

EDUCATION KIT

Situated on Noongar Boodjar, the Berndt Museum was founded in 1976 at the University of Western Australia. It cares for one of the most globally significant collections of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and cultural material in the world.

This Education Kit is part of a series of exhibitions, public programs, and educational materials that explore the museum's custodianship of significant Indigenous heritage and our sense of connection to related places and communities, both on campus and across Australia. These programs have also been developed in relation to our role as a teaching museum, through developing Indigenous-led pedagogies, and working with the School of Indigenous Studies at UWA.

This edition, sees us focus on important Noongar artists who deftly navigate forms of cultural continuity and truth-telling, using artworks to relate and connect with country, as well as exploring the disruptions and displacements of colonisation.

Dwelling with Place considers Indigenous perspectives on place as a continual process of involvement with the world around us, from becoming intimately aware of its cycles and subtle transformations, to understanding the complex layers of history.

The exhibition will run from 10 September – 10 December 2022 in the Janet Holmes à Court Gallery at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery. This Education Kit is designed to broadly explore some of the key themes and artworks in the exhibition and can be tailored for different age groups.

Contact:

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Cover image:

Cultural Map, 2019, acrylic paint on canvas, 235 x 186 cm

Artists: Barbara Bynder (Karda Designs), Shane Yondee Hansen with Kim Mahood as facilitating artist.

Noongar Elders and Leaders: Doolann Eatts, Margaret Culbong, Vivienne Hansen, Morten Hansen, Farley Garlett, Noel Nannup, Sandra Harben, Richard Walley, Herbert Bropho, and Michael Ogilvie.

Project Facilitation: Brave & Curious

THE EXHIBITION

The display includes key paintings by Sharyn Egan, Shane Pickett, Primus Ugle and one by a collaborative group of artists, facilitators, leaders and elders of the Noongar Nation. In addition, videos featuring the work of artists Roma Winmar, Janine McAullay Bott Brett Nannup and Laurel Nannup are also on display.

The paintings in the exhibition depict both the complex stories of Noongar life under colonisation, as well as representing deep forms of ancestral knowledge, connection to country, ecological knowledge, and cultural survival.

In these works, we see the scars of colonial massacres, missionary culture, and forced removal. We also see profound acts of resistance in the form of cultural continuity, with artists using artworks to connect with family histories, as well as depict knowledge of place, language, plants, animals, and seasons.

Colonial Mapping & Counter-Mapping



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Colonial Mapping & Counter-Mapping

Colonisation in Australia – the process of new settlers establishing control over Indigenous people and their lands – has involved forms of mapping over an extended time. New maps made by settlers described purportedly newly ‘discovered’ lands that were, however, already deeply connected to Aboriginal people. Such maps divided country up into parcels for private ownership and resource extraction, criss-crossing it with the straight lines of new borders. These new maps ignored Indigenous people’s deep knowledge of country, imposing new systems for dividing up and controlling the newly established colonies, and eventually the nation.

By contrast, the artworks in this exhibition expose the underlying stories, histories, and knowledge systems of Noongar people that have very often been over-written by such colonial maps. These can be considered a method of ‘counter-mapping’ because they provide a different story to the one told by Western style street and property maps. In the artwork example above, Noongar elders led a cross-cultural mapping project to help guide the on-going development of the University of Western Australia campus, located on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja. While it focuses on the UWA campus and surrounding areas, the Noongar knowledge and stories depicted radiate outwards in many different directions and show the deep and intricate connections between places and people across country.

Colonial Mapping & Counter-Mapping

Reflection I

Take a common map that relates to your local area, such as a street map, or a section of Google Maps. What kind of information does it contain that helps tell you about the local places that it depicts? What is the language that it is written in? Are there any images or stories included? How have things been depicted visually in the map?

Now consider what might be missing. How does it compare to the *Cultural Map* depicted above? Have any Noongar place names been used in the map you are using?

Are there any stories or histories linked to any of the places that are recorded in the map? Are there depictions of local plants and animals? What further information would you like to learn about the places on the map?

Cultural Continuity



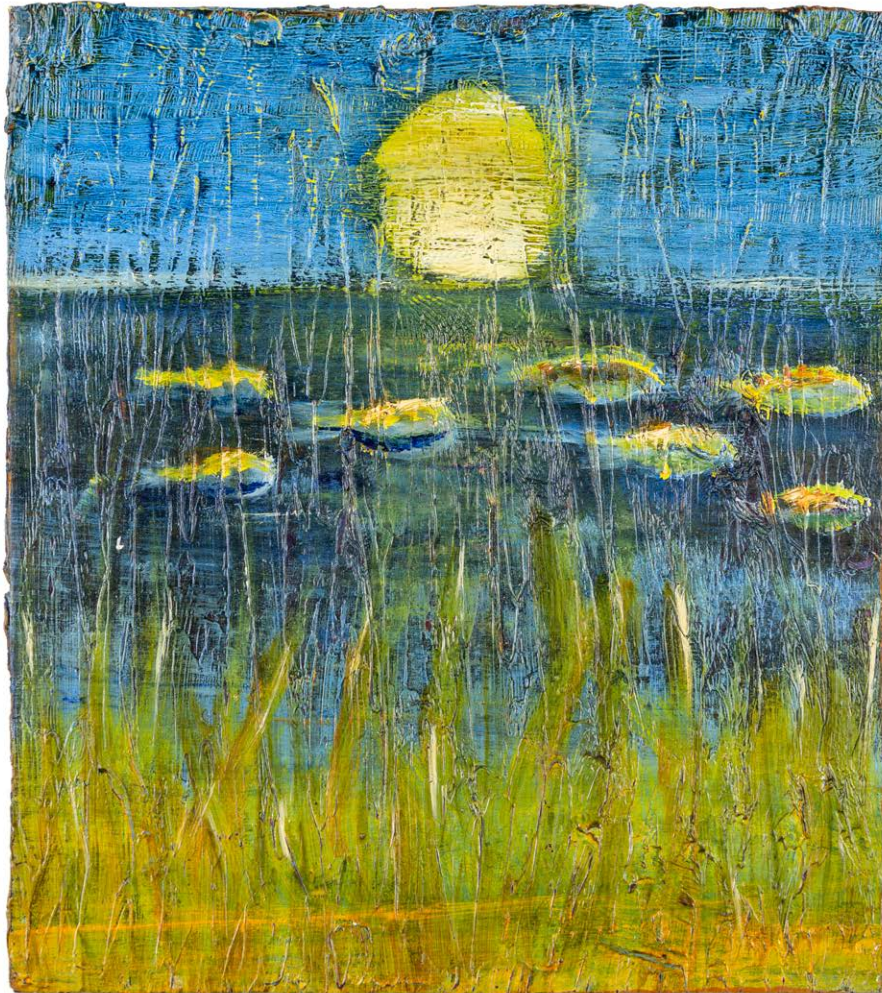
Sharyn Egan, *Birak*, 2003, oil paint on composite board, 22 x 19cm, Berndt Museum Collection [2003/0018-23]

Cultural Continuity

Birak

Birak season sees the rains ease up and the warm weather really start to take hold. The afternoons are cooled by the sea breezes that abound from the southwest. This was the fire season, a time to burn the country in mosaic patterns. An almost clockwork style of easterly winds in the morning and sea breezes in the afternoon, meant that traditionally this was the burning time of year for Nyoongar people. They would burn the country in mosaic patterns for several reasons, including fuel reduction, increasing the grazing pastures for some animals, to aid in seed germination for some plants and for ease of mobility across the country. As for the animals, there are many fledglings now venturing out of nests, though some are still staying close to their parents. Reptiles are looking to shed their old skin for a new one. With the rising temperatures and the decreasing rainfall, it's also time for the baby frogs to complete their transformation into adulthood.

Cultural Continuity



Sharyn Egan, *Makaru*, 2003, Oil paint on composite board, 22 x 19 cm, Berndt Museum Collection [2003/0018-23]3]

Cultural Continuity

Makuru

Makuru sees the coldest and wettest time of the year come into full swing. Traditionally, this was a good time of the year to move back inland from the coast as the winds turned to the west and south bringing the cold weather, rains and occasionally snow on the peaks of the Stirling and Porongurup Ranges. As the waterways and catchments started to fill, people were able to move about their country with ease and thus their food sources changed from sea, estuarine and lake foods to those of the lands in particular the grazing animals such as the kangaroo. As well as a food source, animals provided people with many other things. For example, 'Yongar' or kangaroos not only provided meat but also 'bookas' (animal skin cloaks that were used as the nights became much cooler). Nothing was left; even the bones and sinews were used in the manufacturing of bookas and for hunting tools such as spears.

*Makuru is also a time for a lot of animals to be pairing up in preparation for breeding in the coming season. If you look carefully, you might now see pairs of 'Wardongs' (ravens) flying together. You also notice these pairs not making the usual 'ark ark arrrrrk' that these birds are well known for when flying solo. Upon the lakes and rivers of the Southwest, you'll also start to see a large influx of the Black Swan or 'Mali' as they too prepare to nest and breed. Flowers that will start to emerge include the blues and purples of the Blueberry Lilly (*Dianella revoluta*) and the Purple Flags (*Patersonia occidentalis*). As the season comes to a close, you should also start to notice the white flowers of the weeping peppermint (*Agonis flexuosa*) as the blues start to make way for the white and cream flowers of Djilba.*

Cultural Continuity

Reflection II

Look closely at the artworks *Birak* and *Makuru* by Sharyn Egan and read the detailed descriptions she has provided of the two Noongar seasons that they represent.

There are six commonly identified Noongar Seasons: *Birak* (December - January); *Bunuru* (February - March); *Djeran* (April - May); *Makuru* (June - July); *Djilba* (August - September); and *Kambarang* (October - November).

Please note that different Noongar groups can have slightly different names / dates / and number of seasons.

Egan's artworks and their accompanying stories use description, colour, texture, poetic abstraction, and representation to distil the essences of each season. These artworks are exercises in noticing the shifting world around us – from changes in the weather, to the life cycles of plants and animals, to cultural practices linked to the seasons.

Birak falls within the English / settler concept of summer in Australia and *Makuru* falls within winter.

What kind of knowledge do the words 'summer' and 'winter' give us as English-language concepts? List the words and things that 'summer' and 'winter' make you think of. Now compare this to the knowledge in Egan's images and descriptions of *Birak* and *Makuru*.

List the words and things she refers to that are different. Do they give different kinds of information about the seasons? What do they add to your understanding of these times of the year?

ACTIVITY: Look, Listen, See

The following activity may be a drawing or painting activity.

Crayons, pastels, coloured pencils or acrylic paints could be used, working on paper or canvas board.

Background

The activity is inspired by the evidence of close looking and the sense of place created by artworks in this exhibition. It is important to note that this activity focuses primarily on encouraging students' awareness of their own perceptions and their experiences of a place and communicating this visually.

This should be considered a starting place for becoming mindful of the shifting world around us, and recognition that there are many other layers to understanding of place; including social histories, and forms of Indigenous knowledge, such as stories, names, and ecological knowledge.

Instead of reaching for more typical forms of understanding a place, such as with English place names, or the four Western seasons, or related to our everyday connections to a place (such as going to school), this activity asks us to stop and take environmental things in slowly, becoming more aware of the small shifts that occur over time and the way phenomena interact.

While we are not asking students to consider specific forms of Indigenous place-based knowledge in this activity, (although we encourage schools to investigate things such as local Indigenous place names, stories, and histories), this activity promotes the idea that we are always embedded in place and that our environment is composed of many different interacting relationships and phenomena, and it reflects an Indigenous approach to understanding place.

The Activity

1. **LOOK** around you / create broad strokes of colour as a background to your image

Notice where you are physically and take in the world all around you. Let the experience surround and 'wash over' you. What are the main sensations you feel and perceive? Close your eyes and let a single colour come to mind.

Create a drawing across the canvas or on the paper that represents a total feeling or sensation.

Maybe the background is created with a cool grey wash* to reflect the chill in the air, or it may be lines of deep green colour to reflect the light, as seen through the trees.

2. Hear and **LISTEN** closely / make a pattern from the sounds

Next, close your eyes and pay attention to the sounds all around you. Begin with the sounds that are closest to you and let your listening flow outwards.

Are there small chirping insects, the thrum of cars on a highway, the calls of different kinds of birds? Let your mind focus in on one of the sounds you can hear and isolate it.

Get to know its song.

Choose another colour and draw the song of the sounds that you can hear.

3. Focus and **SEE** the details / draw in small and fine lines

Come back to the place where you are sitting and keep your eyes open.

Instead of taking in the entire scene, focus in on something in particular; maybe just a small detail, like the crease lines on a fallen leaf, or the pattern of ripples on water.

Spend time getting to know the intricate shapes and colours that even a small detail of an object can create.

Choose a third colour and create the third and final layer of your drawing.

Create a pattern from the detail that you have seen, try and use thin continuous lines.

*Techniques: WASH

The technique in art that is called a wash results in a semi-transparent layer of colour. This is done using pigment diluted in water or other liquid medium. A wash of diluted ink or watercolour paint applied in combination with drawing is called 'pen and wash', 'wash drawing', or 'ink and wash'.

Artist Biography

Sharyn Egan

Sharyn Egan is a painter, weaver and sculptor. A member of the Stolen Generation, she grew up in the New Norcia Mission School. Beginning her art career at the age of 37, she completed a Diploma of Fine Arts at the Claremont School of Art in Perth (1988), and an Associate Degree in Contemporary Aboriginal Art (2000) and Bachelor of Arts (2001) at Curtin University. Also Awarded a Certificate VI in Training and Education, she has worked as an art lecturer, curator and art facilitator in schools, community groups and health organisations.

Much of her artwork is a commentary on her life as a Nyoongar woman and the associated trauma, emotions and deep sense of loss and displacement experienced by Aboriginal people. She works in numerous media, including painting, sculpture, woven forms and site-specific installations, often using materials, including ochres, resins and grasses that connect to land.

She has been featured in numerous exhibitions and has been awarded prestigious public art commissions, including at the new Perth Stadium, at Elizabeth Quay, Yagan Square and the Scarborough Beach Redevelopment. She is a frequent exhibitor and invited artist at Sculpture by the Sea, at Bondi and in Cottesloe.



THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**

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Gallery open

Tues - Sat, 11am - 5pm

FREE ADMISSION

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