunity for colonisation.

By bringing these artists' work together we can start conversations about issues with shared importance for today's audiences. These include questions around national identity, land ownership and use, and our relationship to the natural world.

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The paintings are accompanied by works that set the art historical context for them. For the first time, the Gallery is displaying all its work by Heysen to illustrate this artist's remarkable career. Heysen's work is also accompanied by examples of the work of his contemporaries, and the historical tradition which influenced his practice.

Street's work is located in the context of the extraordinary output of Kimberley-based artists from the 1980s onwards. Many of these senior artists were former station workers and their subject matter includes records of station life – including the dark side of European and Indigenous peoples' encounters – and the painting of Country.

During his lifetime Heysen's paintings of landscape, and particularly his depictions of gum trees, were already being associated with the making of uniquely Australian pictures with which the newly federated nation could self-identify. Despite its perceived link with patriotic imagery, *Droving into the light* also draws its subject matter from a long European artistic tradition of depicting rural life.

Dutch artists' pictures of landscapes with domesticated animals, often overseen by relaxing peasants, became popular in the seventeenth century. This fashion for images of country life as delightful and simple was picked up in England in the following century, while nineteenth century French Realist painters turned their focus to the people working the land. Heysen was greatly influenced by many of these artists, including Lorrain, Turner, Millet and Clausen, examples of whose works are displayed here.

Hans Heysen was captivated by the countryside around the village of Hahndorf (Bokati-illa) in the Adelaide Hills, although he wrote that it was light as it fell on trees that was his real painterly subject. Hahndorf was settled by German immigrants in the late 1830s, and when sheep were introduced in the mid-1850s the traditional lands of the Peramangk peoples were cleared and fenced, resulting in their displacement.

Heysen permanently moved to Hahndorf in 1912 and he painted there until his death. He started *Droving into the light* in 1915, recalling that the composition was triggered by “a direct visual impression, one hot summer afternoon”. It failed to sell when first exhibited, and the artist reworked the painting some years later. The final painting is a combination of direct observation and studies from nature, resulting in an idyllic vision of rural life and a hymn to light, colour, and atmosphere.

Cattle were first introduced by Europeans to the Kimberley region in the late 1880s. The establishment of large pastoral holdings disrupted the traditional lifestyles of the local Indigenous peoples and changed eco systems. Properties depended on an Indigenous workforce for their survival with workers, men and women, mostly exchanging their labour for food, clothing and tobacco rations and a chance to maintain connection to Country.

Following Commonwealth legislative changes, in late 1968 equal wages for Indigenous workers began to be phased in – resulting in many people losing their positions on the stations. The artists whose work is shown here are former station workers, many of who started to paint with ochre on canvas later in life. These paintings are multi-layered; some combine images of physical sites on Country that are also connected to dreaming stories, while others address a different lived experience, bearing witness to confronting events from the recent past.

The Canning Stock Route is a series of linked wells that track across traditional lands. It was developed by Europeans in the early twentieth century to break the western Kimberley region's monopoly pastoral industry by supporting the droving of cattle along its path. Its construction exploited local Indigenous peoples' knowledge of waterholes, many of which were sacred, and ultimately made them inaccessible to them. Overall, it interrupted thousands of years of connection to Country and movement across it, and as a result many people moved away to towns, stations and church missions, including Rover Thomas and Jan Billycan who later became significant artists. They were both born close to Well 33 on the Route, and desert country remained an important subject for their art, connecting them and others to Country.

During the Second World War the track was upgraded in case it was needed to evacuate northern Australia. Axel Poignant was part of an expedition undertaken in 1942 to assess the scale of work required, and his photographs of the journey were taken with a deliberately 'modern' documentary approach.

Left to right

Claes Berchem

born 1620 Haarlem, Netherlands

died 1683 Amsterdam, Netherlands

The cow drinking

1680

etching on paper

Purchased 1971

1971/00Q1

Paulus Potter

born 1625 Netherlands

died 1654 Amsterdam, Netherlands

Cattle

c1645-1654

etching on paper

Gift of Sir Ernest Lee-Steere, 1947

1947/0Q13

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Claude Lorrain after

born 1604 Chamagne, France

died 1682 Rome, Italy

William Forrest engraver

born 1805 Edinburgh, Scotland

died 1889

Landscape with cattle, evening

c1840-1845

line engraving on paper

Purchased 1990

1990/0383

Francesco Zuccarelli after

born 1702 Pitigliano, Italy

died 1788 Florence, Italy

Benjamin Pouncy engraver

born c1750 Kent, England

died 1799 London, England

Landscape with figures and cattle

1777

engraving on paper

Gift of Rev F G Price, 1904

1904/0Q12

...continued on next page

J M W Turner after

born 1775 London, England

died 1851 London, England

Charles Turner engraver

born 1773 Oxfordshire, England

died 1857 London, England

Bridge and Cows

1807

etching and mezzotint on paper

Purchased 1966

1966/0Q37

Jean-François Millet

born 1814 Grunchy, France

died 1875 Barbizon, France

Le depart pour le travail [Departure for work]

1863

etching on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00Q4

Jean-François Millet in the style of

Potato gatherers

printed c1920

lithograph on paper

Purchased 1971

1971/0Q52

Camille Pissarro

born 1830 St Thomas, Danish West Indies

died 1903 Paris, France

Vachère au bord de l'eau [Cowherd beside the water]

1890

etching and drypoint on paper

Purchased 1971

1971/0Q53

George Clausen

born 1852 London, England

died 1944 Berkshire, England

The end of a long day

1897

oil on canvas

Purchased 1898

1898/00P6

Will Ashton

born 1881 York, England

died 1963 Sydney, New South Wales

arrived Australia 1884

Summer, Gumeracha, S.A. 1911

1911

oil on canvas

Purchased 1911

1911/00P2

Left to right, top to bottom

Hans Heysen

born 1877 Hamburg, Germany

died 1968 Mt Barker, South Australia

arrived Australia 1884

not titled [landscape with fallen tree, south coast]

not dated

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D2

not titled [tree study]

not dated

red chalk heightened with white on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/0D10

not titled [tree study]

not dated

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/0D11

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not titled [tree sketch]

not dated

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D8

Hans Heysen

born 1877 Hamburg, Germany

died 1968 Mt Barker, South Australia

arrived Australia 1884

The rainbow

1914

oil on canvas

Gift of Sir J. Winthrop Hackett, 1915

1915/00P2

Hans Heysen

born 1877 Hamburg, Germany

died 1968 Mt Barker, South Australia

arrived Australia 1884

Droving into the light

1914–21

oil on canvas

Gift of Mr W H Vincent, 1922

1922/00P1

Hans Heyesen

born 1877 Hamburg, Germany

died 1968 Mt Barker, South Australia

arrived Australia 1884

Land of the Oratunga

1947

charcoal and wash on paper

Purchased with funds from the
Nanny Barker Bequest Fund, 1955

1955/OD21

Hans Heyesen

born 1877 Hamburg, Germany

died 1968 Mt Barker, South Australia

arrived Australia 1884

Lengthening shadows

1933

watercolour on paper

Gift of the Estate of Ms Margaret Campbell Dawbarn, 2014

2014/0017

Left to right, top to bottom

Hans Heysen

born 1877 Hamburg, Germany

died 1968 Mt Barker, South Australia

arrived Australia 1884

not titled [mountain sketch with rock strata]

after 1926

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D7

not titled [Flinders Ranges landscape]

after 1926

pencil and ink wash on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D3

not titled [Flinders Ranges study]

after 1926

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D9

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not titled [Flinders Ranges landscape]

after 1926

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D5

not titled [trees and mountains, Flinders Ranges]

after 1926

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D4

not titled [clouds over Flinders Ranges]

after 1926

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D6

Hans Heyesen

born 1877 Hamburg, Germany

died 1968 Mt Barker, South Australia

arrived Australia 1884

The barn

1911

etching on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/0Q57

The country lane

1911

etching on paper

Purchased 1956

1956/0Q58

Hans Heyesen

born 1877 Hamburg, Germany

died 1968 Mt Barker, South Australia

arrived Australia 1884

Frosty morning

1929

watercolour over pencil underdrawing on paper

Purchased with funds from the
Hackett Bequest Fund, 1933

1933/00W1

Henri Van Raalte

born 1881 London, England

died 1929 Second Valley, South Australia

arrived Australia 1910

The old cow shed Mandurah

1921

etching and drypoint on paper

Gift of F A Hadley, 1954

1954/00Q8

David Davies

born 1862 Ballarat, Victoria
died 1939 Cornwall, England

Grazing cattle

1888
oil on canvas on board

Purchased 1970

1970/00P7

Elioth Gruner

born 1882 Gisborne, Aotearoa / New Zealand

died 1939 Sydney, New South Wales

arrived Australia 1883

A winter's morning

c1922

oil on canvas

Purchased with funds from the Great Australian
Paintings Appeal with funds presented by Swan Television
and Radio Broadcasting Ltd, 1978

1978/OP14

Axel Poignant

born 1906 Leeds, England

died 1986 London, England

arrived Australia 1926

Paddy, King of Ord River

1947, printed 1980

silver gelatin print

Purchased 1986

1986/0092

Left to right, top to bottom

Axel Poignant

born 1906 Leeds, England
died 1986 London, England
arrived Australia 1926

Jim Estorick (Canning Stock Route)

1942
silver gelatin print

Purchased 1986

1986/0096

Head of stockman (Canning Stock Route)

1942
silver gelatin print

Purchased 1986

1986/0097

Aboriginal stockman (Canning Stock Route)

1942, printed 1986
silver gelatin print

Purchased 1986

1986/0099

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On the Canning Stock Route

1942

silver gelatin print

Purchased 1986

1986/0105

Teamster (Canning Stock Route)

1942

silver gelatin print

Purchased 1986

1986/0098

Aboriginal stockwoman (Canning Stock Route)

1942

silver gelatin print

Purchased 1986

1986/0100

Nyaparu (William) Gardiner

born 1943 Brockman River, Marble Bar, Western Australia

died 2018 Port Hedland, Western Australia

worked in South Hedland, Western Australia

language: Nyangumarta

My Father's Brother

2016

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia
Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2017

2017/0201

Nyaparu (William) Gardiner

born 1943 Brockman River, Marble Bar, Western Australia

died 2018 Port Hedland, Western Australia

worked in South Hedland, Western Australia

language: Nyangumarta

My Father was a Station Hand

2016

pen and pencil on paper

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia
Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2017

2017/0202

Nyaparu (William) Gardiner

born 1943 Brockman River, Marble Bar, Western Australia

died 2018 Port Hedland, Western Australia

worked in South Hedland, Western Australia

language: Nyangumarta

Jamu (Grandfather)

2017

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia
Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2017

2017/0203

Paddy Jaminji

born 1912 Warmun, Western Australia

died 1995 Warmun, Western Australia

worked in West Kimberley, Western Australia

language: Gija

Kimberley landscape

1987

ochre on canvas

Purchased 1987

1987/0114

Jack (Warningayirriny) Britten

born c1928 Garnawarranginy, Alice Downs Station,
Kimberley region, Western Australia

died 2002 Australia

worked in Warmun, later years spent at Wurreranginy
(Frog Hollow), Western Australia

language: Gija

Ngalawan - Purnululu

2001

ochre on canvas

Purchased through The Leah Jane Cohen Bequest,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation and
Partial Gift of Seva Frangos Art, 2010

2010/0005

Remika Nocketta

born 1989 Kununurra, Western Australia

language: Gija

Desma Sampi

born 1989 Kununurra, Western Australia

language: Gija

Phyllis (Booljoonngali) Thomas

born 1933 Riyarr, Turner River, Bungle Bungle Range,
Western Australia

died 2018 Western Australia

worked in Warmun, Western Australia

language: Gija

Freddie Timms

born 1946 Police Hole, Warmun, Western Australia

died 2017 Halls Creek, Western Australia

worked in Warmun, Western Australia

language: Gija

Tickets

2002

ochre on cardboard

Gift of David Larwill, 2007

2007/0011.a-r

Phyllis (Booljoonngali) Thomas

born 1933 Riyarr, Turner River, Bungle Bungle Range,
Western Australia

died 2018 Western Australia

worked in Warmun, Western Australia

language: Gija

The escape

2002

ochre on canvas

Purchased 2003

2003/0166.a-h

Charlene Carrington

born 1977 Perth, Western Australia

works in Warmun, Western Australia

language: Gija

Texas Country

2006

ochre on canvas

Purchased by Neil Archibald in the memory of his father

Norman George Archibald, The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2007 2007/0001

Queenie (Garagarag) McKenzie

born c1915 Texas Downs Station, Kimberley region,
Western Australia

died 1998 Warmun, Western Australia

worked in Dingo Springs, east of Warmun, Western
Australia

language: Gija

Dreaming sites on Texas Downs

1998

ochre on canvas

Purchased through the Sir Claude Hotchin Art Foundation,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2000

2000/0015

Paddy Nyunkuny Bedford

born c1922 Bedford Downs Station, Kimberley region,
Western Australia

died 2007 Kununurra, Western Australia

worked in Warmun, Western Australia

language: Gija

Emu Dreaming and Bedford Downs massacre

2001

ochre on linen

Gift of Helen & Ben Korman, 2010

2010/0076

Ian Abdulla

born 1947 Swan Reach, South Australia

died 2011 Berri, South Australia

worked in Barmera, South Australia

language: Ngarrindjeri

Sheeps head trilogy 1, 2, 3

1990

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased 1991

1991/0020.a-c

Mervyn Street

born 1950 Louisa Downs Station, Kimberley region,
Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Gooniyandi

Bull ride

2015–16

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia
Foundation: TomorrowFund, 2016

2016/0097.a-c

Mervyn Street

born 1950 Louisa Downs Station, Kimberley region,
Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Gooniyandi

Chewnkey (cattle trough)

1995

lithograph on paper

Purchased 1996

1996/0328

Mervyn Street

born 1950 Louisa Downs Station, Kimberley region,
Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Gooniyandi

Penbono

1995

lithograph on paper

Purchased 1996

1996/0309

Mervyn Street

born 1950 Louisa Downs Station, Kimberley region,
Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Gooniyandi

Building paper bark house

1995

lithograph on paper

Purchased 1996

1996/0327

Lawrence Inkamala

born 1988 Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

works in Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory

language: Arrernte

Arkaapa (Desert Oak tree)

2017

terracotta and underglazes

Purchased through The Leah Jane Cohen Bequest,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2018

2018/0069

Jukuja Dolly Snell

born c1933, Kurtal, Great Sandy Desert, Western Australia

died 2015 Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

worked in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Wangkajunga

Kurtal – Living water

2014

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased, 2018

2018/0087

Rover Thomas

born c1926 Gunawaggi, Well 33, Canning Stock Route,
Great Sandy Desert, Western Australia
died 1998 Warmun, Western Australia
worked in Warmun, Western Australia
language: Gija

Well 33 Canning Stock Route

1991

ochre on canvas

Purchased 1991

1991/0287

Mrs Jan (Djan) Billycan

born c1930 Kirriwirri, Great Sandy Desert, Western Australia

died 2015 Bidyadanga, Western Australia

worked in Broome and Bidyadanga, Western Australia

language: Yulparija

Kirriwirri

2011

synthetic polymer paint on linen

Purchased through The Leah Jane Cohen Bequest,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2011

2011/0070

Albert Namatjira

born 1902 Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory
died 1959 Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory
language: Arrernte

Ullumbaura (Haasts Bluff)

c1946

watercolour on paper

Purchased 1946

1946/00W1

Sonia Kurarra

born 1952 Noonkanbah, Western Australia
works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia
language: Walmajarri
Noonkanbah Highway

2018

synthetic polymer paint on cow hide

Purchased 2019

2019/0002.1

Ngarralja Tommy May

born 1935 Yarrnkurnja, Great Sandy Desert, Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Walmajarri

Untitled

2018

synthetic polymer paint and paint pen on sheep hide

Purchased 2019

2019/0002.2

Ngarralja Tommy May

born 1935 Yarnkurnja, Great Sandy Desert, Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Walmajarri

Untitled

2018

synthetic polymer paint and paint pen on cow hide

Purchased 2019

2019/0002.3

Johnny Nargoodah

born 1959 Noonkanbah, Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Nykina/Walmajarri

Mustering time

2018

synthetic polymer paint and leather ink on stamped cow
hide

Purchased 2019

2019/0002.4

Johnny Nargoodah

born 1959 Noonkanbah, Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Nykina/Walmajarri

Life on a muster

2018

synthetic polymer paint and leather ink on stamped cow
hide

Purchased 2019

2019/0002.5

John Prince Siddon

born 1974 Derby, Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Walmajarri

My last muster

2018

synthetic polymer paint on cow hide

Purchased 2019

2019/0002.6

Mervyn Street

born 1950 Louisa Downs Station, Kimberley region,
Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Gooniyandi

Sheep station story

2018

synthetic polymer paint on and leather ink on sheep hide

Purchased 2019

2019/0002.7

Mervyn Street

born 1950 Louisa Downs Station, Kimberley region,
Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Gooniyandi

Droving cattle in the summertime

2018

shaved and etched cow hide

Purchased 2019

2019/0002.8

Albert Namatjira

born 1902 Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory
died 1959 Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory
language: Arrernte

Ghost gum scene near Gosse Range

c1952

watercolour on paper

Purchased 1964

1964/00W5

Ewald Namatjira

born 1930 Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory

died 1984 Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

language: Western Arrernte

not titled [landscape]

c1960s

watercolour on paper

Gift of Mrs L Smith, 1977

1977/00W4

Wakartu Cory Surprise

born 1929 Tapu, Great Sandy Desert, Western Australia

died 2011 Australia

worked in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Walmajarri

Karru Jila

2009

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased through the The Leah Jane Cohen Bequest,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2011

2011/0048

Francis Walsh

born 1971 Meekatharra, Western Australia

works in Wiluna, Mid-West region

language: Martu

Canning Stock Route (Things happen here)

2019

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia

Foundation: COVID-19 Arts Stimulus Package, 2020

2020/0355

Left to right

Albert Namatjira

born 1902 Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory

died 1959 Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

language: Arrernte

Ghost gum scene near Gosse Range

c1952

watercolour on paper

Purchased 1964

1964/00W5

Ullumbaura (Haasts Bluff)

c1946

watercolour on paper

Purchased 1946

1946/00W1

Ewald Namatjira

born 1930 Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory

died 1984 Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory

language: Western Arrernte

not titled [landscape]

c1960s

watercolour on paper

Gift of Mrs L Smith, 1977

1977/00W4

Johnny Nargoodah

born 1959 Noonkanbah, Western Australia

works in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

language: Nykina/Walmajarri

Life on a muster

2018

synthetic polymer paint and leather ink on stamped cow
hide

Purchased 2019

2019/0002.5

Mustering time

2018

synthetic polymer paint and leather ink on stamped cow
hide

Purchased 2019

2019/0002.4

Left to right

Hans Heysen

born 1877 Hamburg, Germany

died 1968 Mt Barker, South Australia

arrived Australia 1884

not titled [trees and mountains, Flinders Ranges]

after 1926

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D4

not titled [Flinders Ranges study]

after 1926

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D9

not titled [clouds over Flinders Ranges]

after 1926

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D6

...continued on next page

not titled [Flinders Ranges landscape]

after 1926

pencil and ink wash on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D3

not titled [mountain sketch with rock strata]

after 1926

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D7

not titled [Flinders Ranges landscape]

after 1926

pencil on paper

Purchased 1973

1973/00D5

Frederick McCubbin

born 1855 Melbourne, Victoria

died 1917 Melbourne, Victoria

Down on his luck

1889

oil on canvas

Purchased 1896

1896/00P7

For late-nineteenth century viewers this painting evoked nostalgia for a passing way of life while promoting an ideal of the freedom of the itinerant bush labourer. McCubbin was indebted to European realism for this composition of a rural worker posed within a landscape. In his paintings on the theme of the pioneer McCubbin was deliberately trying to establish a form of modern history painting in Australia by combining its unique subject matter with the equally unique Australian light and landscape.

Hans Heyesen

born 1877 Hamburg, Germany

died 1968 Mt Barker, South Australia

arrived Australia 1884

River Gums

1932

charcoal on paper

Purchased with funds from the
Hackett Bequest Fund, 1933

1933/00D1

I consider Heyesen's mastery of the tree as the greatest contribution to Australian landscape art ... through his art we own a larger familiarity with our native land. It is his peculiar glory to have created the image of the gum ... whatever else he may paint, this will distinguish his work for all time.

LIONEL LINDSAY 'THE ART OF HANS HEYSEN' 1920

The Escape is a series of artworks that reveals the story of the artist's uncle narrowly escaping death at the hands of white cattle station workers. Recently, a number of artworks have been produced from the east Kimberley region that describe the massacre of Indigenous people. These stories have been exposed as elders, and oral history from elders who have now passed away, retell the witnessed acts of murder that were once kept secret in fear.

Phyllis (Booljoonngali) Thomas

born 1933 Riyarr, Turner River, Bungle Bungle Range,
Western Australia

died 2018 Western Australia

worked in Warmun, Western Australia

language: Gija

The escape

2002

ochre on canvas

Purchased 2003

2003/0166.a-h

As a young woman Phyllis Thomas lived and worked on Turner Station where she gardened and looked after poultry. Thomas would often go out bush with her grandmother and other old women where she learnt much about her country.

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When she married Joe Thomas they worked on various stations until Bow River Station was granted to the Timms family and Rugun community (Crocodile Hole) was set up on that large property. Joe Thomas was instrumental in the establishment of the Rugun community and school where Phyllis Thomas taught children Gija culture, art, song and dance.

Left to right

1.

This painting depicts country along Turner River called Riya where Phyllis Thomas was born close to the old homestead. In this artwork we see the figures of a man and woman heading out from the old homestead. The man is heading out to hunt kangaroo and the woman is in search of kapok bush roots. As the pair travel up river, heading east, they see crows and kites circling not far from the homestead.

2.

The pair travelled east towards the circling crows and kites to see if something had been killed. They came across a shallow grave where an old man had been buried in a shallow grave. The man's body had been buried too shallow and crows and kites were pecking at his eyes. The man and woman recognised the body of the old man and cried for him before returning to the homestead.

...continued on next page

3.

Another old man who worked for Turner Station set out because he wanted to return to his own country on the Ord River. As this man was walking along he was spotted by a white station worker on horseback who gave chase with another man at the sight of the old man fleeing the station.

4.

The man ran towards the river as he was being chased by two white men on horseback. He came across a waterhole and dived in amongst the waterlilies and hiding under the roots of a tree along the banks.

5.

When the man dived into the waterhole and hid amongst the waterlilies the two white men stood at the edge wondering what to do. They used a long stick to jab around in the water trying to spear the man.

6.

The two white men continued to stab into the water trying to kill the man hiding amongst the waterlilies. So the man cut his own arm under the water. The two white men saw the blood and thought they had wounded the man so they kept stabbing around the roots as the blood drifted in the water. Once they believed they had killed the man they left and returned to the homestead.

...continued on next page

7.

The man waited in the water until he felt the two white men had gone. He then emerged from the waterhole and set off for his country near Ord River.

8.

The final painting shows the waterhole full of lilies after the two white men have returned to their station and the man they were trying to kill has returned to his home on the Ord River.

The copyright of this story belongs to Phyllis Thomas and her family. The copyright of the original transcript belongs to Phyllis Thomas, her family, Frances Kofod (linguist) and Jirrawun Aboriginal Artists Corporation.

Charlene Carrington

born 1977 Perth, Western Australia

works in Warmun, Western Australia

language: Gija

Texas Country

2006

ochre on canvas

Purchased by Neil Archibald in the memory
of his father Norman George Archibald,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2007

2007/0001

Texas Downs Station is Carrington's and her family's traditional country and it is where her parents were born. Her father, Churchill Cann, mustered cattle all throughout this country. This painting is essentially a map of Texas. It is a very beautiful place with many waterholes, fishing holes and hilly areas. There is an abundance of bush tucker, gerring (kangaroo), echidna and goanna are all found in this country.

Queenie (Garagarag) McKenzie

born c1915 Texas Downs Station, Kimberley region,
Western Australia

died 1998 Warmun, Western Australia

worked in Dingo Springs, east of Warmun, Western
Australia

language: Gija

Dreaming sites on Texas Downs

1998

ochre on canvas

Purchased through the Sir Claude Hotchin Art Foundation,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2000

2000/0015

This work depicts four important dreaming sites/places on Texas Downs Station where the artist was born and worked as a goatherd and camp cook. She later moved to Warmun where, having seen the success of the men who were painting, she also began to paint. McKenzie often compressed the physical features of the landscape, enabling her to link multiple sites connected to a particular dreaming in a single image.

Ian Abdulla

born 1947 Swan Reach, South Australia

died 2011 Berri, South Australia

worked in Barmera, South Australia

language: Ngarrindjeri

Sheeps head trilogy 1, 2, 3

1990

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased 1991

1991/0020.a-c

Storytelling is an important part of Indigenous culture and each of Ian Abdulla's paintings uses anecdotal narrative to paint a picture of his life experience. Here, Abdulla recounts everyday life for him and his family who at the time were living and working on a mission near the Murray River in South Australia.

Lawrence Inkamala

born 1988 Mparntwe (Alice Springs), Northern Territory
works in Ntaria (Hermannsburg), Northern Territory
language: Arrernte

Arkaapa (Desert Oak tree)

2017

terracotta and underglazes

Purchased through The Leah Jane Cohen Bequest,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2018

2018/0069

This tree is special for being used in the past for yards and using the smaller ones for shade. In the old days they would cut them, strip the branches and make horse yards and fence lines. This is a good strong wood that grows everywhere in the Northern Territory Central Desert. All the colours I have used on this pot come from the colours and the shape of the bark on the tree. I was excited to start making this different pot with all these colours, my way.

ARTIST STATEMENT 2017

Mrs Jan (Djan) Billycan

born c1930 Kirriwirri, Great Sandy Desert, Western Australia

died 2015 Bidyadanga, Western Australia

worked in Broome and Bidyadanga, Western Australia

language: Yulparija

Kirriwirri

2011

synthetic polymer paint on linen

Purchased through The Leah Jane Cohen Bequest,
The Art Gallery of Western Australia Foundation, 2011

2011/0070

Jan Billycan mainly painted her birthplace of Kirriwirri. She said, “this is the birth place of my father’s clan. Our clan is also named Kirriwirri, and call each individual members of this clan Kirriwirri. There is a big warla (mud flat) at this place. This is what this painting is about.” Kirriwirri is in the Great Sandy Desert close to the west of Well 33 on the Canning Stock Route. It is the birth place of the artist and her family. This work shows tali (sand dunes) and jila (living water).

Francis Walsh

born 1971 Meekatharra, Western Australia

works in Wiluna, Mid-West region

language: Martu

Canning Stock Route (Things happen here)

2019

synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Purchased through The Art Gallery of Western Australia

Foundation: COVID-19 Arts Stimulus Package, 2020

2020/0355

The waterhole overflows an old Bungarrago where we go for walks and collect water from when it is filled up. Around my country there is abundance of wildflowers namely Sennas, Eremophilas, Flannel Bush, Cotton Bush and purple Mulla Mulla to name just a few. You can see in my painting that a man is holding the spear (lower middle person) and is ready to go hunting for food. The footprints that is shown represents the community living together and you can also see footprints of dingoes. There are two birds I have painted here that is very well known in my country and it is Piakoo and Finches. The three girls at the top of my painting is the three young girls who walked along the rabbit proof fence. The painting in all depicts that in my country there are a lot of things that happen near.

ARTIST STATEMENT 2020

Louis Buvelot

born 1814 Vaud, Switzerland
died 1888 Melbourne, Victoria
arrived Australia 1865

Yarra Flats

1872
oil on canvas

Purchased 1977

1977/OP11

On the road to Dromana

1878
oil on canvas

Purchased 1896

1896/00P5

For Buvelot, the landscape around Melbourne was appealing as it offered ease of access as well as subject matter that suited his interest in quiet, unspectacular aspects of the Australian bush. In both these works he has used a typical picturesque composition to construct images of the fringes of the city as tranquil, productive countryside where people are comfortable in the landscape and cattle safely graze unattended.