



May 08, 2015

Dear Friends,

Here's the latest news from the Desert River Sea team in Broome - Enjoy!

Philippa & Geraldine



Image credit: Revealed Exhibition Opening, Gallery Central, Perth & Revealed Marketplace, Urban Orchard, Perth © Tim Acker 2015

Kimberley Artists' perspective on Revealed 2015

From the artists' perspective, one of the most enjoyable aspects of Revealed is the Marketplace, where they not only have the opportunity to generate sales, but also meet and interact with buyers and others interested in the intercultural aspect of the event.

This year's Marketplace was held in the Urban Orchard in front of the Art Gallery of Western Australia. It was the perfect venue for a sunny day with live music, plenty of shady trees and places to take time out and talk with friends. The atmosphere was overwhelmingly energetic and happy, even if people were a little tired by the end of the day! Desert River Sea managed to catch up with some of the Kimberley artists at the Marketplace, a difficult task since most were flat out talking to people wanting to know about their art centres. Their feedback certainly underscores the success of the event.

Manager Jeannette Swan an artworker/painter Janine Gordon from Halls Creek were at the Yarliyil art centre stall, dealing with a stream of visitors without a break for much of the afternoon. In Janine's words, Revealed was 'absolutely awesome and one of the best so far'. She'd enjoyed the photography and painting workshop she'd done earlier, but was particularly pleased she'd sold her first painting and couldn't wait to get home to Halls Creek to do more. Yarliyil has put considerable effort into developing lines of merchandise, perhaps a logical marketing strategy for an art centre located on a busy tourist route. Products such as silk scarves, clothing and cards formed a large part of the stall display and these, along with smaller paintings, all sold well according to Jeannette. She said people asked lots of questions and suggested that perhaps the market could be held for longer at the next Revealed.

Next stop was Kununurra's Waringarri and Kalumburu's Kira Kiro stand, where painters Gloria Mengil and daughter Jerita were representing the art centres and their array of ochre pigment works on canvas and paper. It was the second attendance at Revealed for both – Jerita had previously been selected for the Revealed exhibition and this year Gloria was included; both spoke extensively of their experience. Gloria was excited her monochrome pigment painting had sold at the exhibition opening and was inspired to get home to finish another similar work, this time in colour. She said it made her feel really proud to see her work hanging there, that being selected had made her feel like crying – 'remembering the old ones who also painted'. She used to watch her older relatives paint at home when she was a kid and now goes in to Waringarri art centre to paint every day. When asked if they felt a bit shy talking to so many visitors at the Marketplace, the answer was emphatically 'no - we enjoyed talking to all those people!'

Nagula Jarndu Women's Resource Centre was experiencing its first Revealed. Their stand was adorned with their new range of delicate hand-printed textiles and papers. The women have recently opened a studio and retail space in Broome and had worked hard to produce enough material to bring to Perth. Their work sold so well that only a few t-shirts remained well before the market ended. Artist Maxine Charlie, whose printed fabrics were also selected for the Revealed exhibition, represented the groups of artists back home. In her opinion Revealed was really good. She enjoyed the exhibition opening and felt it was an honour to be part of it. She also felt inspired by the Marketplace, as the feedback from visitors was that their work was something new and different and, like the others, she was enthusiastic to get back home and do more work. An interesting development for Nagula Jarndu, which grew out of contacts renewed at the event, was the possibility of forging an artistic partnership with the Erub Island ghost net weavers from Torres Strait, who had been invited to Revealed to present weaving workshops. Erub Islanders have a history of contact with Broome and the pearling industry; the possibilities presented by a project which interweaves the work and life histories of both communities are tantalising.

Mowanjum's Samantha Allies and Kenneth Gibson, and Mangkaja's John Prince Siddon and Daisy Japulija were also selected for the Revealed exhibition. Both art centres were busy at the Marketplace but unfortunately we didn't get the opportunity to talk to the artists themselves.

Whatever one thinks about the appropriateness of artwork being displayed and sold in a market setting, it is undeniable that the artists and art workers involved (particularly those from remote areas such as the Kimberley), experience the Marketplace as an opportunity to engage with buyers they would not normally have the opportunity to meet, helping bridge a communication gulf which exists between the mainstream art world and those whose work they seek so voraciously yet know so little about. In addition, the opportunity to socialise with peers from further afield results in a lively cross-fertilisation of ideas and inspiration. It is also, just as importantly, pretty good fun and respite from the more serious business of life back home!

West Kimberley photographer and Desert River Sea Emerging Leaders participant, Michael Jalaru Torres attended Revealed 2015 for the first time. A number of his artworks were selected for the Revealed Exhibition at Gallery Central. Michael was excited at the prospect of inclusion in the exhibition and had high hopes for the opportunity to network at the event and make new contacts. Regretfully, due to timing conflicts, he couldn't attend the professional development workshops in the lead-up to the exhibition.

Michael was pleased overall with the quality of the artwork displayed at the group exhibition. He had some ideas suggesting future enhancement of the exhibition design and said he would happily be included in the next Revealed as well. He was especially proud to share his exhibited work with visiting family and friends in Perth and made two sales within the first half hour of the exhibition opening.

Already quite promotions savvy (he also distributed his own promotional postcards whilst networking), a positive outcome of the exhibition according to Michael was that he was approached by people interested in his work as a direct result of exposure during Revealed. In Michael's case, this was quite extensive, including an interview with NITV's "Around The Traps", the exhibition, the Revealed exhibition catalogue, a portrait photo in the Revealed lift-out in the West Australian and (along with other Revealed artists) on the big screen in the Cultural Precinct on a 1hr loop.

When we asked Michael "what next" he enthusiastically described a number of projects he had coming up, newly inspired to hunt down suitable galleries and exhibition spaces to best coherently display his new theme-based body of works. Currently in the process of securing a collaboration with a set-designer using projection technology for a theatre/dance production in China in the coming year, Michael is also going to Berlin for a few weeks in August. He is keen to present himself to the German audience as a

technically skilful and aesthetically valid photographer with the subtle ability to convey emotional connection and responses to country. Michael has some German lineage in his family history and is entertaining the idea of potentially exploring this further through his art making whilst in Germany. Keep an eye out for Michael Jalaru Torres, there's lots of exciting things to come in the career of this artist, that's for sure!



Image credit: The Q & A Panel, (L to R) Devina McPherson, Lynne Hargreaves Violet Pickett, Charmaine Green, Philippa Jahn, Jeannette Swan © Tim Acker 2015

Screening of East Kimberley Films at Revealed

The Saturday afternoon of the Revealed program in Perth saw the presentation of a collection of short films resulting from the documentary partnership between Desert River Sea and FTI's Indigenous Community Stories Project.

Filmed last year in Kununurra, Warmun and Halls Creek, selected artists were recorded talking about aspects of their lives and art practice. Over 30 hours of fascinating footage of people, country and art resulted. These were painstakingly edited back at FTI in Perth to produce a collection visually arresting and very moving short films, intended to constitute a local and wider community record and resource for the future. They will be lodged at the relevant art centres, FTI, Desert River Sea and AIATSIS.

The screening took place at the State Library Theatre. The program included two pieces on Yamatji artist Charmaine Green and deceased Nyoongar artist Shane Pickett, as well as the Kimberley stories of Waringarri and Warmun art centres and Rosie Lala and Maggie Long from Halls Creek. For much of the screening you could hear a pin drop, such was the level of audience engagement with the subjects documented. A Q and A session followed, with Michelle Broun and Devina McPherson from FTI, Lynne Hargreaves and Philippa Jahn from AGWA/ Desert River Sea, Jeanette Swan from Yarliyl art centre, Violet Pickett and Charmaine Green making up the panel. There were no shortage of questions; however, as a panel member pointed out, the audience reach of these important films needs to extend beyond such screenings and the

audience demographic which usually attends them, to have a broader mainstream reach.

For those who missed the screening, the films are available to view on the Desert River Sea website as well as additional short edits on [Churchill Cann](#) from Warmun and [Ben Ward](#) from Waringarri. We highly recommend them!



Image credit: (L to R) Martha Lee in front of her painting installed at the new Broome North Primary School, Maxine Charlie with her crab design public artwork at the new Broome North Primary School, Martha & Maxine in the Nagula Jarndu workshop © AGWA 2015

Nagula Jarndu Artists in high demand

The artists at Nagula Jarndu have been very busy of late. Not only have they recently moved premises to their new rented studio and shopfront space at 3/20 Hunter Street Broome, they are currently undertaking a training workshop with Megan Kirwan-Ward, two of their artists have been involved in a local public art project as well as the Revealed Exhibition in Perth, and they have just returned from a sell-out first attendance at the Revealed Marketplace in Perth. They have been involved in community events such as the Taste of Broome all while simultaneously working hard to ensure production meets demand for their art and textiles!

On the 1st of May Nagula Jarndu artists Maxine Charlie & Martha Lee were distinguished guests at the official opening of the new Broome North Primary School due to their involvement in its public art project. Working alongside Kimberley Training Institute teacher and project coordinator Karen Morgan, the public art project took one year from the conceptual stage through development to the final outcome. The artworks are located all around the new school in various forms; sculptures of crocodiles, seedpods and shells, colourful designs in concrete on the ground and paintings on canvas.

Maxine and Martha developed a Mangrove theme across all the works, “A modern representation of the Yawuru world” as Martha puts it. Martha and Maxine took inspiration from their childhoods and wanted the artworks to convey cultural knowledge inflected with a mood of happiness. The artworks draw on Yawuru heritage in the way the artists have reflected the knowledge acquired in their youth about the

mangrove environment at high and low tides, animals, fish and bush tucker.

Martha hopes to continue the project by involving the school children in painting the sculptures thus expanding on the idea of teaching and passing on meaning. The school Principal, Noel Morgan, gave thanks to the artists in his address at the official opening ceremony. He promised the school would look after the artworks and make sure the students would all be taught what they meant. Yawuru representative Tony Lee mentioned in his speech how proud he was of the collaboration between the Yawuru project team, the artists, the State Government and the community on this project. He mentioned that this was the first time Yawuru had been invited to be part of a “meaningful and innovative engagement that showcases culture and heritage through visual art”.

Riding on the success of the school public art project, Nagula Jarndu artists are now focusing on working with Landscape designers and Landcorp on making two sculptural pieces intended to be a landmark on the way into Broome.

Meanwhile, back at the Hunter Street studio they’ve occupied since March, the women have been making the most of the 4-month lease of the workshop space to produce as many textiles as possible for the upcoming North-West Expo and the Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair. They have just completed a commission of six paintings and hands stitched baskets for a project with a local interior designer and have been busy building artists profiles by participating in regional Art Awards.

Despite its success Nagula Jarndu is yet to establish a permanent studio/workshop space. Artists have moved from the Recovery Centre, to the scout hall and even worked from home when necessary. They all agree that so far, this location has been the best space for production. The set-up is favoured because of its inviting atmosphere, its ability to draw visitors from the shop-front through to the workshop area where they can see the art in progress and talk to the artists at work. Despite being very busy, All the women are willing to talk to visitors and share what they are doing. They are not only happy to talk about the artwork but are also keen to discuss the value of Nagula Jarndu in general, how the art production is therapeutic to some sick and elderly ladies and how it brings great joy, Martha says it “feels good in your Liyan”. The artists would also like to encourage younger women to get involved; they joke that they can use them “as the muscles to begin with” The work is quite time-consuming and a lot of labor is involved; they would like the older ladies to make the designs and the colour choices and the young ladies to print. This is of course a good way to teach as well.

Unfortunately, many of the older women have health problems and the artists believe it’s essential to get the younger girls coming in regularly; the main obstacle to achieving this is child care. In the past a mobile day care centre helped, but ideally a crèche located right next door (such as the one in Maningrida at Babbarra Designs) would be the best solution.

In regards to challenges, the lack of premises is probably the greatest. The reality is

they can't stay in their current location without funding. The need for future security is huge, the staff and artists recognize that with permanency they can get more regular artists to join (there are currently about 8 regulars and more are starting to come all the time) they want to build upon work, plan for exhibitions and develop a reputation. However, despite the other challenges, the demand for artworks is currently greater than the supply. For now, the talent of the artist's speaks for itself, as Megan Kirwan-Ward put it "the first exhibition really was intended to show off the potential of these artists, now they are going forth and proving their skills". We are already impressed at what they have accomplished despite the obstacles; we can't wait to see the results Nagula Jarndu achieves once they get the long term support they deserve!

'Encountering Truth: The Real Life Stories of Objects from Empire's Frontier and Beyond'. June Oscar's 2015 Menzies Lecture

On April 23rd the British Museum opened a 'major exhibition presenting a history of Indigenous Australia, supported by BP. This exhibition will be the first in the UK devoted to the history and culture of Indigenous Australians: both Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders. Drawing on objects from the British Museum's collection, accompanied by important loans from British and Australian collections, the show will present Indigenous Australia as a living culture, with a continuous history dating back over 60,000 years.' (British Museum press release).

Indigenous Australia: Enduring Civilisations (coming to the National Museum in November this year) includes both contemporary artworks and historic objects. It has become the focus of ongoing debates regarding the implications and merits of the repatriation of historic items of Aboriginal material culture, the significance of which have undoubtedly intensified for descendants of the original owners in most cases no longer able to participate in decision-making processes regarding them.

Bunuba woman June Oscar (bio. below) was invited to deliver the 2015 Menzies lecture in London within days of the opening of this exhibition; these debates, and their impact on, in this case, the people of Oscar's Fitzroy Valley in the Kimberley, are at the heart of this powerful essay. We believe it deserves a wide readership for its dignity and insight; as it is not yet easily accessible, with June's permission we share a link to it [here](#) for those who are interested.

June Oscar Bio 2014

June is the Chief Executive Officer of Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource

Centre and a proud Bunuba woman from the remote town of Fitzroy Crossing. June is a champion for Indigenous Australian languages, social justice, women's issues and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

In 2007, she fought successfully for alcohol restrictions in Fitzroy Crossing. Her focus on Aboriginal children and her determination that we do not sacrifice the health of children for the 'right' to buy full strength take-away alcohol, made her a role model for all Australia.

In 2011, in an article appearing in The Age and Sydney Morning Herald June was named as one of the 50 most influential women in the world for her work in improving the lives of those living in remote Aboriginal communities.

June is co-founder of the Yiramalay Wesley Studio School and in 2012 she was appointed as an Ambassador for Children and Young People by Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People, Michelle Scott. In 2013 she was awarded an Order of Australia (AO) in the Queen's Birthday honours. June was the winner of the Westpac and Financial Review 100 Women of Influence 2013 for Social Enterprise and Not for Profit Category. In 2014 June was awarded the Menzies School of Health Research Medallion for her work with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. (Bio. courtesy of Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre)



Warlayirti Artists travel to the 2015 Venice Biennale

Artists from the remote Kimberley community of Balgo (Wirramanu), a small community that lies between the Great Sandy and Tanami Deserts are travelling to the other side of the world to attend the 2015 Venice Biennale.

Three people representing Warlayirti Artists left last week on the long journey to Venice to attend the opening of the Biennale. The first leg was a 12-hour road trip to Broome, followed by a 2-hour flight to Perth, 10 hours to Dubai, 8 hours to Rome and finally 1 hour to Venice. What a transition for artist Eva (Joan) Nagomara, Ribnga Green, Warlayirti Artists assistant and Manager Sheryl Anderson to find themselves in a city of water, canals and islands, leaving far behind their desert lives for a week of openings, celebrations, performance and ceremonies. As Sheryl explained to everyone before she left, Venice has "creeks for roads and boats for motor cars." They laughed.

One of the challenges was the packing and wrapping of a very large artwork on its stretcher to carry with them on the plane. Larry Gundora's artwork, 'Wirramanu' (Balgo), measuring 1.5 x 1m is in his distinctive style using ochres and acrylics painted in layers on canvas. This makes it quite fragile, so it was recommended that it not be rolled. The artwork will form part of the installation by Italian artist, Giorgia Severi who visited Warlayirti Artists in Balgo last year.

The artists are travelling to the Biennale to join Severi and her artwork 'Country', bringing an Aboriginal perspective to the fair. An official collateral exhibition in partnership with the Gervasuti Foundation, 'Country' is a mixed-media installation incorporating objects, drawings, photographs, film and sound recordings, which will challenge audiences to shift between cultural viewpoints through the process of storytelling.

Alongside objects, stones and symbols of the land, the work features paintings, collaborations, 'message sticks' - recordings of voices and songs of more than 30 Indigenous artists from remote areas starting in Balgo with Kapululangu Women's Law and Culture Centre and Warlayirti Artists and also including Boolarng Nangami Aboriginal Art and Culture Studio, Outbackarts, Anangu Antakirinja Matuntjara Yankunytjatjara, Kayili Art Centre and Tjanpi Desert Weavers.

Inspired by her time volunteering in Balgo, Severi recorded artists and elderly community members singing songs, telling stories and intimate explanations about daily life, culture, hunting and complex subjects such as symbolism and the kinship system. ['Country'](#) aims to send a message to an overseas audience and share with them Aboriginal perspectives on life, culture and country. It will be interesting to see how audiences as well as the contributing artists visiting the exhibition respond to this work. No doubt the Biennale will be a fascinating and memorable experience in general for these remote artists; we look forward to hearing the stories upon their return!

Many thanks to Angela Berry for her contribution.



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