



July 05, 2016

**Dear Friends,**

Here is the latest Kimberley art news from Broome - Enjoy!

Philippa & Geraldine



*Image Credits: (L to R) VALP participants Anthea and Lynley Nargoodah hanging paintings from Mangkaja Arts, the Visual Arts Leadership Program Participants, install view of the inaugural VALP exhibition in Kununurra. © AGWA 2016*

## **Visual Arts Leadership Program Workshop, Kununurra 2016**

The Visual Arts Leadership Program (VALP) was initially created as a means of both supporting Kimberley-wide art practice and forging sustainable links with individuals capable of being community contacts and conduits for engagement between the Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA) and remote artists. The aims of the annual workshops are to equip participants with skills which can be of direct use in their own arts practice and employment and, more broadly, their communities. This year the professional development event covered exhibition curation, the role of the curator and the basic steps and tools involved in the curating process. The workshop encompassed theoretical learning as well as practical hands on experience, culminating in a collaborative exhibition organised by the participants.

A select group drawn from across the Kimberley attended; independent artists as well as others working in art centres and arts organisations. This year's group included:

Lillie Spinks (Ngurra Art Centre, Ngumpan)

Francine Steele ((Ngurra Art Centre, Ngumpan)

Lynley Nargoodah (Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency, Fitzroy Crossing)

Anthea Nargoodah (Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency, Fitzroy Crossing)

Amanda Smith (Marnin Studio, Fitzroy Crossing)

Garry Sibosado (independent artist, Lombadina)

Michael Jalaru Torres (independent artist, Broome)

Cessa Bani (Mowanjum Art & Culture Centre, Mowanjum)

Kirsty Burgu (Mowanjum Art & Culture Centre, Mowanjum)

Lutisha Woolagoodja (Mowanjum Art & Culture Centre, Mowanjum)

Rowena Morgan (Nagula Jarndu, Broome)

Betty Bundamurra (Kira Kiro Art Centre, Kalumburu)

Nancy Daylight (Warmun Art, Warmun)

Marika Riley (Warmun Art, Warmun)

The workshop was held in Kununurra over three days from the 18th - 20th May. Timed to coincide with the annual Argyle Diamonds Ord Valley Muster festival, the VALP exhibition opening was promoted as an official event of the Muster Programme. The Dawang Gallery at Waringarri Aboriginal Arts Centre was the venue; this large purpose built display space usually showcases the Waringarri permanent community collection and with its high ceilings, picture rails, track lighting and close proximity to the art centre was an ideal location for the concluding exhibition.

Upon arrival at Waringarri the participants were warmly greeted by artists Agnes Armstrong & Dora Griffiths who officially welcomed everyone with a water blessing followed by a tour of the art centre and retail gallery. This was an effective approach to the start of the curatorial workshop as it introduced participants to the methods of presentation of the diverse selection of art and related products there.

With the 2016 program officially underway, participants were keen to unpack the artworks they had brought along. In preparation for the workshop, each had selected works from their art centres or own art-making practices with the intention of showcasing strong, meaningful, and beautiful art from their individual regions. Under the guidance of Carly Lane, AGWA Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, participants learned best practice techniques for handling artworks and condition reporting.

Once all the artworks were safely unpacked and positioned around the gallery for easy viewing the next group activity was the theoretical focus on art interpretation. Participants took turns enthusiastically sharing the artworks they had brought along and explaining why they had chosen them. There was much interest in each other's

selections and arts practice particularly in the wide variation in media, approach and expression of common themes. Artworks included hand dyed and printed textiles, acrylic and ochre paintings on canvas and bark, painted and engraved boab nuts, prints, carved pearl shell, woven baskets, hand-stitched dolls and bags, seed necklaces and photographs.

Arguably one of the most challenging aspects of the exhibition design training involved the elimination of artworks and final selection for the exhibition. Participants were set the onerous task of democratically curating the final selection whilst showing respect and sensitivity for each other's artworks. In the end they narrowed the selection down to 45 pieces.

The second day of the workshop kicked off with exhibition planning as Carly Lane talked the group through the processes of layout and design of the gallery space. Sight lines, lighting, visual connections, hanging styles and flow were all covered and debated by participants with everyone getting the opportunity to speak up and give their own input and suggestions.

Due to the diversity of artwork selected, the installation phase of the workshop provided participants with an interesting insight into multiple install and display methods for a variety of unfamiliar artwork media. The cooperative nature of the workshop was underpinned by an atmosphere of support with participants skill sharing and encouraging each other throughout. After a busy day of install there was excitement that evening as Waringarri Aboriginal Arts presented their annual Corroboree under the Stars event on the front lawns and dance ground of the art centre. Joining over 400 other visitors on the night the VALP participants were treated to the impressive Bali Bali Balga, Joonba and Wangka performances by the Waringarri dancers accompanied by an al fresco supper of ground-cooked beef and damper. Betty Bundamurra, VALP participant from Kalumburu who had been officially invited to join the dancing, was beautifully recorded by fellow VALP participant Broome photographer Michael Jalaru Torres.

On the final day of the workshop the group hurried to complete the last of the physical installation, adjusting spotlighting, sticking labels, doing final checks on the list of artworks and cleaning up the space for the 5pm exhibition opening. AGWA Director Stefano Carboni and Director of Exhibitions and Collections Lynne Hargreaves, who flew up from Perth especially to meet all the participants and attend the opening, chatted and shared a few nervous giggles with everyone in the atmosphere of mounting anticipation. Each participant showed Stefano and Lynne the works they had contributed and were presented by them with a certificate of completion.

With the exhibition hung and ready for the public, the group happily took selfies and snapped photos of the results of all their hard work; the sense of collective pride in the

exhibition was evident. The doors opened and crowds of visitors packed the gallery space until there was standing room only. Alongside the participants Desert River Sea Indigenous Community Liaison and Project Coordinator Philippa Jahn welcomed everyone and congratulated the VALP participants on their hard work and achievements, and thanked the artists and staff of Waringarri Arts for the use of the venue. She then introduced Waringarri elder Alan Griffiths and his wife Peggy. Mr Griffiths gave a heartfelt welcome to visitors and in particular to the VALP participants, listing all the places across the Kimberley they had travelled from and adding his own anecdotes of those places he had visited in his youth. Stefano then spoke more about the Desert River Sea project in general, teasing everyone with the notion that the VALP exhibition was a small taste of things to come, with the project's major exhibition scheduled to be at AGWA in Perth in October 2018.

The opening was a marked success with the receptive crowd very intrigued by the variety of artworks. Many pieces sold and the exhibition also opened the following day for those who had missed the previous evening. This also proved popular, with visitors including the Kimberley Moon headlining act Bernard Fanning and bandmates adding an unexpected element of celebrity spotting to the whole experience, with the band San Cisco already having attended the night before.

Before embarking on the long journeys home, participants and AGWA staff rounded off the week by celebrating some well-deserved R&R at the Ord Valley Muster Kimberley Moon concert where elderly Kalumburu artist Mary Teresa Taylor entertained everyone with her astonishingly energetic dance-offs with strangers in the mosh pit.

Since returning home, several participants have mentioned intentions of putting their exhibition curating skills into practise, with Kirsty Burgu from Mowanjum Art & Culture even insistent on doing so immediately, wanting to work on the weekend after the workshop to re-hang their retail gallery display. Others have thrown themselves back into their own art practice; Garry Sibosado shared photos with the group of a brand new shell carving in process the day after returning home. After the success of the 2016 workshop it is hoped that participants will be prepared and enthusiastic for upcoming involvement with Desert River Sea and AGWA for the 2018 Kimberley exhibition and book publication. The Broome office would like to thank everyone involved in making this year's event such a success, particularly the enthusiastic participants who delivered a fantastic exhibition.

For images, full exhibition list and short video go to: <http://desertriversea.com.au/right-now/visual-arts-leaders/visual-arts-leadership-program-workshop-kununurra-2016>

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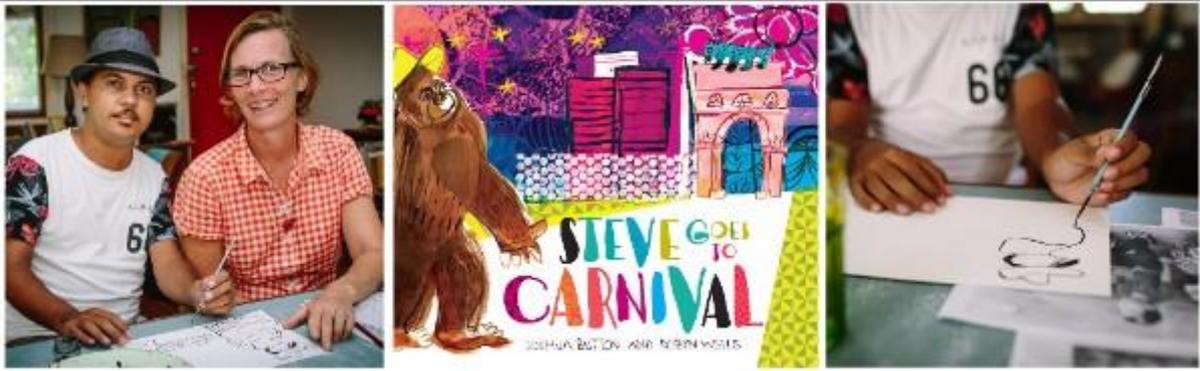


Image credits: (L to R) 'Steve Goes to Carnival' collaborators Joshua Button and Robyn Wells, Front Cover of 'Steve Goes to Carnival', Joshua Button at work illustrating. Photos by Julia Rau Photography ©

Magabala Books 2016

## Magabala Books launch Button and Wells' *Steve Goes to Carnival*

The flamboyant Wasamba Carnival Drummers set the mood at the recent celebration of the publication of *Steve Goes to Carnival* at Magabala Books in Broome. This exuberant new children's book was launched by Senator Pat Dodson to a crowd of well-wishers familiar with the story of this beautiful work's genesis over the course of some ten years.

Essentially a collaboration between young Walmajarri man Joshua Button and long-time friend and mentor Robyn Wells, the story began with Josh's long-term fascination with gorillas and Brazil, an unlikely combination which he and Robyn have developed into a wildly illustrated tale of endearing sensibility. As Shaun Tan writes in his cover endorsement '*How much life and joy can you fit into one picture book? This much!*'

Drawing on her own fine art background, Robyn is passionate about enabling young people to express themselves through language and art. The pair's collaboration began in a literacy program at primary school where Robyn mentored Josh while he illustrated his first book *Joshua and the Two Crabs* (Magabala 2008). For the new work Joshua's ink illustrations, Robyn's added textures and other design elements, along with the characters and text all developed over countless hours working at Robyn's kitchen table. Not only did this process birth a book but, as both have described, enabled Josh's world to expand from the familiar intimacy of his life in Broome to a 'discovery of the architecture, language, music and food of Rio de Janeiro'. Josh and Robyn's renderings of the story's diverse characters (also doubling as portraits of important figures in his life; even Pat Dodson has a cameo appearance) are enlivened by personality in every movement and facial expression.

An underlying theme of friendship and kindness in the face of apparent difference lies at the heart of the story, clearly a reflection of the authors' own bond. It is aimed primarily at young children, however *Steve Goes to Carnival* is one of those rare books which adults will also have no trouble reading multiple times, as will surely be

demanded!

For further information visit the Kimberley not-for-profit publishing house that aims to promote, preserve and publish Indigenous Australian culture: [www.magabala.com](http://www.magabala.com)

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## Desert River Sea Intro Video

For a quick introduction to the DRS project watch our newly released [intro video](#) found on our homepage. This short Kimberley production was made using local expertise with many thanks going to Goolarri Media, Michael Jalaru Torres and all the art centres and artists involved for their contributions.

[www.desertriversea.com.au](http://www.desertriversea.com.au)

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*Image credit: (L to R) John Prince Siddon at Revealed Art Exhibition in Perth 2015, Mindi Rardi 2016, 60 cm x 80 cm, etching on enamel tin, Prince at home in Mindi Rardi © Mangkaja Arts*

# Feature Artwork – John Prince Siddon, *Mindi Rardi*

Each issue we invite art centres to suggest artworks to highlight here. This month Fitzroy Crossing's Mangkaja Arts presents *Mindi Rardi*, by John Prince Siddon. Their description follows:

This work (currently in the Kimberley Art Prize in Derby) uses new materials; enamel-coated tin that the artist has etched back, incorporating well established carving and print making skills developed by Mangkaja Artists over time. The piece reflects on the issues faced by communities balancing traditional and contemporary cultures.

John Prince showcases his signature style with fine line work and clever composition, as he reflects on life in his community of Mindi Rardi in the Fitzroy Crossing township of the Western Kimberley region. Prince shows the worries that the older generation have for their younger family members and the difficulties faced by those living in overcrowded community housing.

*'That's the Mindi Rardi now, it's a community like the others.*

*Mindi Rardi, that's Walmajarri words, its Bunuba land, that old man he knows.*

*He speaks Walmajarri, he grew up in the desert, he was a cowboy before.*

*That's Mindi Rardi, with the cockroaches, and the spiders and the ants*

*That's Mindi Rardi, the people fighting, drinking, smoking gunja.*

*Mindi Rardi, that's a rock, that old man he knows, he's worrying for all them people'.*

John Prince Siddon's profile has been on the rise in recent years with his selection in AGWA's 2015 Western Australian Indigenous Art Award and group and solo exhibitions around the country. His distinctive works, using a mix of materials and techniques reflect on traditional and contemporary culture. Prince's imagery draws on his dreams and stories of the epic characters of the Narrangkarni (Dreamtime), the animals particular to the region and iconic symbols including the map of Australia and the coat of arms in which he incorporates Indigenous figures. Prince likes to reflect on issues at hand for his community, including more recently the worries of the movement of cane toads across the Kimberley. This work is a poignant look at the struggles of community life and the concerns of the older generations watching their young families battle with contemporary problems including addiction and overcrowding.

For enquiries about this and other artworks by John Prince Siddon please contact Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency on (08) 9191 5833 <http://www.mangkaja.com>

Click [here](#) for more information on John Prince Siddon and his artworks.

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## Desert River Sea wins MAGNA Award

The Desert River Sea project is very proud to have been awarded a Museums & Galleries National Award (MAGNA) in the Indigenous Project or Keeping Place Category at the recent 2016 Museums Australia conference in Auckland.

Comments from judges Margo Neale (National Museum of Australia) and Djon Mundine (curator and historian) included: *“Innovative in that it pioneers a new model for state art galleries to work with remote art centres in a sustainable way. It involves having a campus in the region (Broome in this case) using an approach that sustains, supports and strengthens the artists and administrators as well as fulfilling more coherently on the State institution’s mandate. ...it demonstrates a high level of responsiveness to Aboriginal socio-cultural priorities and economic imperatives alongside contemporary art practice.”*

The MAGNA award’s acknowledged Desert River Sea for:

### **Diversity and inclusion**

From the project’s inception it was acknowledged that it should have a regional base founded on flexibility, resourcefulness and localised historical and cultural awareness. The Broome base is at the heart of the operation and has the core role of initiating and building on the relationships, a highly effective approach to working with remote art centres.

### **Innovation and Impact**

For a city-based state collecting institution this outreach is an innovative extension of standard practice. The key elements of the project illustrate the extent to which AGWA is extending the standard level of cross-cultural engagement for a state collecting institution. It has moved beyond observing, collecting and exhibiting to pro-actively developing an art-focused ecology of gallery staff, and artists, industry specialists and communities. Practical measures of support with promotion and documentation for example have been critical to legitimising the project’s stated aim of working in partnership with Kimberley artists.

Art Gallery Director, Stefano Carboni said *“Desert River Sea has been a pivotal focus for AGWA’s Indigenous visual arts strategy in recent years. We are thrilled to be acknowledged for the project’s accomplishments to date in what is an ambitious and unique undertaking for a state collecting institution. Desert River Sea will be*

*celebrated with a 2018 exhibition leaving a legacy of cultural networks and research that will extend well beyond this.”*

*“Through a collaborative approach to preserve and showcase the rich cultural heritage of Traditional Owners, the State Art Gallery has transformed the way it engages with Indigenous art centres and artists in the furthest corners of Western Australia.”* Andrew Harding, Rio Tinto

For more information on Museums and Galleries Australia and the other 2016 category award winners go to: <http://www.museumsaustralia.org.au/site/magna-2016.php>

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*Image credit: The group of AGWA guides in Derby. Photo: Jenny Stacey and Lyn Ward.*

## **AGWA Guides Tour the Kimberley**

Last month, a group of 16 guides from the Art Gallery of Western Australia escaped the cold, ventured up north to explore Kimberley art and ended up having an adventure they wouldn't forget.

AGWA is fortunate to have an incredibly successful Voluntary Gallery Guide program with volunteers who are dedicated to bringing the Gallery's varied collection to life through free guided tours. They have been taking visitors through the Gallery for 39 years. Each new guide is trained for twelve months before they join the program and today there are more than 80 active volunteers who regularly present guided tours to the public.

Although they have studied Aboriginal artworks and artists as part of their training and ongoing research, the Kimberley trip was born from the guides' desire for a cultural and professional development opportunity that would add to their knowledge of art from the Kimberley region. More than anything, they were keen to meet artists and

other community members and gather background information that would help when discussing Kimberley works on show in the gallery which they are frequently asked to discuss by Gallery visitors.

Meeting up with Desert River Sea staff for a Q and A session upon their arrival in Broome, the group had many enthusiastic queries about the artists, art centres and Kimberley region in general. Travelling by road in two vans and following the DRS Kimberley Aboriginal Art Trail Map east from Broome, the jam-packed itinerary included visiting 5 art centres and 2 women's centres, a boat tour of Geikie Gorge with the trip culminating with the Waringarri sunset cultural tour in Kununurra, all in 5 days!

By all accounts, the guides thoroughly enjoyed the experience of meeting artists, exploring the art making communities and the diverse range of artwork styles across the region. Jenny Stacey, one of the guides tasked with organising the logistics and for keeping everyone on schedule happily reported back after the journey; *"The art centres were amazing and all so individual. We met some really great people and we got some wonderful insights into the art centres."*

For information on contacting and visiting Kimberley art centres and for a downloadable version of the Kimberley Aboriginal Art Trail Map go to [www.desertriversea.com.au](http://www.desertriversea.com.au)



Image credit: 2016

Mowanjum Festival Poster

## Upcoming 2016 Mowanjum Festival

The annual Mowanjum Festival is coming up very soon; the event is taking place during NAIDOC week, on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> July. This celebration, held at Mowanjum Arts and Culture Centre on the Gibb River road 12 kilometres from Derby is Western Australia's largest traditional Aboriginal performance event and is now in its nineteenth consecutive year.

Tickets can be bought at the gate with the festival open to the general public from 2pm with food, drink and bush tucker available on site. A variety of cultural workshops will be run including didgeridoo playing, boab nut carving

and ochre painting and the art gallery will be open from 2pm until 9pm. The corroboree starts at 6pm after the

sun sets and will be featuring guest performers from throughout the Kimberley.

For more information contact Mowanjum Aboriginal Art & Culture Centre (08) 9191 1008



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