

UPPER SECONDARY - EXHIBITION REVIEW

Activity Sheet 1

Djalkiri: we are standing on their names - Blue Mud Bay

The idea for this project was to bring a group of artists, scientists and print makers from different cultures together, to think about Western science and knowledge within the holistic perspective of Yolngu people.

Yolngu belief and knowledge is contained within songs, stories, ritual and art. Paintings are like maps depicting living things and earthly elements. All have meaning and are based on knowledge and relationships. This is expressed through the *Djalkiri*, literally meaning *foot or footprints*, but when applied to Yolgnu law it takes on a more profound meaning referring to the underlying *foundation of the world*. The title, *Djalkiri: We are standing on their names - Blue Mud Bay* comes from words spoken by Djambawa Marawili. It is about walking together in the footsteps of the ancestors.

- Exercise 1** Consider the above statement. Choose two works, one by a Yolngu artists and one by a visiting artist. How do the works differ? How are they similar?
- Exercise 2** John Wolseley has titled his work *Sea Wrack: Tide After Tide – Baniyala*. What do you think the title refers to? How does it explain the work?
- Exercise 3** List all the animal and plant species you can find in the exhibition, or which are referred to in the descriptions. Some may be hidden or just fragments. Write down the names you know. If you are unsure of the name write a description or make a drawing of the plant or animal. Discuss your findings with the class.
- Exercise 4** Make drawings of your favourite works. Make notes about techniques and colours used. Think about your own environment and how you might create an artwork which responds to your daily surroundings.
- Exercise 5** Having thought about the *Djalkiri* project what roles do you think each of the following have played in the presentation and interpretation of this exhibition?
- the gallery
 - the curator
 - the ethno botanist
 - the anthropologist
 - the print maker, the artist and
 - yourself, as viewer
- Write a paragraph about the parts played by each of these exhibition participants. What do you think is the role of art galleries in showing contemporary culture?
- Exercise 6**
- Research
- Look around the exhibition; spend time reading, looking and talking about the artworks. Make notes and drawings on the following:
- the title of the exhibition
 - where the artists come from
 - what the artists have in common
 - how the artists are different
 - the techniques and materials they used
 - your favourite work.
- Exhibition report
- Research the art from Arnhem Land back in the class room.
 - Find out about at least one of the visiting artists.
 - Compare works by a Yolngu (Arnhem Land) artist and a visiting artist.

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Activity Sheet 2a

Look around the exhibition. Discuss the artworks with your friends. Write down any questions you may have. When you have had a good look around, sit down together as a group in the exhibition space. Read the following artist's statements. Talk about the exhibition. Ask the questions you have written down.

Judy Watson

When the red flowers appear on the kurrajong, the mud crabs have good flesh on them

We ate the crabs and fish, tasted buffalo stew, heard the buffalo snuffling around our camp

People danced and welcomed us with blue flags and great ceremony

Our camp is in an open area where the stingray came in and bit the ground in different places. The eyes of the stingray are waterholes where freshwater bubbles up out of the ground.

Boat/sails/prau, the dreaming Macassans

"We had those designs", said an old man

Wangarr – ancestral presence in the country, in the land

Past, present, future

Djalkirri - strong spirit places

Different currents that go under and over each other

mungurru – great current

Waters – shared between the clans

Baru, crocodile, diamond, fire

Mäna the shark came inland up the river from the sea

Casuarina, Wangupini, the cloud of this tree

That arises in the sea

We sing about this tree

11 clans in the map of Blue Mud Bay, different dialects

Matthew Flinders met a captain of the Macassan fleet who had exchanged names, Pobasso with Yolgnu – Wirrpanda

Garrangali the name of the band, is the crocodiles' nest, a jungle area on the floodplain

Garrangari, the flood plain

Djambawa: I am still living and surviving with all those stories

The sand is still alive

The shape is still alive

The stories is still alive

Blue – sea

White – cloud

Invisibility

Djambawa Marawili

I want to talk about that day when the artists got together. Manymak, it was good. It was really good for us the Yolgnu people. We learned very much from them. The techniques they were using to show us, and the Balanda (white persons) way of doing art. For us we were learning from them. And the others, those people who were working with us the Ngäpaki (foreigners) have learned from us, how we make the patterns, careful and tight. We told them and we showed them that this country has the stories. And those stories were there from beyond, from our ancestors to us, our grandfathers to our fathers and to us.

When those Ngäpaki artists were walking around in that country, they were walking about the land, but the patterns and the designs are beneath, they come from our ancestors. The way we were working together was really important because we were looking from both worlds, the Balanda world, the Balanda way of significance in how to describe and how to paint it and how to make those pictures real, those paintings of country, with substance, with story, with meaning.

We did the same thing too. We gather the information we made it really happen in a partnership. We were both working together to show ourselves that we are both artists in the Balanda world and also in the Yolgnu world. And it was really important.

So that is what I felt on that day. And the other artists were feeling the same thing too. It was a good team. We were learning together and having a good partnership. Working together to lift the art from the country to make it really strong. It was really important for us to be working at the foundation. It was Djalkiripuynyu (people from the foundation, footprint people), made it really strong, the relationship with those artists and that is really important to me. Thank you.

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Activity Sheet 2b

John Wolseley

Since the early days of European settlement there has been a tradition of heavy-footed artists drawing and documenting parts of the continent about which they know little. As for myself, when I arrived at Banyala I was just plainly discombobulated! Here I was with Yolgnu artists of such distinction and with such brilliant ways of expressing in paint their vast knowledge about the place that I thought - goodness me - I'm starting from scratch here! In these etchings I may have found a way of making ignorance a virtue - or even a valid stratagem for drawing. There I was on the edge of the sea with a blank unmarked etching plate and an empty mind. At least a mind 'trying' to be empty. I watched the ebb and flow of the waves and how sometimes the energy and openness of the sea would deposit some leaf or coral to add to the random scatterings at my feet. As I drew each fragment, carefully mimicking the placement of each one as it rested on the sand, I was fascinated by the idea that there was a hidden order in the pattern of disparate objects as they rested on the sand.

Djambawa told me that a mangrove leaf (Aegialitis annulata) with an odd resemblance to a sting ray was used by children at play when they are re-enacting the mythic stories about a giant ray which created some of the landforms of Banyala. Glenn then identified some little water chestnut corms as Biviya, (Eleocharis spacelata). Sprouting from these important edible corms are the slender leaves which figure in the marvellous paintings of the Garangalli flood plains by Mulkan Wirrpanda. Howard then told me that a feather I had found was that of a Brolga, and how those magnificent birds play a significant role in the great creation stories about Garangalli. And then Glenn said that Brolgas feast on these Biviya. When I showed him a Koel feather which blew away before I could put in my etching he said they say here that when the Koel sings it is ripening the black Plums (Vitex Glabratus).

Marrnyula Mununggurr

In October 2009 I had a trip to Yilpara with other artists Fiona Hall, Judy Watson, John Wolseley and Jorg Schmeisser. We worked with Marrirra Marawili, Djambawa Marawili, Liyavaday Wirrpanda and Mulkan Wirrpanda.

Basil Hall came along to help with the printing process. He took the images back to his studio for printing in Darwin. Winsome Jobling made the paper for the Bawu to go on to the print.

Ethno-biologist Glenn Wightman and anthropologist Howard Morphy were also part of this group. Rose and Angus from Nomad Art organised the workshop. Peter Eve took photos of the workshop and Yilpara. The next day we were sitting under the tamarind tree and Djambawa was telling us a story about Yilpara and the sea rights ceremony. He told us about the flag.

That night I dreamt about the Bawu and then asked Marrirra and Djambawa if I could paint my mother's design. I got the permission from them and this is the story for my print.

Bawu represents the sailing cloth. It is the Madarrpa and Mangalili clan design. The design in the middle is Bawu. On the top the white represents the clouds and the blue represents the water.

The lines around Bawu represent the saltwater-Mungurru connected to Yilpara and Djarrakpi homelands. This is my first painting from my mother clan. It tells the story of sea rights. The ceremony for sea rights at Yilpara had this flag situated in the sea connecting clouds and water.