

● Portfolio - Gabi Briggs



ARKAN & IRBELA 2024
West Space Commission
Gabi Briggs
Film & Installation

Nurturing the legacy of her late nan Patsy Cohen's research – formalised in Patsy's 1990 book *Ingelbah and the Five Black Matriarchs* – ARKAN & IRBELA sees the gallery transformed into a location for the two women to dialogue across time and space, film and print publishing.

ARKAN & IRBELA presents coded knowledge and stories from their family's history on Anaiwan Country, Northern New South Wales. Central to this is the Anaiwan Skinship System – a network of complex relations that define an individual's responsibilities and relationships to Community and Country, and from which Blak, Anaiwan femininity emerges. The work honours the manifestations of reality, identity and ethics in the Skinship System, that are inherently derived from Country and the relations it sustains.

Structured along conversations and relational moments with family members, ARKAN & IRBELA materialises Anaiwan knowledge within a Story of resurgence, demonstrating the power of cultivating an inter-generational code of ethics within an ongoing relationship to Place. Patsy Cohen generated the research for her book by walking Country with family and Community, revitalising cultural knowledge and story through Place-based memory. ARKAN & IRBELA engages in a non-linear dialogue with her methodology and intention, by articulating how their family is embedded within the matrix of Anaiwan Country.

Both Briggs' and Cohen's research constitute a continued connection to Country, family and culture. By anchoring her practice of Anaiwan cultural revitalisation through that of her nan's, ARKAN & IRBELA embodies the sentiment expressed by Wakka Wakka and Kombumerri Professor Aunty Mary Graham: 'I am located, therefore I am'.



GEDYURA 2024

These Arms Hold Exhibition

Gabi Briggs

Lomandra, wood, wire, film

80 x 15cm

GEDYURA, the Anaiwan word for woman, honours an unnamed Aboriginal gedyura's act of frontier resistance on Anaiwan Country. This work, a rifle woven from lomandra with an accompanying video, centres on a historical fragment: a newspaper clipping describing an armed Aboriginal gedyura leading men blamed for raiding stations in New England.

The weaving process connects me to her legacy, challenging the erasure of Aboriginal women's resistance in colonial narratives. This meditative practice transforms a symbol of colonial violence into a testament to Indigenous survivance, the conjunction between resistance and survival.

Strong kinship, a powerful weapon passed down by my matriarchs, is woven into this work. My family witness to the making process and my sibling's presence in the video - my mother's sister's child who shares my skin - embody this kinship. It's evident in the collaborative process: weaving the rifle in the homes of my irbelas (mother, mother's sisters) and bawas (sisters), their participation ensures this story's preservation extends beyond me to our entire family, reflecting the communal nature of our cultural knowledge.

The video doesn't simply retell the gedyura's story, but rather engages with it in a non-linear dialogue, subverting the colonial gaze to offer intimacy and authenticity that colonial accounts lack. By emulating the unnamed gedyura's movements, as described in the newspaper clipping, I invite the audience to see the duality at play: past and present, violence and creation, colonial narratives and Indigenous knowing.

As an Anaiwan gedyura raised by matriarchs, I see our reflection in her. This work honours her resistance, connecting past and present in a testament to our enduring strength.



IRBELA: turn into transcendence

BUS Projects

Collingwood

2023

If the virtual realm is land-based, can it return us to country? Can we transcend the limits of all physical experience and knowledge to seek sovereignty within the virtual?

IRBELA, the Anaiwan word for mother and mother's sister, is the physical manifestation of a metaverse that holds, protects and tells stories of blak womxn who have been relegated to anonymity by the white witness.

IRBELA was created by artist Gabi Briggs who invited Nayuka Gorrie, Dtarneen Onus-Browne and Meriki Onus to consider what she could hold, protect and share. Given the land-based nature of the virtual realm, could IRBELA create a space where sovereignty can exist and, in turn, provide safety and healing to our communities from colonial harm?



.. and in response I urge you to read (our data)

500 prints stacked, sovereign data collated and interpreted.

Barreng Yirramboi Exhibition

MADA Gallery

Monash University (Caulfield Campus)

2022

.. and in response, I urge you to read (our data) is the second iteration of a series I created after *Mugun & Gun: Resisting New England Frontier Wars - Edition One*, a zine collaboration between myself and my cousin Callum Clayton-Dixon, published in 2018. The zine documented the conflict and violence on Anaiwan country during the frontier. I pulled the data from the zine to map out these sites and drew out correlations obscured from plain view. This second iteration circles once again back to sovereign data collection to make visible the Black Witness(1).

1. Amy McQuire, 'Black and White Witness', *Meanjin*, Winter 2019.



QWE3NZ

Large video projection, 4 minutes 23 seconds, looped.

The work QWE3NZ, is in tribute to all Indigenous women who were photographed by the colonial administration, forced to be interpreted by the male gaze. In the video, I become the subject and also the image-maker, as I video myself transitioning into different poses copied from archival photographs of Indigenous women from so-called Australia. I create a counter-fiction to the colonial narrative created by the Australian archive by using my body to author my own narrative as an Indigenous woman, I challenge the male colonial gaze to regain my autonomy.



MURRA BURN

Closed performance, public installation of objects left from the closed performance.

First Draft, Sydney

MAV X FUSE Festival, Melbourne

Murra Burn aims to renegotiate what self-love might look like as an Anaiwan woman. I reclaim the violent incursions enacted on my very essence. This work required the breakdown of vapid and commodified notions of self-care that are extensions of colonial notions of womanhood-which also lends itself to the domination of Indigenous womanhood.

The final manifestation of MURRA was of objects left after a closed performance. All that now act collectively as an installation, act as indexical evidence of the extinguishment of the artist's hair, accompanied by an immersive sound piece that uses the act as its score.

There are two reiterations of the project, the first was in 2016 at First Draft, Sydney and the last was in 2019 at the MAV X FUSE Festival.



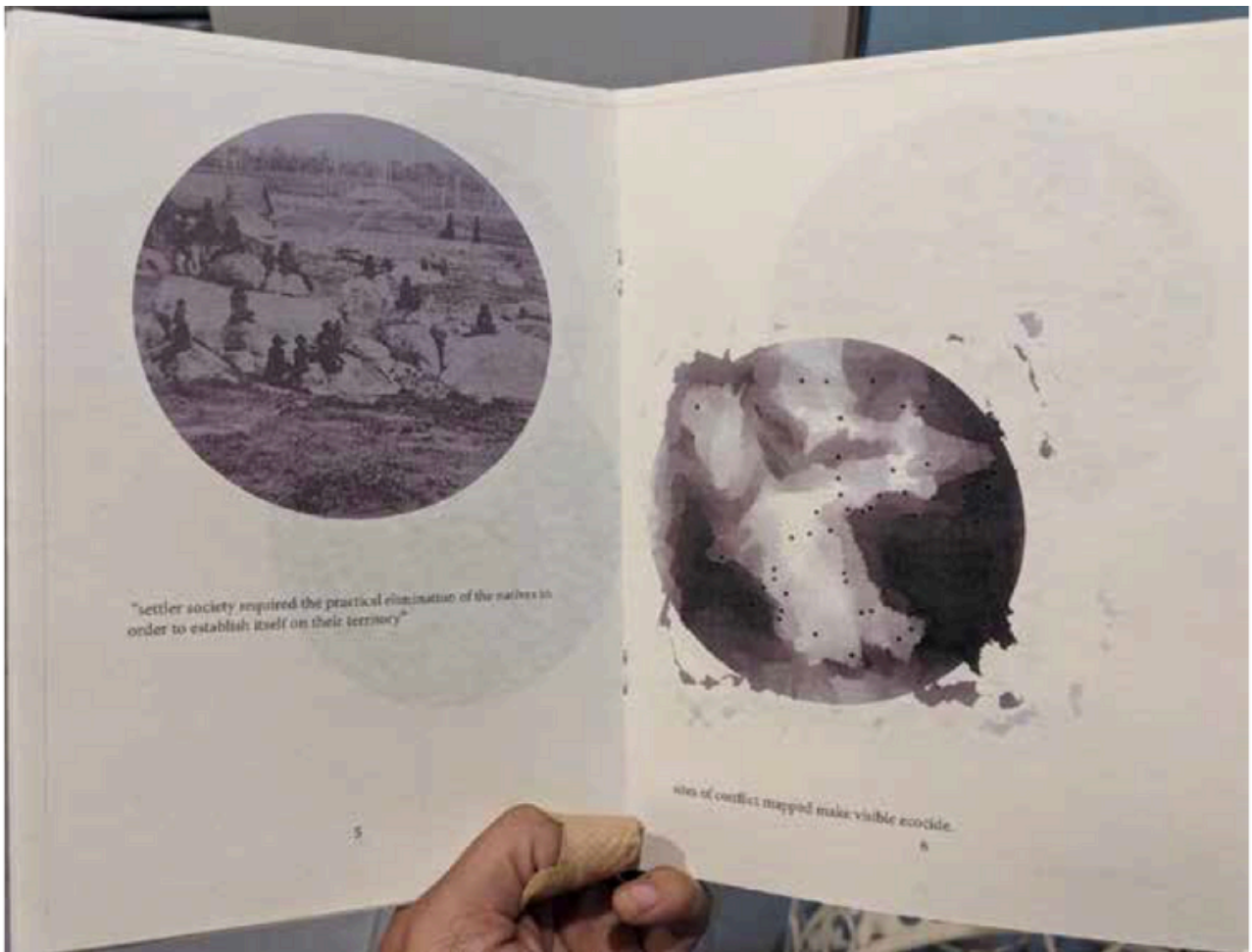
MURRA BURN, 2019
CODE SWITCH
Blak Dot Gallery

Photograph of the installation of MURRA BURN in the CODE SWITCH exhibition at Blak Dot Gallery.



....And In Response I Urge You To Read
12 zines, 1 shelves and black velvet fabric backdrop
Art Word Place
Tamworth Regional Art Gallery

An installation of a black velvet backdrop with three shelves offered 12 zines for the audience members to read. The zine contained maps that showed the relationship between sites of conflict within the southern part of the New England and areas that were ecological affected by colonisation. This work also toured as a part of ARTstate.



....And In Response I Urge You To Read
12 zines, 1 shelves and black velvet fabric backdrop

Excerpts from the zine.



Surviving New England: Our Koori Matriarchs

A series of 10 portraits printed on individual vinyl banners, 1m x 1.94 metres.
Above portrait is of Patsy Cohen.

A series of portraits displayed at the Aboriginal Community Garden at Narwan Village in Armidale, NSW. The intention behind the portraiture was to platform the traditional understanding of matriarchal power within Anaiwan society. The project and its success, was predicated on process and protocol, the work in identifying the matriarchs, then inviting them to be a part of the series, was just as important as the exhibition. It was integral that the identifying of Matriarchs was a collective decision made by community elders and knowledge holders, additionally it was important to invite them by official invitation and to cook for them.