

TarraWarra Biennial 2014: *Whisper in My Mask*

16 August – 16 November 2014



Image: Tony Garifalakis, *The Hills Have Eyes* (detail) 2012, fabric collage, 170 x 130 cm. Courtesy of the artist

The TarraWarra Biennial 2014: *Whisper in My Mask*, curated by Natalie King and Djon Mundine, is the fourth iteration of a signature event on the national exhibition calendar.

Inaugurated in 2006 to identify new developments in contemporary art practice, the TarraWarra Biennial invites artists to present their work at the unique TarraWarra Museum of Art, located in the spectacular Yarra Valley one hour from Melbourne. The Biennial highlights pivotal aspects of Australian practice under an experimental curatorial platform.

Featuring recent and specially commissioned works by more than 20 of Australia's most vital contemporary Aboriginal and non-Indigenous artists, and taking a line from the evocative song 'Art Groupie' (1981) by singer Grace Jones, the title of this year's Biennial, *Whisper in my Mask*, signals a wide-ranging exploration of masking.

Love me in a picture, Kiss me in a cast, Touch me in a sculpture, Whisper in my mask.
'Art Groupie', Grace Jones, 1981.

In a selection of works that elicit an emotional and sensory response, the Biennial explores the mask's multifarious forms and functions and the ways in which it both reveals and conceals personas: to protect, beautify, frighten or pacify, universalise or eternalise, and intensify and amplify expression.

Disguise manifests as trace, inscription, erasure, secrets, camouflage, whisperings, dreamings and subterfuge. These ideas will infiltrate the Biennial as a series of trigger points by incorporating a range of artworks including sound, video, performance and participatory installation by cross-generational Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists.

The curators have undertaken extensive research and field work to cities and remote communities in order to select Aboriginal and non-indigenous artists working across diverse media. Having worked at Ramingining and Maningrida, Djon Mundine has extensive networks in rural communities as well as affiliations with emerging and established artists in various cities. This significant experience has been deployed alongside Natalie King's expertise in photography and moving image practices to ensure a ground-breaking Biennial. Together, their collaborative curatorial methodology interrogates the work of lesser-known artists alongside those who are more established.

The participating artists include: boat-people*(NSW), Daniel Boyd (NSW), Søren Dahlgaard (VIC), Destiny Deacon & Virginia Fraser (VIC), Karla Dickens (NSW), Fiona Foley (QLD), Tony Garifalakis (VIC), Sandra Hill (WA), Gabriella Mangano and Silvana Mangano (VIC), Romaine Moreton (VIC), Nasim Nasr (SA), Polixeni Papapetrou (VIC), Elizabeth Pedler (WA), Sangeeta Sandrasegar (VIC), The Telepathy Project (Veronica Kent and Sean Peoples) (VIC) and The Tjanpi Desert Weavers Project with Fiona Hall (SA/NT/WA).

TarraWarra Museum of Art Director, Victoria Lynn, says, "This year's Biennial features both timely political gestures about the masking of history as well as a more mysterious interest in hidden personas, ghosts and telepathy. Featuring performances, talks and events, the exhibition also embraces a broad sense of community that encompasses not only the local Yarra Valley but also the significant Indigenous communities across Australia."

Highlights include the specially commissioned work of the Tjanpi Desert Weavers with the Australian Venice Biennale 2015 representative Fiona Hall; The Telepathy Project which involves a town meeting at the Healesville Hotel, a libretto for TarraWarra's lake, a project about dreams, and a library; and 3,500 litres of beanbag beans for the participatory installation by emerging Western Australian artist Elizabeth Pedler.

On August 16, timed to coincide with the Biennial's official partner, Melbourne Art Fair, (13 - 17 of August, at the Royal Exhibition Building), the Museum will present the premiere of the play 'Weavings and Whispers: *Miwi* wisdom', written especially for the Biennial by Prof. Diane Bell, and performed by members of the Ngarrindjeri Weavers, followed by an audience discussion, along with a range of talks given by the exhibition artists throughout the day.

On October 19 the Museum will hold a special day of events curated for Melbourne Festival, *Whisper in My Mask: A day in the valley*, featuring Søren Dahlgaard; The Telepathy Project libretto *Reading Solaris to the Great Moorool*; artists of the TarraWarra Biennial 2014 in conversation with curator Natalie King; poetry readings by Romaine Moreton and *A Special Conversation*: Henry Reynolds, Djon Mundine & Fiona Foley.

*boat-people - (Safdar Ahmed, Zehra Ahmed, Stephanie Carrick, Dave Gravina, Katie Hepworth, Jiann Hughes, Deborah Kelly, Enda Murray, Pip Shea, Sumugan Sivanesan, Jamil Yamani)

Curator Biographies:

Djon Mundine OAM is a member of Bundjalung people of northern NSW. He has an extensive career as a curator, activist, writer, and occasional artist. Mundine has been involved in the visual arts since the late 1970s, working as Art Advisor at Milingimbi, Maningrida and Ramingining in the Northern Territory from 1979–95, with the majority of this time spent at Ramingining (1983–95), a small community in Central Arnhem Land located around 400 kilometres east of Darwin. While at Ramingining, Mundine initiated *The Aboriginal Memorial* (1987–88), a significant installation of 200 hollow log coffins or poles now held in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra. In 1995, his last year at Ramingining, Mundine was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his services to the visual arts. Since that time he has worked as a curator and academic while he continues to be involved in collaborative art projects.

In 2005–06 he undertook a residency at the National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku) in Osaka, Japan as a Research Professor in the Department of Social Research, prior to which he was Senior Consultant and Curator of Indigenous Art at the Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. He has taught at the National Art School, Canberra and has held curatorial positions at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. More recently, he was Indigenous Curator – Contemporary Art at the Campbelltown Art Centre where he mounted the *Sunshine State – Smart State* and *More Than My Skin* exhibitions. He is currently a PhD candidate at College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales.

Natalie King is a Melbourne-based curator, writer, editor and Senior Research Fellow, Victorian College of the Arts, University of Melbourne. Formerly, she was the Director of Utopia, a pan-Asian incubator at Asialink. She has curated exhibitions for numerous museums including the Singapore Art Museum, National Museum of Art, Osaka, Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tjibaou Cultural Centre, New Caledonia and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney. King is co-editor of the anthology *Art in the Asia Pacific: Intimate Publics*, Routledge, 2014 with Larissa Hjorth (RMIT) and Mami Kataoka (Mori Art Museum). She has conducted interviews with Ai Wei Wei, Candice Breitz, Joseph Kosuth, Massimiliano Gioni, Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Tacita Dean, Hiroshi Sugimoto, Bill Henson, Jitish Kallat, Hou Hanru, Kathy Temin and Cai Guo-Qiang amongst others. King is on the editorial board of *Art and Australia* and a correspondent for *Flash Art International* as well as a contributor to *Artlink*, *Eyeline*, *LEAP* (China), *Art Monthly* and *Art Asia Pacific*.

She was the curator and editor of *Up Close: Carol Jerrems with Larry Clark, Nan Goldin and William Young* at Heide Museum of Modern Art, 2010, part of the Melbourne Festival, as a recipient of an Australia Council grant. Formerly, she was the visual arts reporter for ABC radio. She is the co-author of a Thames & Hudson monograph on Chinese/Australian painter, Guan Wei, with Hou Hanru. In April 2013, King co-convened with Victoria Lynn, a Curatorial Lab with renowned biennial curator Hou Hanru, as well as a public “in conversation”. She also conducted a workshop at Lalit Kala Akademi, New Delhi with Raqs Media Collective. In 2014, she will co-curate the 13th International Photo Festival at the Dong Gang Museum of Photography, Korea.

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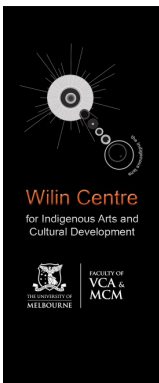
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