

ARTBACK NT  
PRESENTS

# WE EAT WE ARE

A SPARK NT EXHIBITION  
CURATED BY SARAH PIRRIE

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Out of the Bag

6

Tea Tales

6

DINING LOCATIONS

Godinymayin Yijard Rivers  
Arts and Culture Centre

Katherine,  
Northern Territory  
  
21 September – 26 October 2019  
[gyracc.org.au](http://gyracc.org.au)

Araluen Arts Centre

Alice Springs,  
Northern Territory  
  
14 March – 26 April 2020  
[araluenartscentre.nt.gov.au](http://araluenartscentre.nt.gov.au)

Northern Centre for  
Contemporary Art

Darwin,  
Northern Territory  
  
1 May – 31 May 2020  
[nccart.com.au](http://nccart.com.au)

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DIGESTIVE

EAT  
ARE

The cursory labels of visitor, citizen or traditional owner are redrawn here as broad, shared, participatory identifiers such as shoppers, harvesters, makers and preservers. Personal and collective food journeys and the translation of cultural and social identifiers comprise the key thematic ingredients of *We Eat We Are*.

DEGUSTATION MENU

*At a dining table, chicken feet divide my friends. They are often, jokingly, used as a test of bravery, a hurdle to qualify 'Chinese-ness'.*

Siying Zhou, 2018

Artist **Siying Zhou** alludes to the multivalent properties of identifiers in her artwork *Sux My Exotic Fingers*. Chicken feet are an iconic item on the Chinese menu both loved by and repellent to many Australian palates. As a nationally recognised cuisine Zhou questions its fluctuating status as she moves from Chinese to Australian citizen. For Zhou, eating is not simply the act of nourishment – what and how we eat reveals much about who we are and who we would like to be.

## DINING L

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### ENTRÉE

*We Eat We Are* celebrates food as a form of social sculpture that unites, nourishes and renews. The lives we live through food define our imaginary, making sense of our desires, ideals and practices as a society.<sup>i</sup> Often hidden in plain sight, these are the spaces and time-valued traditions that gurgle in a pot or ripen in the sun. When we eat, we consume glocally: linking into the global and local food webs while revelling in our own sense of place. Seasonal rhythms, generational knowledge and sensory memories flavour expectations of what it is to live in the Northern Territory. As we eat we embrace the unexpected and the familiar, and plot a vision for our future selves. Do we go out fishing or take a trip to the Woolies deli section? Eat salty plums<sup>ii</sup> made from time honoured Asian recipes or eat the wild harvested super food, Kakadu plum?<sup>iii</sup> Through our anticipation of taste, ingredients and availability, we creatively imagine and invest in our future identity and wellbeing.

The gastronomically attuned artists in this exhibition represent a small cross-section of the Northern Territory's Top End society echoing cultural diversity and embracing a multiplicity of practices.

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### DEGUSTATION MENU

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*Day by day, we can choose the food or we can be obsessed with the food ... we absorb it and reflect upon what feeds us through our daily life.*

Bao Vi Truong, 2019

Bao Vi Truong has allied the physical, spiritual and emotional in her triptych *What is food?* Referencing Vietnamese Hàng Trống folk painting and Western altarpieces, iconic 'gods' and 'goddesses' are constituted from the Darwin familiars – Masked Plover, Agile Wallaby and Saltwater Crocodile. Truong's experience of Darwin as an international student has informed her insightful observations and interpretations. The Plover embodying parental devotion represents the soul of Darwin, the Wallaby, surrounded by physical food 'servants', is the everyday, while the ruff collared Crocodile goddess, straddling both land and water, nurtures our emotional selves through religious ritual and sacred stories.

*My mum cooks the food that grandma taught her ... [you] can feel the hard work and love they put into the dish when you eat ... it's like a hug every time I eat their food.*

Christine Joy Barzaga, 2019

Artist Christine Joy Barzaga's collection of graphic paintings and animations are devoted to what she loves and knows best – the dynamics of Filipino food culture and family life. Barzaga cooks up her food stories drawing on the forms and

norms of Filipino culture to create a fusion that pays attention to both her rich family heritage and her individual everyday self. Fuelled by humour and generosity and peppered with miscommunication, exuberant Boodle fights and recipes known by heart, Barzaga celebrates the colour, chaos and delights of giving as much as you get on the food frontier.

*Balanyaramirr gunhi garra miny'tji-yarpum gatha malanya gunhi madayin'miriw, yan gäna gatha malanya wakiyu ganapurrurü Yolguw yuṯa miny'tji garrakuway. Once I started painting food plants without reference to their sacred identity, I had to find a new way to paint.<sup>iv</sup>*

Mulkun Wirrpanda, 2018

Mulkun Wirrpanda's food memory takes her back to her childhood of living and thriving on the Yolgu floodplains estate between the Koolatong and Baykultji Rivers known as Matarawatj. Mulkun is a senior female artist of the Dhuḍi-Djapu clan from Dhuruputjpi. Her shared botanical knowledge of edible and medicinal plants recognises the importance of native food sources for environmental sustainability. Mulkun's vast knowledge of plant ecology, reflects an abundant home and habitat, rich with edible tubers, shrubs, vines and grasses. Living off the land and seascapes is governed and guided by a flexible yet structured Indigenous Knowledge Systems.<sup>v</sup>

Christine Joy Barzaga,  
*Kainan Na: Let's Eat Until Our Bellies Are Full*,  
2018, watercolour, ink, pencil  
on Arches paper, 21 x 32cm.  
Collection of the artist.  
Photographed by Fiona Morrison.







*When we go out on country  
for hunting, I take family  
- my daughter, my girls, I  
go out with my aunties too,  
grandchildren too, developing  
future generations, especially  
Sophia, showing her how to go  
hunting and collect mud mussels.  
When I sit with my daughter,  
especially as she's a young  
one, I tell her stories, about  
how important bush tucker is.  
It's also a good medicine, how  
important it is, I tell stories.*

Michelle Woody, 2019

For Tiwi artists **Kaye Brown, Raelene Lampuwatu Kerinauia, Janice Pungautiji Murray** and **Michelle Woody** collecting, feasting and creating is fundamental to coastal living. Memories of a day out on Melville Island, collecting shellfish at Milikapiti, are infused with visceral experiences of texture, sound and colour. Crackling dry leaves underfoot precede plunging through wet mud to harvest Jukwarringa (Mud Mussels) and Piranga (Long Bum) from mangroves at Murkunarimi. Forested mangroves are exchanged for glistening shorelines, seabirds and the lapping tides of Timrambu, where families eat local Mirnangini (Cockles) and fossick for Mirninguwuni or Piliwuni (Oysters). Collected shellfish are incorporated into a prepared lunch of salads, damper and tea. Home and host, these coastlines are a popular family destination infused with laughing children and neighbourly chatter. The charred remains of coastal mud mussel feasts are decorated with bold designs. Hold a painted Jukwarringa in your hand and you will sense the liveliness of saltwater people.

*The food we eat and how we  
eat it are tightly intertwined  
and define identity in an  
ever-changing society.*

Emma Lupin, 2019

Emma Lupin's photographic series *It's in our Hands* charts the complexity of choice through the migration of food from a raw, endemic source to processed product. As an environmental scientist, horticulturalist and artist, Lupin considers the food chain and the choices available to us through time and place. The ethno-pharmacological importance of native and naturalised foods are challenged by extraction and processing to create artificial foods, vitamins and minerals that have seemingly no origin or source. Fast or slow food, whole or supplemented, *It's in our Hands* contrasts the edible history and the food future that metaphorically lies in our hands.

From the photographic series ***It's in our Hands***, clockwise from top left:

Emma Lupin  
**Kakadu Plums in Hands**  
2019, digital print on paper, 90 x 60cm.  
Collection of the artist.

Emma Lupin  
**Rosellas in Hands**  
2019, digital print on paper, 90 x 60cm.  
Collection of the artist.

Emma Lupin  
**Water Lilies in Hands**  
2019, digital print on paper, 90 x 60cm.  
Collection of the artist.

Emma Lupin  
**Chillies in Hands**  
2019, digital print on paper, 90 x 60cm.  
Collection of the artist.



SHARE PLATES

As part of a 2014 Darwin Festival cross cultural exchange project the *Temporary Territory* team<sup>vi</sup> created **Indonesian food stalls**. Banners were made and purpose fitted to Darwin bus shelters. Disguised as **Warung Street Stalls**, the signage denoting these transformative sites replaced menu images of Indonesian produce with local fare of Magpie Geese, Crocodiles, Bats and Barra (Barramundi). Tools of translation and transplantation, the banners effectively replicated the act of recipe migration exercised through choice and adaption of ingredients. In homage to Warung and in the spirit of communal sharing and exchange, *We Eat We Are* incorporates a **Story Larder** where audience members are invited to participate in communal activities that contribute to an ever expanding visual and verbal foodie narrative as the exhibition travels from place to place.

**Out of the Bag** purposely begins in Katherine, a natural place of convergence. This 'Crossroads of the North' is a meeting place for trade and supplies, where 'big shops' centre around the town's large supermarket. In our increasingly environmentally conscious times, single-use plastic bags are being abandoned in favour of the humble shopping bag, elevating it as a signifier of eco-conscious consumption and aesthetic delight. There is a renewed appreciation for the skill and artistry of hand woven and dyed dilly bags and the cultural practices connected to them. *We Eat We Are* invites audiences to contribute examples of loved and appreciated shopping bags and to reminisce on the goods so often gathered within. In Alice Springs, audiences are invited

to create ceramic bowls and cups to contribute **Tea Tales** to the Story Larder, capturing the spirit of sitting and sharing favourite recipes and food stories while engaged in communal activity.

Exhibiting artists in *We Eat We Are* exist within an osmotic multicultural membrane, creating work that infuses local and global inferences, embedded in an intimate understanding of the relational experience of food. They are diverse in their creativity and live different lives, but each provides an essential ingredient of the Northern Territory's past, present and future socio-cultural ecology.

Sarah Pirrie, SPARK NT Curator

<sup>i</sup> Taylor, C. 2004. *Modern social imaginaries*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. For Taylor, a social imaginary describes 'the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations' p 23

<sup>ii</sup> Rawlinson, C., 2012. *The Salty plums experiment*, ABC Radio Darwin, viewed 19/5/2019 <http://www.abc.net.au/local/videos/2012/06/01/3516374.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> Garrick, M., 2018. *Kakadu plum plan aims to take a bite out of lucrative global medicine industry*, ABC News, viewed 25/5/2019 <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-11-21/kakadu-plum-plan-aiming-bite-lucrative-global-medicine-industry/10516544>

<sup>iv</sup> Mulkun Wirrpanda' MIqawarr/Harvest The Art of Mulkun Wirrpanda and John Wolseley' 2018 National Museum of Australia.

<sup>v</sup> Morphy, H., & Morphy, F. (2006). Tasting the Waters: Discriminating Identities in the Waters of Blue Mud Bay. *Journal of Material Culture*, 11(1-2), 67-85. doi:10.1177/1359183506063012

<sup>vi</sup> The Temporary Territory team consisted of artist Simon Cooper, Sarah Pirrie (Darwin); MG Pinggontono, Sales Husein (Jakarta) and was a 2014 Darwin Festival reciprocal exchange project with Jakarta-based arts collective ruangrupa

Top:  
Jukwarringa (Mud Mussels) painted by Kaye Brown, Raelene Lampuwatu Kerinauia, Janice Pungautiji Murray and Michelle Woody, 2018, earth pigment on shell. Photographed by Fiona Morrison

Bottom:  
Raelene Lampuwatu Kerinauia and Michelle Woody painting Jilamara on Jukwarringa (Mud Mussel) at Timrambu, Melville Island, Tiwi, 2018. Photographed by Sarah Pirrie





DIGESTIVE

Sarah Pirrie

I would like to thank the artists, arts centres and the many people and organisations who have supported me in the development and delivery of this exhibition. I would especially like to acknowledge Jo Foster, Artback NT for her creative wisdom, Dr Wendy Garden, Curator of Australian Art, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory for her industry knowledge and support and Peter Dowling, Charles Darwin University for his willing technical support. Finally, I would like to thank the generous hospitality of the Tiwi artists Kaye, Michelle, Raelene and Janice and their families during my visit to Milikapiti.

**Artback NT** is the Northern Territory’s visual and performing arts development and touring agency. Our Visual Arts Program collaborates with artists, curators, organisations and communities throughout the Territory to co-create and co-present touring exhibition projects which showcase the unique talents and perspectives of the region. We tour Northern Territory generated exhibitions to remote, regional and metropolitan galleries, sharing quality visual arts experiences with diverse audiences across the country.

**SPARK NT Curator Program** is an Artback NT initiative that responds to an identified gap in Northern Territory curatorial pathways. The annual SPARK NT Curator Program, launched in 2017, supports an independent or emerging curator, residing in the Northern Territory, to develop an exhibition project for tour. SPARK NT is designed to foster critical thinking in art and curatorial practice within the Territory and provide Northern Territory artists with opportunities to showcase their work within a curated touring exhibition.

Gallery Partners

Artback NT has partnered with regional galleries in the Northern Territory to support the SPARK NT Curator Program. Gallery partners are engaged in the development of guidelines, assessing the applications and are committed to hosting SPARK NT touring exhibitions in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

COLOPHON

Artback NT

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We Eat We Are

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Inside Cover Image: Christine Joy Barzaga, **Boodle Fight** (watermark detail), 2018, watercolour, ink, pencil on Arches paper, 32.5 x 29cm. Collection of the artist.



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Featuring a diverse range of Top End artists, working across a variety of mediums, *We Eat We Are* explores the relational experience of food that binds, defines and maps our social and cultural exchanges and perspectives.

Food for thought as well as food for the soul, this vibrant exhibition intrigues and delights.



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**Connecting people and place  
through arts development and touring**

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