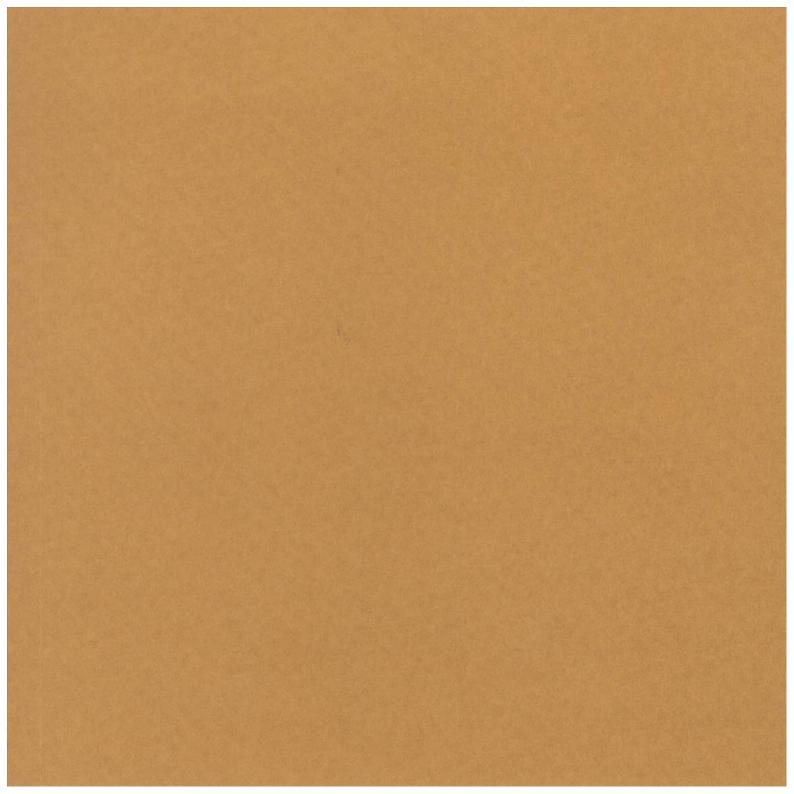


3 Views of Kaurna Territory Kaurna Territory Kaurna Territory now

Agnes Love, Nicole Cumpston, Darren Siwes





Introduction Introduction Introduction

The Aboriginal people of this country are the only comparable indigenous people who have been given no specific rights to their own lands. The Maoris, the Eskimos, the American Indians all had treaty rights and ownership and control of lands in their countries...We must, as far as we can, right the wrongs done by our forefathers.

Don Dunstan, 13th July 1966. In the South Australian House of Assembly, Second Reading of the Aboriginal Lands Trust Bill.

Don Dunstan persistently championed Aboriginal rights firstly as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (1965-67) then as Premier (1967-68, 1970-79). His major legislative achievements for Aborigines were the Aboriginal Lands Trust Act (1966), the Prohibition of Discrimination Act (1966), and the Aboriginal Affairs Act Amendment Act (1966-67). The Pitjantjatjara Lands Rights Bill was before Parliament when Dunstan resigned in February 1979.

It seems relevant that the Artspace Gallery should host an exhibition by three young Aboriginal artists to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the Adelaide Festival Centre as the area on which the Centre now stands was, in 1836 when South Australia was first colonised, occupied by Aboriginal people. The main local group was called the Kauma Tribe. The colonisation of the Adelaide Plains and adjacent lands had a profound impact upon the Aborigines and brought their traditional way of life to an abrupt end.

Today, many Aboriginal people frequent the Festival Centre site as audience and performers, keeping alive a culture that is important for all Australians to acknowledge. Performances by companies such as Bangarra Dance Theatre, Black Swan Theatre Company and the Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre can be seen at the Centre. Actors such as Deborah Mailman performing in The Seven Stages of Grieving and Steven Albert (Baamba) in Bran Nue Dae and Corrugation Road have played in the various venues to much acclaim. Artists such as Leah King Smith, lan Abdulla, Yvonne Koolmatrie, Mary McLean (Pantiiti) and Ellen Trevorrow have exhibited in the venues and participated in artists' sessions. The Aboriginal publishing Company Magabala Books has promoted books in the Artspace Gallery. Exhibitions of ceramics by Thancoupie, Utopia Batiks, Karnta (an exhibition representing twelve geographical areas where Australian Aboriginal women's art work was produced such as Tiwi Pima Art, Balgo Warlavirti Artists, Maningrida Arts and Crafts and Goolarabooloo Arts), Flinders Trail (an installation on the Flinders Ranges, one of Australia's prized natural heritage areas, accompanied by storytelling by Cliff Coulthard the Aboriginal
Ranger from the Flinders area)
and the exhibition Australia Through
Her Picture Books (an exhibition
documenting changing perceptions of
Australia, the land and its people through
original picture book illustrations spanning
1918-1994) clearly drew the Festival Centre into an
involvement in Aboriginal issues.

The building of the Festival Centre, stimulated by the need for a large theatre and concert hall to house major events during the Festival of Arts, commenced in 1970 and was completed in 1977. The design of the complex and its surroundings was a striking reminder of how determined the city was to break free from its colonial past. Like the contemporaneous legislation on Aboriginal rights, the genesis of the Adelaide Festival Centre could also be said to be the result of far sighted thinking of an enlightened Premier.

Although at this time art works from overseas were often still given greater recognition than works by Australian artists, evidenced through purchases of works by Dame Barbara Hepworth and Otto Hajek, by 1973 works by Fred Williams and Sidney Nolan had been acquired. Broad thinking individuals such as David Wynn, Ruby Litchfield, David Thomas, Anthony Steel, H J Baily and Peter Nicholson played a part in decisions resulting in the current Festival Centre, its art works and surrounds. The Festival Centre was built in three stages. The first was the construction of the 1,978 seat Festival Theatre, completed in 1973 (prior to the opening of the Sydney Opera House). In 1974 the Playhouse, the Space and the Amphitheatre were completed in the Drama Centre, adjacent to the Festival Theatre. The final stage was the completion of the Centre's two-level car park and the Plaza area surrounding the buildings.

The Festival Centre joined the Art Gallery of South Australia, the South Australian Museum and the University of Adelaide to make a unique inner city cultural precinct along North Terrace.

Through music, art and theatre, encouraged by the existence of the Festival Centre complex, what was once a site of dispossession could be said to be in the process of being reclaimed by a more tolerant, multicultural society.

The Festival Centre, built on Kauma land, is reexamined through Aboriginal eyes in the works in this exhibition.



Robert Davenport, Australia 1816-1896 Adelaide from the north bank of the River Torrens watercolour 15.8×26.3cm Collection, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide

Gift of Mr Davenport 1927

in the works in this exhibition.

Vivonne Thwaites Visual Arts, Adelaide Festival Centre

Shorthand Adelaide Shorthand Adelaide

continuing Kaurna presence.

exposing the "Aboriginal Location"

been the focus for cultural projects since its official opening 25 years ago. A dozen Adelaide Festivals have happened on the site, all of which have brought performers from around the world to what has been consistently the best festival in the country. The Festival Centre now holds the memories of thousands of performances, exhibitions and events. Many of these events have been played out on the Stadtikonographie Adelaide, (Shorthand Adelaide) an environmental sculpture made of concrete and colours on the plaza. The Stadtikonographie Adelaide and the Festival Theatre literally modernised the gentle topography of the area, to create an abstract and globalised set of signs on land that had been locally significant as a ceremonial site for Kaurna people. For many of us who have participated in Adelaide Festivals, the intensity of these heightened cultural experiences is hard to shake but this project aims to look through the buzz to expose a

The Adelaide Festival Centre has

Not far from where the geometric white shells of the Festival Centre now stand was the Tarnda Kanya, (literally Red Kangaroo Ancestor - Rock). The Tarnda Kanya and the surrounding slopes were a key ceremonial location for the Kaurna, within the area that was later to be called Adelaide. As a part of the establishment of the town the rocks at Tarnda Kanya were quarried and according to Aboriginal accounts were used to create the first church, in a city noted for its churches. Another legacy of the quarrying is the Parade Grounds, where the void left by mining activity has formed the venue for a military garrison. This activity, together with subsequent construction and the intensive use of the river banks by livestock erased the traces of Aboriginal land use from this section of the river.

For the three artists in this exhibition, the ancestors of the Kauma still have a presence at the site. The memory of these ancestors is carried into the exhibition by the artists' extended consultations with Kaurna Elders Lewis O'Brien and Doris Graham, whose authority for and knowledge of the Aboriginal history of the Adelaide area is unsurpassed. The history of the area as relayed to the artists by these two old people has found visual expression in this exhibition.

The reclamation of a Kaurna presence in Adelaide has been a concerted and conscious project. For not only did the Kaurna bear the brunt of the European establishment of a colonial base at

Adelaide, but during the years under *The Aborigines Act of South Australia 1911*, Aboriginal people in Adelaide were actively removed from the city. Descendants of the original Kauma together with Aboriginal people from other areas who had moved into Adelaide were relocated to Point McLeay and Point Pearce, where for many decades the identity of the Kauma people was subsumed into the consolidated Ngarrindjeri and Narrunga identities of those missions.²

For Ngarrindjeri artist, Agnes Love, information imparted by Lewis O'Brien has enabled her to see history through the lens of a camera at the sites where events described to her had occurred. Through the camera, history can be framed and examined To resolve her image Karrauwirrabarri - River Torrens, Love has located herself on the same hill where a century and a half earlier, Robert Davenport painted the watercolour Adelaide from the north bank of the River Torrens. Clearly the two images have very different intentions. Davenport uses his elevated viewpoint to survey the well grassed, watered and still lightly wooded slopes of the area now known as Elder Park. Davenport creates a prospectus for potential agricultural expansion in the colony. Aborigines are depicted encamped but passive, and towards the top of the southern rise a building, the old Legislative Council building, stands erect and solid as a marker for the inevitability of British progress. In Karrauwirraparri - River Torrens, Love is the indigenous presence and she reclaims the site through the use of the Kaurna name. recording changes to the site and suggesting the persistence of an Aboriginal view of the land.

Love's photograph was taken in the knowledge that at the same time as Davenport produced his watercolour the Kaurna were being persuaded to sit down at the "Aborigines Location", a reserve created in the first years of British occupation a couple of kilometres downstream, near the current site of Morphett Bridge. It was a little later, at the "Location" that the German missionaries Schurmann and Teichelmann recorded some of the Kaurna language and translated hymns and indeed the Ten Commandments into Kaurna. Ironically it is their records which now form the basis of the reclamation of the Kaurna language. ³

The presence of the Kaurna as they moved from the "Location" on paths up and down the river has captivated another artist in the exhibition. Nicole Cumpston is a woman of Barkindji descent whose grandmother was from Wilcannia on the Darling River. For five years Cumpston was a darkroom technician with the South Australian Police Department and her images seek to expose



Adelaide Festival Centre construction, April 1972 Photographer, Mr Nael Bieg

forensic evidence of Aboriginal presence at the site. Her eye is close to the ground and will surely demonstrate the traces as the spirits of the ancestors move along the paths near the bank of the river.

I am trying to show the spirit of the Aboriginal people – as we are still here – that although we are not always obvious – that our ancestors are watching over – that our presence is here amongst the trees, reeds and rocks. ⁴

In Tarnda Kanya (Rock of Tarnda), Cumpston uses infra red film to reveal a wavelength in the landscape that is invisible to the naked eye but which we feel through our bodies and know through experience. She expresses the attraction of the site which has made it a natural meeting place over time. The shell of the Festival Theatre rises above the reeds as a monolith. By rubbing ochre onto the surface of her image she has prepared the building as an Aboriginal site, referring to Tamda Kanva as a monolith of the memory, which had drawn the Kauma to the site. In the early colonial period Tamda Kanya was supplanted by the Rotunda, a colonial edifice that still symbolises the claiming of the land by the English and continuing reliance of the colonists on a culture with its centre so many thousands of miles away. The modernistic carapace of the Festival Theatre was added to the site as a major symbolic move in Don Dunstan's revolutionary Adelaide of the 1970s in severe contrast with the colonial buildings in the precinct. There is a curious continuity of charismatic landmarks at this site. This continuity echoes the tendency for the forces of empire to create their monuments on top of those of the cultures they aim to supplant - in Britain the Romans built their temples on Celtic sacred sites and in what is now Turkey, the Byzantines built on Roman temples.

In Wauwe, Agnes Love takes a more synoptic view of the Festival Centre and the river and in a montage of 15 photos she creates a meta image of a kangaroo. For Love this kangaroo is not Tamda the male kangaroo associated with secret men's ceremonies, but a female kangaroo which evokes Kaurna women's ceremonies near the banks of the river. Further resonance comes from Love's own experience as a photographer documenting the First National Aboriginal Women's Festival in 1984, an event which introduced her to the potency of the Festival Centre as a site for the expression of contemporary Aboriginal culture. Since that time, events as diverse as traditional Pitjatjantjara Inma in 1986, in 1994 Pet Thang, the haunting photographic series by Tracey Moffatt in the Adelaide Festival and Leah King Smith's Patterns of Connection in 1992 have been hosted by the Festival Centre and in the process the site has

become an important point of convergence for the expression of Aboriginal culture on the national stage.

Darren Siwes, an urban Aboriginal man, born in Adelaide, places himself in the contemporary architectural setting of the Festival Centre. He does not critique the building but enjoys its architectural purity. He calls on the geometry of the building, designed by the Adelaide based firm Hassell and Partners, to draw focus on himself as a transparent but totally contemporary Aboriginal presence. Transparency for Siwes conveys intertemporality, the capacity to be standing on the concrete Plaza in 1998 but also to represent an Aboriginal presence at the site for millennia. It is also a transparency that infers that Aboriginal people will persist at the site into the future. The titles of his works convey the bi-cultural coexistence essential to the expression of his European background and Aboriginal identity.

...a recognition that puts the heritage of the Kaurna in a positive framework. Still my Worli Takanna can mean, 'still my spacious house' or 'the place is still here, it will always be'. The whole idea is that this is Kaurna land and will always be Kaurna land. Still all Australians can claim the spacious house (The Festival Centre). 5

The completion of the Festival Centre was a powerful marker in Australia's post colonial history. The opening was presided over by recently elected Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam and South Australia's then Premier, Don Dunstan, two visionary politicians able to set the scene for an Australia where social justice and reconciliation with indigenous Australians was placed firmly on the national agenda. The symbolism of the modern white shell of the Festival Theatre, which owed nothing to South Australia's heritage as a British colony, represented new ambitions for the State. It was a new kind of public building for Australia, abstracted and unadomed. Siwes locates himself in this modern environment with a sense of personal freedom that would have been impossible in the architecture of the colonial past, an architecture which is laden with the legacy of the institutional dispossession of Aboriginal people.

While the Festival Theatre put on notice that South Australia had ambitions to be part of an emerging global community, the completion of the Festival Plaza in 1977 articulates the notion of a utopian community based on universal ideals. Katja Hajek, the wife of the German artist who created Stadtikonographie Adelaide, noted



Adelaide Festival Centre site plan drawn by Steven Mitchell, 10.2.98

some of the idealism that accompanied the creation of her husband's work:

An environmental sculpture made of concrete and colours, water and light, made of Australia's soil and the sand bushes of Australia's desert. Made for all people of the city of Adelaide, as a place to meet and be together in a social space. There are signs standing by the roadside, signs indicating a space for human life. Signs which create a place.

As well as creating a new place, the signs erected by Hajek also masked the land and the enshrouded history at the site. While Otto Herbert Hajek's contention that "art creates community" has more validity on his plaza than at most other locations, it is a statement that does not acknowledge the competitive, often political claims that have infused cultural activity in Australia since the seventies. Creating place has become more about reconciling historical claims than providing neutral and most usually unticketed space for art to happen.

For me, my task of creating a free space there was the beginning of a train of thought resulting in the conclusion that this free space had to be a space for all the social classes of this city with this place, with this sign and with these colours. ⁷

The people who have experienced the plaza are not like the clones out of an Oskar Schlemmer painting but citizens of an increasingly diverse and fractured world, at the end of what has been a very confusing century. The signs created so confidently by Hajek are now probably interpreted by most strollers on the plaza simply as colour and concrete often seen through raybans for their curious retro appeal. The signs that are more likely to be noticed on the plaza are the logos of *Nike* footwear or *DKNY* t-shirts.

Nor could the "free space for all social classes" conceived by Hajek have anticipated the anarchic culture of the Squeeze Box, a look alike southern Baptist church (with its roof open to the heavens) that was fabricated to harmonise visually with the Plaza during the 1998 Adelaide Festival. It was filled with the iconoclastic energy of the Heruinen (two German drag queens singing Wagner and dressed as Valkyries) or sounds of the crazed Tiger Lillies (led by a counter tenor with a piano accordion). Could the utopian constructivism of the mid-century that is expressed so spaciously in the Stodtikonographie Adelaide have anticipated the grunge culture of the century's last decade?

Equally unlikely, at the time of the Festival Centre's opening would have been the very public recognition by Leah Purcell, a solo Murri performer from Queensland of the local *Nungas* as the owners of the land. Clearly the protocols have changed to the point where the previously invisible custodians of *Tarnda Kanya* are recognised. They have been brought forth as a manifest presence that gives a renewed specificity and significance to events that now occur on the site.

The Adelaide Festival Centre is a place where many things can happen at one time. It can be a place where new culture breaks and where traditional forms are rejuvenated. It is a landscape that is now characterised by the hard edges of the plaza and the geometric shells of the Festival Theatre, whose outer layer sits like an exoskeleton on the gently sloping curves that run down to the riverbanks. The grassy plains that had been managed by fire for access and game are now cut regularly for events and picnics. The site remains a meeting place as gradually the presence of the Kaurna ancestors is brought forth (tanendi).

John Kean Producer, Australian Society Program, Museum Victoria

Footnotes:

- Personal communication, Dr Philip Clarke, Senior Curator of Aboriginal Collections, South Australian Museum.
- 2. Personal communication, Dr Philip Clarke.
- For further information on the Kaurna Language project see: Rob Amery and Jane Simpson in cooperation with the Kaurna Plains School Project and Lewis O'Brien. In gen ed. Nic Thieberger and William McGregor Macquarie Aboriginal Words, Macquarie Library, Sydney. Kaurna. pp 144-172.
- 4. Personal communication, Nicole Cumpston.
- 5. Personal communication, Darren Siwes.
- Katja Hajek, Excerpts from her diary, Don Dunstan reads from Otto Hajek's portfolio at the opening ceremony of the Plaza, 23/3/77, pp 36-39 (unsourced).
- Otto Herbert Hajek cited in Eugen Gromninger, Otto Herbert Hajek, PWA Grafifische Papiere GmbH (1996) Raubling.



The roofline of the Festival Theatre

3 Views of
Kaurna Territory
Kaurna Territory
Now



Agnes Love Agues Fore

Born 8/1/58

EDUCATION

1992-1998 Part time studies toward an Arts Diploma, Tauondi College, Port Adelaide

WORK HISTORY

1994
Documentary Photographer,
1st National Aboriginal
Women's Festival

1986
Telecom Australia, DEIR
(Department of Employment and Industrial Relations)
Aboriginal Achievement
Award SA

1983 Research Assistant/Photographer for the Wakefield Press publication *Survival In Our Own Land* published for SA Jubilee 150, 1988

1979-82 Aboriginal Community College (now Tauondi), Resource Assistant - Library



EXHIBITIONS & COMMISSIONS

1997 Dreams Within, Tauondi Graduate exhibition, Tandanya

Two Spirit People, Nexus Gallery

Red House Gallery, Ann Thorpe, staff and students of Tauondi

Documentary Photography;

The Seven Stages of Grieving, Space Theatre, Adelaide Festival Centre

Weaving The Threads, Port Youth Theatre

Rosewater Railways Project, Port Adelaide Community Arts Centre 1996

Documentary Photography: Bull Bars Tour, Vitalstatistix and Sand Sculpture Collaboration with the Adelaide Fringe, Festival of the Sun, NEXUS

Spirits Rising, Tauondi student exhibition, Red House Gallery, Marion

Open Day exhibition, Tauondi

1995 Tauondi exhibition, Port Adelaide Community Arts Centre

Club Contagious, Tauondi student exhibition, Governor Hindmarsh Hotel

LIST OF WORKS

(cat image) Wauwe, 1998 montage of C-type prints 150 x 100cm

> Kamauwirraparri-River Torrens, 1998 cibachrome print 100 x 120cm

Don's Vision/Our Dreaming, series of 3, 1998 gelatin silver prints 3 prints 50 x 6 lcm (each)

Nicole Cumpston Nicole Cumpston

Born 2/8/63



EDUCATION

1996-97 Teaching and Learning Certificate, Western Institute of TAFE

1993-94 Diploma in Applied and Visual Arts, North Adelaide School of Art

1992 Reproduction and Printing/Graphic Arts, Croydon Park TAFE

1987-89 Associate Diploma-Applied and Visual Arts, North Adelaide School of Art

1982-83 Enrolled Nurse Certificate, Gleneden School of Nursing and Loxton Hospital

WORK HISTORY

1996-98 Lecturer in Photography, Tauondi College

1990-95 Darkroom Technician, SA Police Department

Enrolled Nurse 1987-90 Nurses Specialling Bureau 1983-85 Royal Adelaide Hospital 1982-83 Loxton District Hospital

EXHIBITIONS & COMMISSIONS

1998 Two Strikes, Tamarama Rock Surfers, Red Shed Theatre, Adelaide

1997 Scenes From Road, one person exhibition, Lansdowne Hotel, Sydney

God and You, group exhibition, Marion City Council Chambers, Adelaide

1996 National Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander Art Award, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

Group Show, Festival Fringe 21 Frome St, Adelaide

1995 Shadow Boxing, Tamarama Rock Surfers, promotion and publicity photography, Nexus Theatre, Adelaide 1993
The Calendar Show,
Multicultural Artworkers
Committee,
Nexus Gallery, Adelaide

1992 Group exhibition, Multicultural Artworkers Committee, Nexus Gallery, Adelaide

1991 Group exhibition, Multicultural Artworkers Committee, Lion Arts Centre, Adelaide

1990 Shoulder to Shoulder, Artists Against Racism, Multicultural Artworkers Committee, Union Gallery, Adelaide University

Group exhibition, Adelaide Festival Fringe, Carclew, Adelaide (cat image)
Tarnda Kanya
I from a series of 3, 1998
hand coloured gelatin silver
print from an infrared
negative, oils, conte,
ochre, charcoal
50 x 61cm

Tamda Kanya 11, 1998 hand coloured gelatin silver print from an infrared negative, oils, conte, charcoal

Tarnda Kanya III, 1998 hand coloured gelatin silver print from an infrared negative; oils, conte, ochre, charcoal 50 x 6 lcm

> Yaitya Meyunna 1, 1998 gelatin silver print 50 x 60cm

Yaitya Meyunna 11, 1998 gelatin silver print

LIST OF WORKS

Yaitya Meyunna 111, 1998 gelatin silver print 50 x 60cm

Tanendi 1, 1998 hand coloured gelatin silver print from an infrared negative, oils conte, ochre, charcoal 50 × 60cm

Tanendi, 1998
hand coloured gelatin silver
print from an infrared
negative, oils, conte,
ochre, charcoal
50 × 60cm

Tanendi, 1998 hand coloured gelatin silver print from an infrared negative, oils, conte, ochre, charcoal 50 × 60cm

sewis nerren Siwes

Born 20/2/68

EDUCATION

1997 Graduate Diploma of Education (Secondary), University of South Australia

1992-96 Bachelor of Arts (Visual Arts) (Hons), University of South Australia

1991 Various subjects, Adelaide Central School of Art,

1990
Fitting and Machining
Trades Certificate,
Noarlunga College of TAFE

WORK HISTORY

1997-98 Lecturer in painting, drawing, media studies. Tauondi

1996 Wedding Photographer

1996 Work experience, Tandanya



EXHIBITIONS & COMMISSIONS

1998
Exploring Australian
Spirituality,
Adelaide College of Divinity

1997 Poster for the "Dads In The Family Campaign", for the South Australian Government office of "Families And Children, Domestic Violence Unit"

1996 96 Degrees, University of South Australia Visual Arts Graduate Exhibition, Lion Arts Centre, Adelaide

Guddhabungan, Jabal Centre, Australian National University, Canberra 1995 10%, Art Zone Gallery, Adelaide,

Student Exhibition, Adelaide Central School of Art, Central Studios, Adelaide

1995-98 Various portrait commissions

LIST OF WORKS

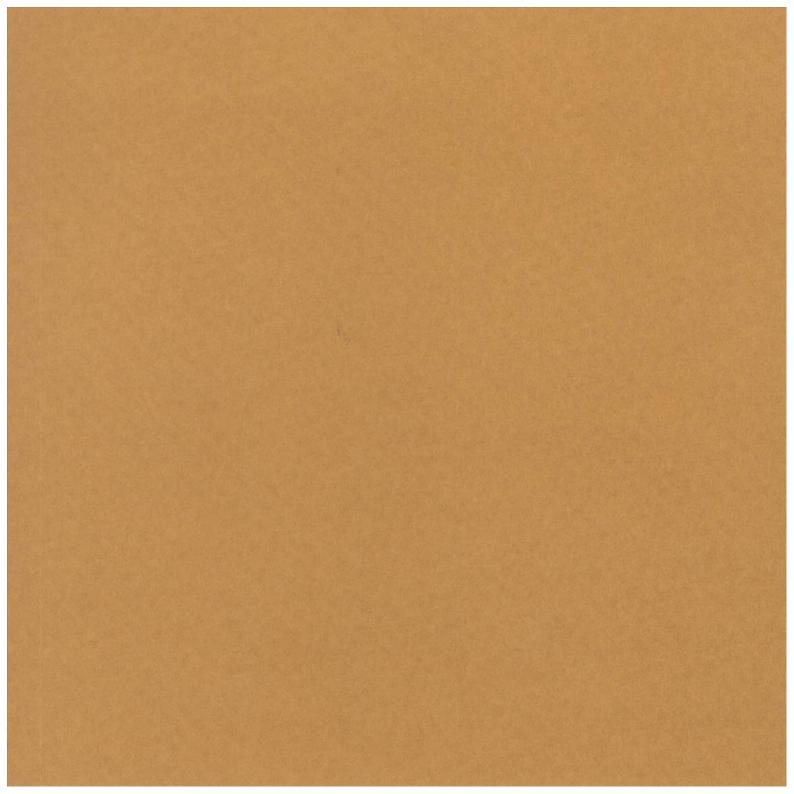
(cat image)
Still My Worli Takanna, 1998
100 x 122cm
laminated cibachrome print
(mounted on aluminium)

To Meet Koma Butto, 1998 100 × 122cm laminated cibachrome print (mounted on aluminium)

Warteama, Between The Children and The Old Ones, 1998 100 x 122cm Jaminated cibachrome print

Yellakiana Beginnings, 1998 100 × 122cm laminated cibachrome print (mounted on aluminium)

(mounted on aluminium)







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Vivonne Thwaites, Curator
Pat Sutton Visual Acts Coordinator



This project has been assisted by the Commonwealth Government through the Australia. Council, its arts funding and advisory body. Bark of a redgum tree ochres and white pipe clay made by J Koolmatne Point McLeay, 1914 Photographer P Clarke Courtesy, South Australian Museum. (A. 1001)