



NOONGAR COUNTRY 2015

# Koorah, Nitja, Boordawan

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE



NOONGAR COUNTRY 2015:

**KOORAH, NITJA,  
BOORDAWAN**

(PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE)

**3 OCTOBER —  
15 NOVEMBER 2015**





## NOONGAR COUNTRY

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JULIAN BOWRON

This year's Noongar Country judging day gave us the opportunity to talk about Noongar art in the South West with our external judge Clotilde Bullen. As a Wardandi woman with strong family ties to the region, and as an experienced curator with over ten years of experience on the staff of the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Clotilde is uniquely qualified to talk about the subject.

In conversation with BRAG volunteer gallery guides, a frequent gallery visitor question was raised: is there a particular, recognisable style of art from the South West?

Clotilde's answer was very clear. There is no identifiable art style and that is typical of the areas of Australia which were rapidly and intensively settled during the colonial era. In those places almost all physical evidence of Aboriginal culture was quite deliberately destroyed. As a result there is tragically very little, or nothing, for contemporary Aboriginal artists from those areas to draw on that speaks of their traditional culture.

However the need of artists to make art persists. In more recent times there is a strong, if cruelly ironic, expectation placed on Aboriginal artists that they will produce artworks that are an expression of their culture.

Often that leads to artists grasping recognisable styles from country that is not their own, the use of dotting typical of the Western Desert or symbols used by artists in Northern Australia. Faithfully copying these styles might result in a good looking artwork but it will inevitably lack the resonances that will make it outstanding.

At the same time the complexity of living in contemporary Australia demands that artists make reference to the pressures, challenges and losses that they have to deal with when they make their work and this includes the pressure of expectations as described above. To express this artists do sometimes make reference to recognisable traditional styles but these are incidental and not the primary technique for completing their artworks.

Later in the day Clotilde spoke at the exhibition opening about what she looked for when taking part in judging this year's Noongar Country awards. She identified three important aspects: first, a strong idea or concept being expressed and explored; second, good technique or use of materials and third, originality - the artwork has something fresh and new about it.



I recently co-judged the City of Busselton Art Award with prominent WA artist Ron Nyisztor who explained to me that he uses a similar set of criteria for judging artworks which he describes as "mind, body and spirit". Mind is the idea, body is the technique and spirit is the magic something that makes the artwork sing or, in other words, originality.

For any contemporary artist who is entering their work in an award or prize exhibition it is very likely that similar criteria will be used, knowledgeable judges will recognise the challenges that Noongar artists face and look for the ingenious ways that they overcome these challenges.

PREVIOUS:  
**Margaret Danischewsky**

*Past, Present  
and Future, 2015*  
palm fronds  
wool, seaweed  
emu feathers  
wire, sticks

ABOVE:  
**Kim Krakouer**  
*Dry Times, 2014*  
mixed media  
on canvas

LEFT:  
**Gary Deeble**  
*Untitled, 2015*  
acrylic on canvas

## ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Noongar Country is Bunbury Regional Art Galleries' annual exhibition of Indigenous art.

Taking the theme "Koorah, Nitja, Boordawan" (Past, Present, Future), *Noongar Country 2015* is a big, energetic and vivid exhibition, with work by respected senior artists exhibited alongside that of emerging artists, community groups, schools and youth.



The works included are wide-ranging in style and technique, reflecting the great diversity encompassed by Noongar Country: from inner city Bunbury and Fremantle, through smaller towns such as Kellerberrin and Busselton, to more remote and wild places in the South West.

Through paintings to sculptural works and basket weaving, various themes recur which speak of country. Landscapes, seascapes, creatures of the land and sea are all represented, and evocations of the spiritual are woven through many works. Narrative works make up a strong component of the exhibition, often dealing with social history, as well as political and environmental issues.

The winner of the 2015 prize for Overall Best Work was Gary Deeble, as judged by independent curator Clotilde Bullen and City of Bunbury Collection Curator Caroline Lunel. The selected work has been acquired into the City of Bunbury collection, to provide a legacy for future generations of Bunbury residents. Kimberley Krakouer was also highly commended by the judges for his work, *Dry Times*.



TOP LEFT:  
**Sheldon Collard**  
*Boodja*, 2015  
acrylic on canvas

TOP CENTRE:  
**Naomi Danischewsky**  
*Spirits*, 2015  
acrylic on canvas

LEFT:  
**Naomi Grant**  
*Spiritual Matter*, 2014  
acrylic and collage





TOP RIGHT:  
**Phillip Hansen**  
*Ancient*, 2015  
acrylic on canvas

LEFT:  
**Phillip Hansen**  
*Sunset over the  
Kimberley*, 2015  
acrylic on canvas



TOP:  
**Doug Hill**  
*Three Turtles*, 2015  
 acrylic on canvas

LEFT:  
**Kye 'Milimibi' McGuire**  
*Boodja*, 2015  
 acrylic on canvas





LEFT:  
**Cheryl Narkle**  
*Noongar Lands*, 2015  
acrylic on canvas

BELOW:  
**Kelvin Penny**  
*Koboorkorl*, 2015  
acrylic on canvas





LEFT:  
**Stephen Taylor**  
*Beautiful Colours*, 2015  
 acrylic on canvas

BELOW:  
**Stephen Taylor**  
*Strange Weather*, 2015  
 acrylic on canvas

BOTTOM:  
**Jasmine Winmar**  
*Future Pathway*, 2015  
 acrylic and watercolour



FRONT COVER:  
**Naomi Grant**  
*Melting Moments*, 2014  
 acrylic and collage

BACK COVER:  
**Kye 'Milimibi' McGuire**  
*Djinda*, 2015  
 customised doll

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### **Bunbury Regional Art Galleries staff:**

Director: Julian Bowron

COB Collection Curator: Caroline Lunel

Education Officer: Claire Pendrigh

Exhibitions Curator: Alisa Blakeney

Exhibitions Officer: Simon Long

Gallery Officer: Donna Fortescue

### **Casual Gallery Attendants:**

Dean Buck, Hannah Harper, Daniel Kus,  
Stephanie Lloyd-Smith, Suellen Turner

Bunbury Regional Art Galleries is owned and  
managed by the City of Bunbury Council.

Special thanks to Clotilde Bullen, Megan Corby  
and the Yaka Dandjoo Events Committee.

**[www.brag.org.au](http://www.brag.org.au)**

64 Wittenoom Street, Bunbury, Western Australia  
Open 10am – 4pm daily





**PRESENT,**

**PAST,**

**FUTURE.**

