



THE ALTERNATIVE ARCHIVE: BROOME

Kimberley Arts Network 2019

MEET THE ARTISTS

Artists are recorders of social history, the creators of cultural capital in any community and their creative output is central to understanding our sense of identity, place and community.

The Alternative Archive brings together contemporary artists living in communities throughout regional Western Australia to participate in a statewide exhibition network that engages with their local social contexts. Artists and artist groups were invited to create a contemporary visual archive of an aspect of their community drawn from personal relationships with the people, places and stories around them that they feel should be highlighted for their implicit personal, cultural or social value. The project seeks to construct a

dynamic new anthology of artworks and outcomes in any medium that examine how regional artists relate to the people, homes, towns or regions that they know so well. Encompassing the full diversity of artistic voices from around the state The Alternative Archive provides a platform for artists to engage with history, storytelling and local mythology, as well as personal and communal memory in a contemporary format.

Ana Louise Richardson, Lead Curator



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Bernie Shepherd



THE KIMBERLEY ARTS NETWORK

The Kimberley Arts Network is proud to be able to bring The Alternative Archive to Broome through a connection to The Creative Grid. The Creative Grid, coupled with their Galleries West platform, links regional artists and art organisations across Western Australia.

The Alternative Archive project has facilitated the professional development of curators, artists and photographers through important mentoring structures, information sharing and vital networking support whilst also promoting the work of participating curators, artists and photographers to audiences across Western Australia.

This exhibition also brings the Kimberley Arts Network together with The Broome Museum for the first time with the shared value and passion for the important role artists play in creatively reimagining the histories and stories that forge the unique identity of our community.

The Kimberley Arts Network Story

The seeds for the Kimberley Arts Network were sown following a successful open studio art trail event when artists and art lovers imagined the cultural impact a local arts council could effect by bringing creatives together in Broome.

Inspired by this vision, initial meetings were held in late 2017 and early 2018 with a call out to local artists interested in supporting the development of an arts network. By the end of 2018, the Kimberley Arts Network emerged following a lengthy community consultation phase with a shared vision, purpose and a set of objects to drive the networks' vision.

A fundraising art auction coupled with an open studio art trail weekend heralded the arrival of the Kimberley Arts Network, with funds raised used for incorporation, networking nights and the first stages of a state-of-the-art website to connect and promote artists and their works.

Future vision for the Kimberley Arts Network is to continue to strive to meet the diverse artistic needs of KAN members by encouraging a thriving, inclusive and sustainable arts community committed to ongoing advocacy, opportunity, connection and celebration of the arts.

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CURATORIAL ESSAY

Alternative perspectives and diverse narratives have steadily risen to be heard above the singular dominant narrative of history, challenging and questioning its centuries-long authorial voice with increasing urgency.



Never has it been more important to be open to these alternative perspectives and diverse narratives.

The unique multicultural spirit of Broome is layered in sediment-like waves of cultural influence tenured by a love of lustre; European commerce sparked an insatiable hunger for Broome's unique south sea pearl shell leading to an explosion of industry in the 1880s to satisfy this appetite. Within a short time, Broome became a multicultural pearling hub and one of Western Australia's busiest ports, after Fremantle harbour. The emergence of this industry left a significant and lasting impact upon the First Nations people who were experts in sourcing, harvesting and carving pearl shell used in ceremony and trade for thousands of years.

In the intervening years, the pearling industry rose and fell as dramatically as the tides of Broome; bringing with it waves of influence and impact that have indelibly shaped the character and people of our town, through times of prosperity and war. It is precisely this complex, layered history that draws together the artists of *The Alternative Archive: Broome*; story threads that weave across the Kimberley and out

into the Indian Ocean. These alternative perspectives and diverse narratives align and dissect across time, place, and community in a unique braid of ingenuity, craftsmanship and insight to inspire and intrigue audiences new and old.

Carpenter and model maker, Lachlan Fraser, brings three decades of local architectural knowledge to his scaled model of the century-old pearl sorting shed once located on Dampier Terrace. It is fitting that this piece is exhibited within the Sailmaker's Shed – a building he dismantled and painstakingly restored. Passionate about Old Broome's architectural history, Lachlan has spent countless hours researching with the help of the Broome Museum to bring a degree of historical accuracy to his work so that others might imagine taking a stroll through historic Broome.

Contrasting to Fraser's structural build of a neatly scaled history, Gary Smith's magnificently delicate and detailed sculpted pearl shell reveals the ironically constrained tension between the covetable pearl lustre and the horrors of its extraction, a monstrous act beyond belief: Blackbirder and pregnant slave forced to dive for

shell. In this work, Smith is the bridge that connects two jarring sides of pearling history through his own family heritage. This highly emotive and explosive personal content resonates further in the boldly graphic paintings of Yawuru artist, June (Moonie) Djiagween, who depicts the pulsating pain inflicted upon her community over generations in the endless repetition of tear drop markings, and the bizarrely innocuous symbolism of pearl shell buttons. Deeply affected by the recent return of ancestral remains from Germany, Moonie discharges her anguish through a visceral re-enactment of bloodshed and bonding.

Continuing the theme of tragic loss of innocence at sea, Suzy French layers feminine iconography over aluminium to represent the elemental fatality of the Dutch women and children – refugees – whose plane was shot out of the sky over Roebuck Bay in 1942. In keeping with women and the ocean, Jerrilee Bretag weaves across Broome to Riddell Beach in a celebration of women, worship and an earthy connection to nature, femininity and fertility in a stunning layered resin form with entrapped souvenirs of place. Again, women's stories are celebrated and elevated through growth statistics in the counting of women and teams participating in *Her Rules, Her Game*; a new and rapidly expanding diverse community of women rendered in tiny monochromatic oil paintings on old vintage tin number plates by Naomie Hatherley.

Rowena Strain, a proud Catholic woman, has sought to depict the diversity of the local Catholic faith in a series of symbolic communal bowls lovingly turned, embellished and glazed to simultaneously preserve and reveal the intimate layers in

the evolution of this community. Underlying the narrative in these works are the women at the heart of the family who connect the community. Broome has drawn many from their homelands in Strain's work, as in Bernadette Shepherd's maps of country. Shepherd recalls the stories and memories of her country from Wyndham to Balgo and Hall's Creek in minimalist stippled contours contrasted against swirling pools of vivid Kimberley colour. The work becomes a record of memory, people, places and contact akin to a coded photo album. Contributing to this record of country and memory, Ben Houston's photographic landscapes evoke wonder and awe in the majesty of place.

Mapping country and the contested histories of duelling narratives takes a whimsical turn in the hands of ceramicist, Chrissy Carter, who seeks to delight and entertain by creating a wry pastiche for her contribution to *The Alternative Archive: Broome*. Carter's humour is reminiscent of Sydney Nolan or Reg Mombassa, not only in colour and style, but also in an intention to upend any overly serious reckoning in regard to the political disputes over the Lacepede Islands.

Responding to local histories and stories, *The Alternative Archive: Broome* artists have each sought a personal connection that links the past to this moment in time. In sifting through the stories of our place, they have circled the narratives that not only stir them personally, but also in breathing creative life into these chapters of our history, they are reimaged before our eyes in powerful new ways that only art is able to do.

Naomie Hatherley
The Alternative Archive: Broome Co-Curator

Chrissy Carter

Bird Poo Island, a bird's eye view

Ceramic/mixed media



I like to explore many mediums in my art practice. For The Alternative Archive project I have chosen to combine ceramics with oils and watercolour and a bit of glue and other unwieldy stuff.

In the late 1800s, the Lacepede islands, 120km north of Broome on the Dampier peninsula, were taken possession of by the Americans, and an American flag planted there by Charles Robert Baldwin. A political row was sparked and the island reclaimed by the Western Australian government. This incident is known as the Lacepedes incident or the American incident.

The Lacepede islands were heavily mined in the late 1800s for guano or phosphate, (bird poo) for fertiliser, attracting ships from as far



away as the Americas. When the guano ran out in 1879, Blackbirders used the island to hold Aboriginal men and women kidnapped from Beagle Bay and other areas awaited being assigned to certain pearling luggers to be indentured as slaves to dive for pearl shell.

Many vessels were wrecked amongst the islands due to the cyclonic weather conditions in the area.

My work demonstrates the history of the Lacepede islands during the island's guano mining period in the form of a totem.

June Djiagween

Acrylic and ochre on canvas



The works speak of the ongoing pain and ripple effect of grief on June and her people.



June expresses her love for country and ancestral dream stories. She draws her strength and inspirations from all four ancestral tribes deep in her blood with historical stories. From earth, sky, rivers, trees, plants, oceans, islands, animals, spirits, seasons, creation time to connection to country bond by aboriginal sacred laws and culture.

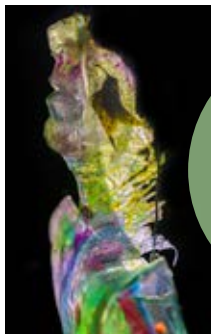
Through three beautiful pieces of artwork June tells several stories. One is of her country and the traditional way her people Bardi-Jawi and Yawuru read the land and its seasons as seen by swarms of jellyfish and the cleansing of the country by monsoonal rains.

The other two pieces depict the horrific history of the slave trade and 'black-birding' and the loss of men, women and children in the colonization of Western Australia and the quest for success in the highly prized pearling industry. As the Australian Aboriginal was considered the oldest living race in the world a new industry was formed in the trade of human remains. In 2019 some of these remains were brought back by their people from Germany to Broome. The pain of this history is such that these stories have rarely been expressed in a visual form, the works speak of the ongoing pain and ripple effect of grief on June and her people.

Jerrilee Bretag

Ngadjayi

Pinkysil oddbod lifecasting silicone rubber to cast. Clear resin. Dried flora and alcohol inks.



I have always enjoyed being creative and exploring new mediums to express myself.



I have always enjoyed being creative and exploring new mediums to express myself. I self taught to Electroform with copper to create unique jewellery pieces and cover intricate objects such as dragonflies, cicadas, scorpions and feathers in copper, to painting, either using my hands or a brush to exploring body moulding and resin work.

Jerrilee explores a contemporary spiritual connection to Riddell Beach as a place for Women's Circles to gather there to mediate, sing and dance at sunset and on the full moons... to explore the feminine connection to place...

The design concept for this art piece was to create a silicone body cast of the upper torso and lower face of a female form.

A clear resin sculpture was layered with dried local flora such as the Mulla Mulla, bird flowers and other environmental elements from Riddell Beach to celebrate women, the feminine, and the female form. Breasts are iconic symbols of the feminine: pregnancy, breastfeeding, and life sustaining. The mouth is represented as closed to symbolise the unspoken word of women's sacred business.

Suzy French

Drift

Drift – Oil on aluminium – Triptych



As I look out across our beautiful Roebuck Bay I always think about people who perished in the Japanese raid on the flying boats in 1942. They were mainly Dutch women and children, the family of servicemen. About 89 souls perished, the historic description of the loss is factual and to the point.

In this work I seek to link an emotion to the catastrophic act of war. These women and children had just arrived, tired, hot, excited. I imagine they would have seen the same beautiful scenery as I see today when I fly the coast, to have landed on the calm waters of Roebuck Bay looking out excitedly across the azure water, did they dip their toes in to feel the cool relief?

It was March, wet season, warm, with lingering humidity.....

'The explosion is reverberating as pain in my ears, I am plunged into darkness, struggling to free myself from fabric and debris, above me the world is burning. Enveloped by the cool waters, the fizz of salty bubbles dance across my skin, the water is taking me deep, lost, my babies...It fills my lungs and stills my heart. I go to my home far across the world, my family, my life and I drift.'

Naomi Hatherley

Keeping Score – Her Rules, Her Game: West Kimberley Football League

Oil on vintage tin score plates



*The players are ghosts
inside the numbers:
lost to AFL history.*

Until recently, little girls were relegated to the sidelines as wistful observers or diehard supporters in the Australian Football League. Women's games had popped up in enthusiastic bursts across the country over the past century to entertain, but not sustain without the backing of the big league. Following a report into women's football, the AFL launched a series of exhibition matches in 2013 to test the water; Women's AFL exploded.

I have never been much of a footy fan, so my fascination with the love of the game comes from an outsider's perspective. The first local women's game I watched, my 17-year-old daughter broke her arm.

That did not deter her. I am inspired by the tenacity, team spirit and support these women share. The future potential of this sport is so promising...

I photograph women's games to render the invisible visible. I paint these images onto vintage tin number plates once used to score regional matches. The players are ghosts inside the numbers: lost to AFL history. Stepping out of the numbers in colour, they are no longer passive observers, but active participants: seen and counted.

The numbers show the growth in WKFL Women players (left) and teams (right) since 2015.

Lachlan 'Lachie' Fraser

A Moment in Time (circa 1910)

Streeter's Jetty and Shell Sorting Shed



Replica Scale Model 1:200



Lachie Fraser decided he had arrived home when he first landed in Broome and found himself captivated by the iconic Australian pioneer-Asian fusion architecture. He has since spent the past thirty years passionately and lovingly restoring many Old Broome buildings: *'My passions all involve this place: history, country, cultures, and working alongside our cultural groups to restore Broome's unique architecture.'*

Lachie began his scaled models 6 years ago he said, to remind people of what was before, how far we have come, and how far we have yet to travel. He spends countless hours consulting with community and researching with the assistance of the Broome Museum in order to create

a true representation of life in Broome a century ago using recycled materials he has collected over the years to ignite thought and encourage investigation.

The scaled model featured in the Alternative Archive exhibition depicts the shell-sorting shed, demolished in 1990. Included in the diorama is the original 1886 version of Streeter's Jetty rebuilt after WWII in 1946 and again in 1999, the push cart rail line that originally travelled from the jetty through to Streeter's store, and a representation of a typically culturally diverse work crew of the day, including enslaved labourers.

Gary Smith

Diving for pearl
Carved Pearl Shell



Broome born, I am a local Aboriginal person descending from the Bardi people of One Arm Point north of Broome and a descendant of the well-known, notorious Harry Hunter.

Self taught I began carving Pearl Shell and Trochus Shell five years ago giving my earlier carvings away as gifts.

Inspiration for most of my work comes from my love of the ocean and wildlife, taking every opportunity to be one with nature. Mostly on the reefs or tidal flats.

My entry in the Alternative Archive Exhibition was inspired by a little known part of Pearling history,

Blackbirding: Local Aboriginal people were forcibly gathered by horseback or lugger, chained together, and either forced or tricked into diving for Pearl Shell. They were forced to do this without breathing equipment, and often without clothing, in treacherous conditions.

Many died through drowning due to the depth of the water, and being forced to continuously dive until they surfaced with a Pearl Shell or sand to prove they reached the bottom. Pregnant women were favoured because they believed they could dive deeper as their lung capacity was greater.

This part of history is special to me as my Great Great Grandfather Harry Hunter was at times Blackbirding himself.

Ben Houston

Where the Desert Meets the Sea

Capturing aerial landscapes - Photography on rag cotton archival paper



Ben Houston has been in Broome for five years. Houston graduated from the reputable CIT Photography studios in Canberra in 2015 and headed to Broome to ply his craft.

"I didn't quite know what to expect when I arrived in Broome. I wasn't disappointed, I was impressed with the amazing quality of the landscape in the area, beautiful and surreal textures, lines and colours, it was a marriage made in heaven for me and my love of 'birds eye view', top down imagery.

I'm totally amazed and respectful of the Aboriginal stories that are told on the sacred land below, Yawuru land. I consider myself extremely fortunate to live in Broome and document the magic Broome coastline."

The Kimberley Coastline is one of the rarest and unique aerial sites on the planet. Where the desert meets the sea.

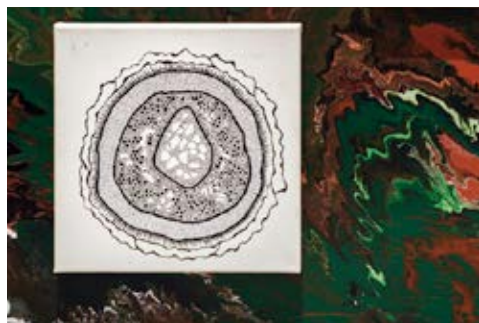
Ben Houston's series for the Alternate Archive Exhibition documents the land, the colours in this time, the here and now in 2019.



Bernie Shepherd

A little bit more about me coming home really

Collage, Pen and acrylic on canvas



*I love Wyndham.
Wyndham is home,
and Balgo is country to me.
My heart lies in Wyndham,
I grew up in Wyndham
My mother's country is Balgo.
I have a strong spiritual connection
to Balgo country.*

Bernie realised recently she had not been back to her hometown of Wyndham for 25 years. In the intervening time she had lived all over; Bidadanga, Muludja, Lake King, Pannawonica, Karratha, and now Broome. Sadly, Bernie lost her sister when she was only 23 to leukaemia. So, when in 2016 her Sister's son suicided at 22 years of age, she felt the need to be home again. It was one of the main reasons I wanted to come home to the Kimberley. [This artwork] is very emotional for me.

Going back to Balgo for a funeral a few years ago was a really spiritual experience. Getting greeted by family was overwhelming. We were shown around on country. We looked out over a valley from these ranges - it was so beautiful. It was a very spiritual experience; it felt like I came home. The old people gave my first granddaughter a bush name, which was very special. Being given a bush name by our elder Ruby Darky, the oldest elder in our family in Balgo was emotional. This experience motivated me to paint the crater. This is where our ancestors roamed.

Rowena Strain

From the Ends of the Earth

Ceramic, maiolica, photo transfer and lustre glazes on maps



Rowena Strain is a potter in Broome who creates functional ware decorated with maiolica paintings of local plants. For this exhibition, she looked at the origins of the diverse Catholic community in Broome. A table laid with maps of the world holds a series of bowls each representing Catholics who call Broome home.

The Sisters from Kenya who are fairly recent arrivals in Broome, the three generation Family in Mission from Rome, the Stolen Generation Jaru woman who raised her large family in Broome, my friend's Spaniard father and Nyul Nyul mother and more.

The design of each bowl was developed in discussion with the people, showing images of them and what is important to them about the home they left. Each bowl has a story to tell and, together, on their table of maps they represent the Broome Catholic community gathered in the cathedral each week.

The glaze techniques she has used include maiolica, photo transfer and lustre.

STATEMENT FROM THE MUSEUM

The Broome Historical Society has been the keeper of Broome's history for over forty years. Founded by a group of Broome locals who were concerned that the town's history was disappearing, the Society has been pivotal in ensuring that Broome's heritage and history remains relevant to the Broome of today.

The Broome Historical Society's collection includes items of national significance and the museum attracts over 20,000 visitors each year, making it one of the most popular regional museums in Western Australia.

The Sailmaker's Shed, an outbuilding of the Museum precinct, was built by Charles Bagge, a Swedish sailmaker who owned the shed for about 20 years. Bagge manufactured lugger sails during the golden age of pearling, when Broome was supplying over 80% of the world's mother of pearl shell. By 1917 Bagge's eyesight had started to fail and he could no longer focus on the fine stitching that was a requirement of his trade. He eventually went fully blind, and had to leave Broome for the Blind Institute of WA in Perth.

The Western Australian Government acquired the shed in 1922 and the building was used for storage for decades. By December 2008 the once busy Sailmaker's Shed was deemed beyond repair and officially condemned as a dangerous building. Broome Historical Society members rallied and petitioned for the preservation of the shed, and after years of fundraising was finally able to start work. Local builders were engaged and the shed was restored in keeping with its heritage values, and was awarded the UNESCO Honourable Mention in 2013 and a WA Heritage Award in 2016.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Photographer	Kevin Smith
Photographer Mentee	Joanna Cypra
Musician	Steve Angoorly

The Broome Historical Society

The Broome Museum	Kylie Jennings
The Alternative Archive Artists, their friends and families	

We respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which this exhibition has taken place, the Yawuru people.

We pay our respects to the elders past, present and emerging.

