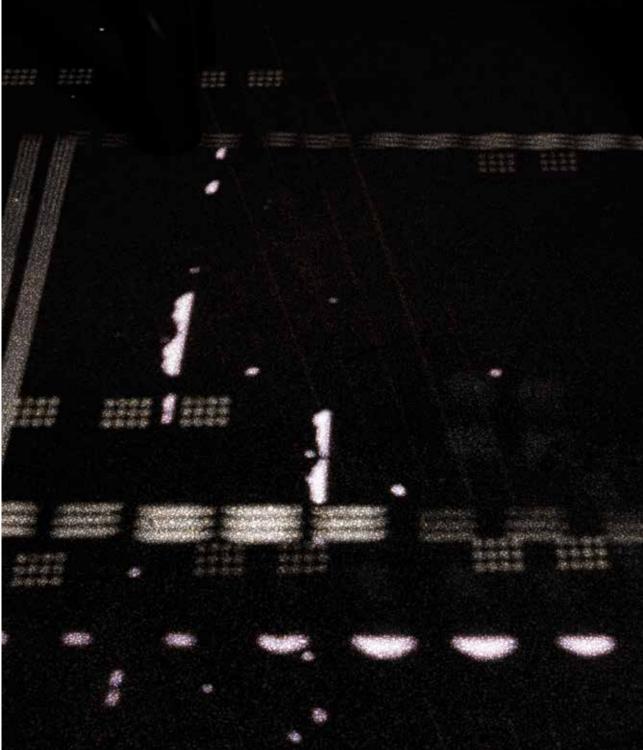
Yhonnie Scarce Missile Park



Yhonnie Scarce Missile Park

Curators: Max Delany, Liz Nowell, Lisa Waup

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art 27 March–14 June 2021

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Foreword

Australian Centre for Contemporary Art and the Institute of Modern Art are delighted to present *Yhonnie Scarce: Missile Park*, the first survey of the artist's practice, drawing upon selected works over the past fifteen years alongside an ambitious newly commissioned installation.

Yhonnie Scarce is an artist known for sculptural installations which span architecturally scaled public art projects to intimately scaled assemblages, replete with personal and cultural histories. Yhonnie is a master glass-blower, which she puts to the service of spectacular and spectral installations full of aesthetic, cultural and political significance. Her work also engages the photographic archive and found objects to explore the impact and legacies of colonial and family histories and memory.

Born in Woomera, South Australia, and belonging to the Kokatha and Nukunu peoples, Yhonnie's work places family at the centre of her practice and draws on the experience and strength of her ancestors. Bringing hidden histories to light, Yhonnie's work is underpinned by extensive and in-depth research that explores the impact of nuclear testing, the displacement and relocation of Aboriginal people from their homelands, and the forcible removal of Aboriginal children from their families.

Across her fifteen-year practice, Yhonnie also consistently engaged with the disciplinary forms of colonial institutions and representation – religion, ethnography, medical science, museology, taxonomy – as well as monumental and memorial forms of public art and remembrance. Her work is both autobiographical and ancestral, ensuring that her family are never forgotten or lost within the labyrinthine administration of the colonial archive.

It has been a great privilege and an especially rewarding experience to work with Yhonnie on the development of this significant survey exhibition and monographic publication. As a curatorial team, together with associate curator Lisa Waup, Yhonnie invited us to accompany her on a road trip to remote South Australia, on an extended research trip to explore the rich family, social, cultural and global histories that inform her work. It was the trip of a lifetime. We traversed sites of significant cultural and political consequence over desert and coastal landscapes; visited Indigenous communities, extended families and ancestors; and traced colonial histories and global defence infrastructure.

We would like to thank Yhonnie for this incredible privilege and her generosity of spirit. It has been an enormous pleasure and honour to work and travel

together and to share such rich conversations and experiences which have profoundly informed our project. It has been an equal pleasure to work with artist Lisa Waup as collaborating curator on this project, to whom we extend our appreciation and gratitude for her insights and advice, warm companionship and astute contributions to the exhibition and publication.

Alongside Lisa, we are especially honoured to present the writing and reflections of an eminent group of contributors to the publication, including Daniel Browning, Natalie Harkin, Louis Anderson Mokak and Hannah Presley. We thank them for their thoughtful intellectual and emotional engagement across interconnected fields of poetry and politics, culture and family.

An exhibition of this scope would not be possible without the significant support of lenders, donors and philanthropic partners. We are especially grateful to the National Gallery of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of South Australia and City of Yarra Council, as well as private lenders, for supporting the loan of significant works from their collections. We equally extend our sincere and special thanks to our exhibition partners the Copyright Agency, Helen Macpherson Smith Trust and Dulux, exhibition donors Bruce Parncutt AO, and Marita and James Lilllie, and the IMA's Commissioners Circle. We are grateful to the Gordon Darling Foundation for their generous support of this publication, along with media partner RRR. We also acknowledge Yhonnie's gallerists, This Is No Fantasy, for their support in the research and development of all aspects of the project. ACCA and IMA gratefully acknowledge our respective state, federal and local government partners Creative Victoria, Arts Queensland, Australia Council for the Arts, Visual Arts and Craft Strategy and City of Melbourne for their cultural investment in our programs and community engagement.

We would importantly like to thank the talented teams at both ACCA and the IMA for their dedication and commitment, and in particular, the contributions of Miriam Kelly and Samantha Vawdrey at ACCA and Llewelyn Millhouse and Tulleah Pearce at IMA, along with all our respective colleagues and installation teams.

Yhonnie Scarce is among Australia's most significant and consequential artists, at the height of her powers. It is a great honour to develop and present *Missile Park*, the first survey and monograph focussing on Yhonnie Scarce's work and we look forward to the public engagement of visitors, readers and participants with anticipation.

Max Delany, Artistic Director & CEO, ACCA, Melbourne Liz Nowell, Executive Director, IMA, Brisbane Road trip: January 2021 Yhonnie Scarce

p.11: Koonibba Aboriginal Community

pp.12-13: Evangelical Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer, Koonibba

pp.14-15: War Memorial, Koonibba

pp.16-17: Woomera Theatre

pp.18-19: Missile Park, Woomera History Museum

pp.20-21: Kistler 1, Woomera

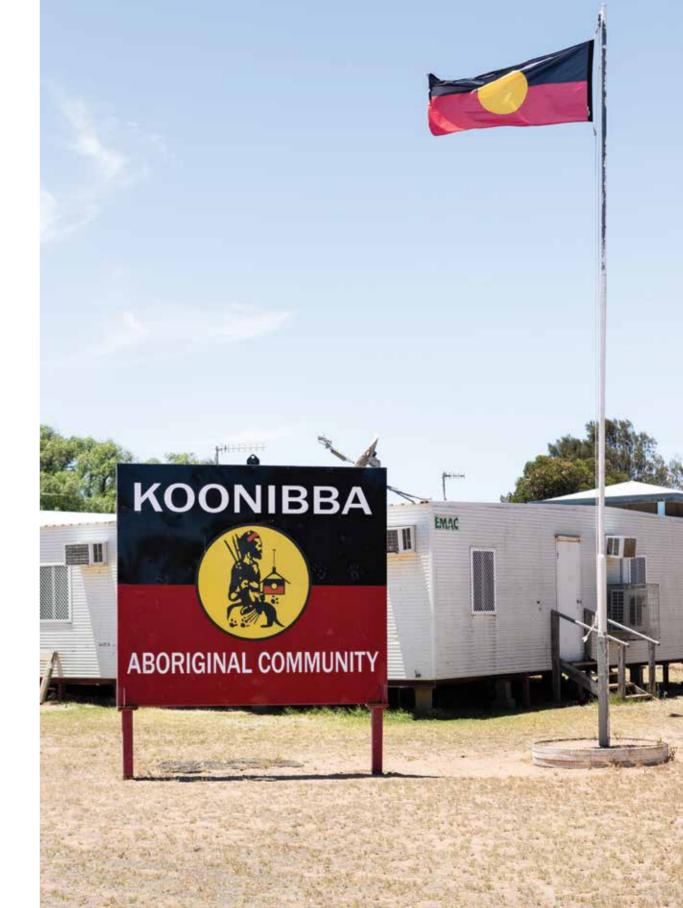
pp.22-23: No Unauthorised Entry, Nurrangar

pp.24-25: Bus Stop 14, Woomera

pp.26-27: Andamooka

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pp.30-31: Point Pearce Aboriginal Community





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DUNNETT	Reginald
GRAY	Arnold Richard
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GURKEN	George
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MILLER	Herbert Phillip
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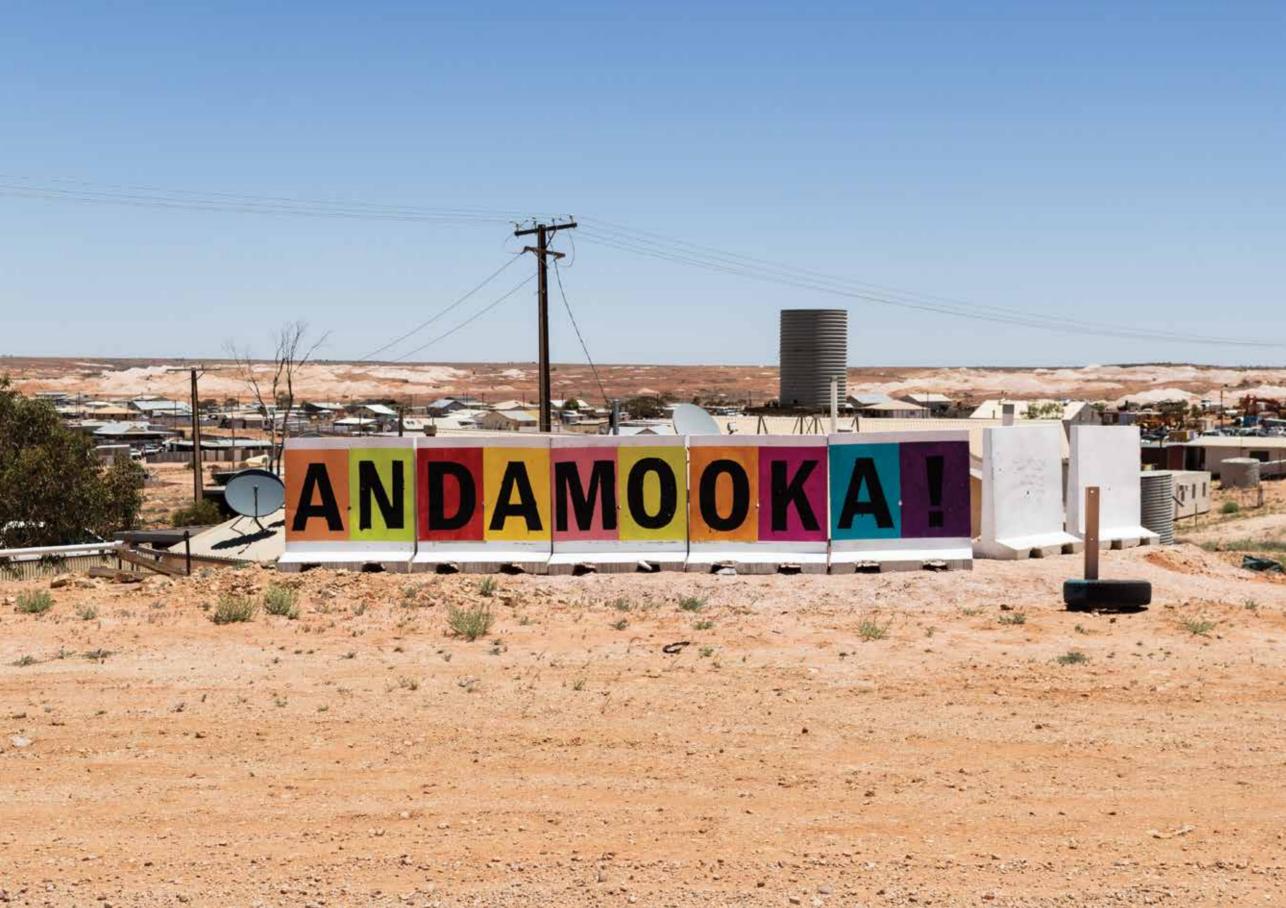
















Missile Park Lisa Waup, Max Delany and Liz Nowell

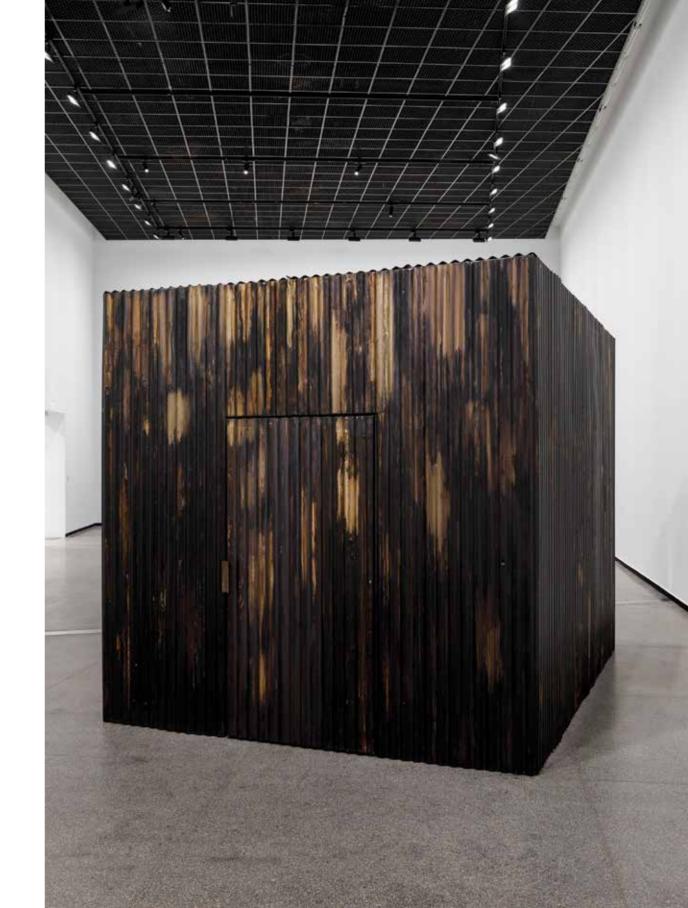
Lisa Waup: If we take the exhibition's title *Missile Park* as a starting point, you can see how Yhonnie's work – while embedded in deeply local and personal histories – branches out to address much broader narratives in relation to colonisation. Missile Park is the name of the public plaza situated at the front of the now closed Woomera History Museum. It contains a collection of rockets and rocket launchers, bombs, target drones, guidance systems, experimental aeroplanes and space junk related to the history of Woomera; a town established at the outset of the Cold War in 1947, specifically for the launching of British experimental rockets, and the development of air and space defence systems.

Max Delany: *Missile Park* more broadly and metaphorically also delineates the Woomera Prohibited Area, or Woomera Exclusion Zone. This vast area extends across remote South Australia, encompassing 127,000 square kilometres, which is said to be equivalent to the size of England or the US state of Florida.

It is in this sense that the idea of 'Missile Park' refers to a much bigger 'parkland', and part of a much larger history. Extending across the traditional lands of six Aboriginal groups – Maralinga Tjarutja, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yunkunytjatjara, Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara, Arabana, Gawler Ranges, and Kokatha, to which Yhonnie belongs – most of the area continues to remain inaccessible to the Traditional Owners.

The existence of the Woomera Prohibited Area speaks profoundly not only to the history of the Cold War, atomic tests and war games, but also to the ongoing effects of colonisation of Aboriginal land, the resulting displacement of First People from their homelands, and the impact of government, military, industrial and technical administration.

LW: In this context, Yhonnie's work gives voice to the voiceless. It draws from a period in history that was so much about secrecy and erasure. The exhibition's title, which is also the title of the major new commission, honours those who suffered under the region's atomic and military operations. Yhonnie has travelled the world, visiting well-known public memorials dedicated to the loss of human life as a result of nuclear bombs, testing and disasters such as Chernobyl and Fukushima. Yet we travelled to Woomera and found many aspects of the Australian contexts of these histories swept under the rug.



MD: Yhonnie's new architecturally-scaled installation, *Missile Park*, reflects this experience. Its three sheds serve as solemn tombs which memorialise the impacts and legacies of nuclear testing on Aboriginal lands. Made from recycled zinc and bitumen, the *Missile Park* sheds have a sombre, brutalist, bodily presence, which bear the imprints of their previous lives. They are perforated with historical marks and punctures which bring stellar constellations and play of light into the black void of the shed interiors. As spaces of reflection, shafts of light cast a focussed beam upon previously obscured histories, illuminating dark narratives which remain concealed.

Liz Nowell: *Missile Park*, like so much of Yhonnie's work, then becomes a memorial for the many people displaced, or who became ill and passed away as a direct result of nuclear testing. It is a work that speaks to the entire experience of what happened in Woomera, rather than selectively omitting or including only certain facts as is done in mainstream reporting. Upon our arrival, it was immediately evident that everything is not as it seems. Amongst the scores of gravestones were many children who have passed away from illness, were stillborn, or lived for a matter of hours. It's quite shocking to see such a disproportionate number of children's graves, and makes clear that death, disfigurement and disease are so much a part of Woomera's history, and yet cultural amnesia runs deep in the town.

LW: It makes me think of Yhonnie's name – a unique name for where she grew up, and one that she loves. As she described, Yhonnie's namesake was a non-Indigenous baby girl who lived for just one month in the iconic Philip Ponds Homestead during the 1950s. She was one of those many babies you mention. Her grave was at least given the dignity of name and place, unlike many of the graves at the nearby Woomera Cemetery which were marked 'unserviceable'. Not one, but multiple graves marked this way. What does it mean for a grave, or a person, to be 'unserviceable'?

LN: Yes, exactly. One can only imagine how many deaths went undocumented – especially Kokatha people. For every 'unserviceable' grave, there would be a dozen more who have not ever been given the dignity of a formal burial. Works like *Burial ground* 2009, *Missile Park* and others seek to restore humanity to the people this country have tried to forget, or literally sought to bury.

LW: Woomera is bound by secrecy; secrets that, as you say, authorities have tried to bury. Some people held onto stories and experiences only to release them on their deathbeds. Lifetimes of silence and anonymity. It's a place where people got lost. When quizzed by us, the staff of the Woomera administration company wouldn't disclose any information about the areas on the map

that had been erased. They said they had no idea what was there. There were lots of tight lips in that town. A brainwashed feeling. A twilight zone.

I remember the mosaic at the Woomera Theatre. It's a pixelated-looking image of the desert and the RAAF base in mottled greys, greens, silver, and dusty purples. The aesthetic is game-like, low-fi sci-fi, reminiscent of the Jetsons, PacMan, or a game of chess, but more likely a war game. At the top of the mosaic there is what looks like a dirty cloud with particles dissipating into the air. Maybe it's the night sky or maybe it's an explosion. The scene is punctuated by a bulbous, glass beaker-like white bomb, and one lone figure with their arms above their head. It seems to reflect both the desert but also the experiments that were conducted there. The ambiguity of the mosaic mirrors the paradoxical nature of the place itself, where it looks one way but is always something else; it's never what it seems.

MD: The mural is extraordinary, and located behind the candy bar. It is an unquestioningly pop celebration of western scientific exploration, technology, and the space race, with its depiction of a flying rocket, the image of 'universal man', and a ticking bomb. It feels so starkly at odds with its surroundings, and seemingly ignorant of, and unconcerned about the neighbouring Indigenous communities on Kokatha Country, and places like Koonibba; once a Lutheran mission, where Yhonnie's family have lived since the late nineteenth century.

LW: At Koonibba we visited another cemetery. We saw broken glass arranged on top of graves as decoration, green and clear, maybe like the type you find in bottles, crushed and fractured and loose on the top of the personal memorials. I watched the sun catch the glass. Then, at Point Pearce Aboriginal Community, we saw a similar type of funerary decoration organised in blue watery forms, and noticed that all the graves faced one way, so the heads of the departed all lay towards the ocean. Remembering, when the bombs went off, the sand turned to glass. I think of how this decoration relates to Yhonnie's work.

MD: The materiality of glass has special significance for Yhonnie. Glass is made of silica, or sand, which is derived from the landscape, from the materiality of Country. Silica naturally melts to glass at intense heats in the furnace or when struck by lightning, or nuclear fission as was the case with the vitreous landscapes at Maralinga. I love the way that Yhonnie brings these things together so concisely, so that glass serves as a lens to focus, reflect and memorialise these contexts and histories.

As we were travelling, the question of country and materiality was brought into sharp relief. The extraction of minerals, such as iron ore, copper, gypsum, salt, silica, and of course uranium, are the most visible and significant industries across remote South Australia. These materials, some of which find their way into Yhonnie's work, give the landscape its extraordinary colour, ruggedness and sensory intensity, but have also been responsible for considerable ecological impacts, and the displacement of First Peoples from their Country.

LN: Visiting the Andamooka opal fields, and experiencing its searing heat, dry winds and vast topography reminded me of the inhumane working conditions which many First People endured under colonial rule. Slavery, wage disparity, blackbirding and illegal working conditions are all a part of this country's history, and our prosperity is built on the back of this unrecognised labour. In *Working class man (Andamooka opal fields)* 2017, for example, Yhonnie pays homage to Barwell, her grandfather, who despite working hard as a miner and shearer – jobs widely considered to embody the Australian 'battler' spirit – was not even recognised as a citizen in his own country until 1967.

MD: This experience of itinerant work, and of displacement and dislocation more generally is an enduring theme in Yhonnie's work, since her earliest works at art school. *The day we went away*, made in 2004, is a good example. A found suitcase containing a collection of bush bananas, it speaks to the histories of dislocation related to the removal of Aboriginal children from their homelands and families, and to the experiences of Aboriginal people being sent to missions and foster families, as well as into domestic servitude, and to work as itinerant labourers.

LN: Max, so much of the assimilationist and segregationist practices you mention here were mandated by colonial, then state and federal governments in this country. And despite Australia being a secular state since Federation, a lot of these policies were rooted in deeply Christian values and belief systems, imposed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities by the church. We saw the impact of religion on the places we visited throughout our travels.

I remember the old stone chapel in Point Pearce, and couldn't help but think of *What they wanted* 2006-10. It's a deeply confronting work that expresses the role religion has played in rationalising colonisation, government policies, scientific 'endeavour', and anthropological research, all of which ultimately led to the displacement and deaths of thousands of First Nations people.

Billie Holiday's haunting 1959 rendition *Strange Fruit* comes to mind when I think of this work. The song decries the lynching of African Americans and

is often cited as a catalyst for the Civil Rights movement. In the case of *What they wanted*, Yhonnie speaks directly to Australia's own history of lynching, massacre and violence, and the role of Christianity in shaping the many policies and belief systems First People have had to and continue to live under.

In this regard, what is also compelling about Yhonnie's use of materials is the way in which she brings a deep humanity to very painful, and often very personal, histories. I would go so far as to say that her work transcends the form of glass and that she imbues each object with a sense of personhood, as though each object is a member of her family. That level of care creates an intimacy that is rare and generous in an artist's practice. The kind of truth telling Yhonnie's work offers, through the lived experience of her ancestors, not only sheds light on their stories, but also speaks more broadly to the violent colonisation in this country.

LW: I agree with your comment about Yhonnie imbuing her objects with a kind of personhood. In Yhonnie's new installation *Missile Park*, sixty glass bush plums are delicately placed upon altars, elevating them to a shrine like status. They honour life – her people's lives – while talking explicitly about death, ethnic cleansing, darkness and injustice. For so long Aboriginal people were classified as flora and fauna. Now, fast forward, and here is the great-great granddaughter giving her ancestors monumental space and voice.

MD: The 2016 portrait of Yhonnie's great-great grandmother Dinah, is another moving example of this approach. Her photo was taken at Koonibba in the 1920s, a Lutheran mission on Wirangu country near Tjutjuna/Ceduna, in remote South Australia. The photographer is unknown, but the image coincides with photographs taken by anthropologist Norman Tindale who visited Koonibba in 1928. *Dinah* is one of a number of works by Yhonnie that retrieve historical photographic images from the containment of colonial archives. By reframing and recontextualising these images, Yhonnie recasts them as treasured family portraits, liberating them from the restrictive focus of the ethnographic gaze. Accompanied by a collection of precious bush plums, the work becomes an intimate, touching portrait and offering to her ancestor; an act of appreciation, reverence and respect.

LN: This idea of invoking these deeply personal narratives to articulate the human impact of colonisation – as opposed to statistics and figures – is one of the most compelling aspects of Yhonnie's practice. While her work is often located in a specific time and place, or honouring a specific person, its emotional resonance extends far beyond one story.

LW: I recall a plaque whilst we stopped at Kimba, a small town on Barngarla Country, which is situated on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula, 337 km from Woomera. The plaque was dedicated to the 'First White Child Born Here'. How strange for that to be recorded, especially when Aboriginal people were displaced from their Country, so many Aboriginal children were born on that land before this one white child.

LN: It's almost as though Yhonnie's works invert that plaque by memorialising and giving dignity to those overlooked in settler-Australian history. In the same way *Missile Park* speaks to both the town of Woomera and the exclusion zone more broadly, I think of works like *Blood on the wattle (Elliston, South Australia, 1849)* 2013; a powerful memorial both to those who lost their lives in the Elliston Massacre, as well as the thousands of people murdered during the frontier wars.

MD: Memory and memorialisation are important threads running throughout Yhonnie's body of work, and very much as a response to this lack of memorials dedicated to First People's narratives of Australia's frontier wars and massacres. *Blood on the wattle (Elliston, South Australia, 1849)*, which is now in the collection of the National Gallery of Victoria, preceded a more recent public memorial that was only eventually established at Elliston in 2017 after decades of advocacy and much public contestation. As Daniel Browning has referred to Yhonnie's work later in this publication, her practice is a form of 'memory politics' against wilful amnesia, which is both 'politically motivated and emotionally driven'.

LW: Yhonnie refuses to let her people be forgotten. Through each delicate form in her work, she is able to share the memories of her ancestors, passed down through generations, she is able to give them voice.



Yhonnie Scarce: Missile Park Installation views

p.41: The day we went away 2004

pp.42-43: Dinah 2016; Working class man (Andamooka opal fields) 2017; The collected 2010;

What they wanted 2006-10; Florey and Fanny 2012; The day we went away 2004

pp.44-45: Dinah 2016; Working class man (Andamooka opal fields) 2017

pp.46-47: Florey and Fanny 2012

pp.48-49: The collected 2010; Weak in colour but strong in blood 2014; What they wanted

2006-10

pp.50-59: Weak in colour but strong in blood 2014

pp.60-63: The cultivation of whiteness 2013; Burial ground 2009

pp.64-67: The cultivation of whiteness 2013

pp.68-73: Blood on the wattle (Elliston, South Australia, 1849) 2013

pp.74-85: *Missile Park* 2021 pp.88-89: *The collected* 2010

































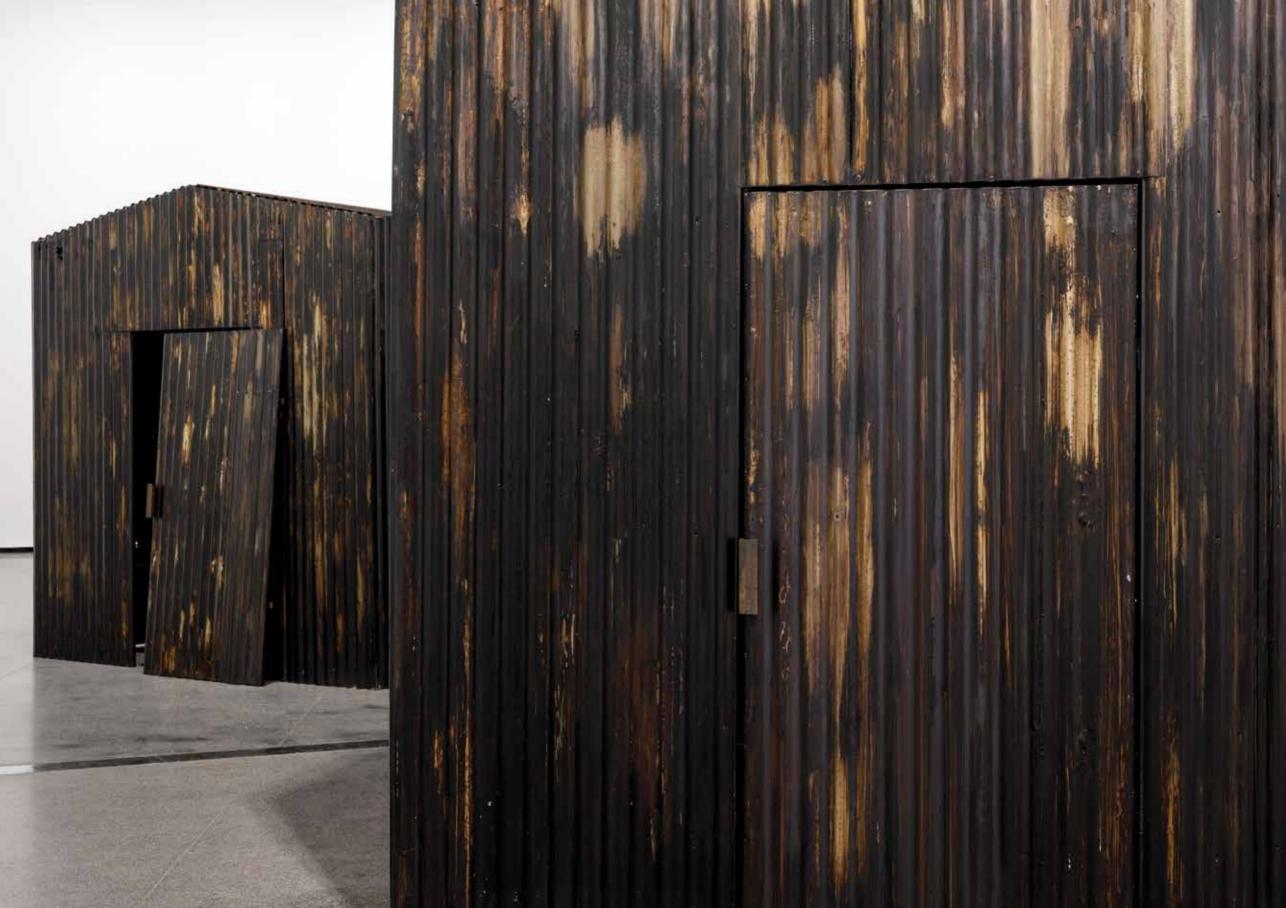




















anneal this breath Natalie Harkin

ANNEAL | heat-up and cool down slowly; soften and strengthen to eliminate stress that accumulates through time: forge an open response to resist and shape-shift without losing one's essence.

mine and refine this float of molten landscape raw silica-sand and limestone sites sliced and stirred and hot-shop forged witness excavations of targets and a redaction of origins of melts of lands lives

see what a breath can do

flux and bubble rise to feverpoint and sweat hot flesh on flesh so carefully laid rested and hung body-broken to sway see their shadows cast low in the sun just what they wanted what a breath what breath

see what her sorrow can do

see what her love can do

what a love a brave pure love this one grain of sand that refuses to disappear slightest fissure to rupture and dissect an unbearable fantasy she seeks heartbeats facade and bloodlines she exhumes assembles beauty to humanity nurture and arow

our screams soar into mighty blue skies dust to dust bury them we scratch up to the deep all flesh cinder and surface ash their charred revelation what we've always known their silence she is patient translucent waits she inhales and she waits exhales see what her breath can do

recognise this breath aifted from Old Ones lessons afloat in the wake of time a warm breeze-like dance on shards of shadow and light navigate their caress the aentlest of she will hold their breathtouch deep for as long as it takes to furnace and as long as it takes shape you a story

see what a breeze can do

a perfect wall of brittle display cultivation of whiteness stolen she seeks paper and displaced and blood where bodies are traced she gathers them near this suitcase of breaths to one day rest she carries in case in her in her case

let us see what they can do

these shimmering dreams not what they seem a fallout mirage of epic distortion from furnace to fission and shrouds of black mist to poisonous shards of green-to-black bear witness to defiant life to a mass of destruction to her fruits her life to her body her strength her blood

now see what her breath can do





Alchemy and memory politcs Daniel Browning

Yhonnie Scarce has consistently described her wide-ranging artistic practice as politically motivated and emotionally driven. A contemporary artist working in glass, Scarce has almost single-handedly created a medium-based genre of Indigenous art that is without precedent. Hers is an unforgiving medium derived from nature in the form of raw silica, then forged in infernal heat, crystallising into an artform often imagined to be decorative and artisanal, if not almost entirely Western. I have often asked Scarce why she decided to make artwork with such a medium. She replied matter-of-factly, 'I love glass. Glass is my friend – it makes me work hard... but I love it so much it doesn't matter how difficult it can be to produce an artwork. I often say I have and still have a long-term love affair with [the] medium'.1

There is however a rupture, or at least a tension, between the medium of glass itself, the alchemy of its production, and the politically motivated intent of the artist, which is much less mercurial, even epigenetic. This disruption is at the heart of the strange and compelling power of her work. The artist's own personal and family history is deeply embedded in her work, and traces a line from her maternal grandfather's Kokatha country in the north of South Australia to sites of massacre, genocide, forced relocation and alienation from traditional lands, nuclear colonisation and memorialisation to Wounded Knee and Elliston Downs to Chernobyl and Fukushima. When I first saw her elongated glass forms I imagined them in almost brutal terms, as eviscerated organs or exhumed physical evidence in the prosecution of war crimes.

At a deeper level, her work engages with the politics of memory. Her work in recasting the ethnographic photographs of the anthropologist Norman Tindale, who surveyed missions and reserves throughout the 1930s, is a case in point. Her more recent collaboration with fellow artist Lisa Radford to visit 'memory sites' in the former Communist states of Eastern Europe demonstrates a broader global approach to memory politics. This approach rearticulates, from Scarce's perspective as a Nukunu and Kokatha woman, the wilful amnesia that is a key plank of the thesis set out by the anthropologist W.E.H. Stanner in his 1968 Boyer Lecture series, a watershed moment in Australian cultural politics:

pp.90-91: Yhonnie Scarce, *In the dead house* 2020, installation views, 2020 *Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art: Monster Theatres*, Adelaide Botanic Gardens, Adelaide, 2020. Courtesy of the artist, Art Gallery of South Australia and THIS IS NO FANTASY. Photography Saul Steed. p.93: Yhonnie Scarce, *Thunder raining poison* 2015, 2000 hand-blown glass yams, stainless steel and reinforced wire, dimensions variable. National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 2016. This acquisition has been supported by Susan Armitage in recognition of the 50th Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum.



It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale.²

Yhonnie Scarce was born in the prohibited zone of Woomera, declared in the 1940s for the testing of long-range weapons. That simple fact still reverberates, casting a long shadow over her research-driven practice. A purpose-built service town downwind of the British nuclear testing sites at Emu Field and Maralinga, Woomera was from its establishment almost exclusively occupied by military personnel and their families. The haunting 2016 body of work *Strontium-90* remembers the miscarriages and child deaths memorialised in the desert cemetery at Woomera, and the taking of thousands of bone samples from infants post-mortem without parental consent. British authorities were testing for evidence of a by-product of nuclear fission which is synthesised in human bone. In the exhibition space of her Melbourne gallery, Scarce assembled a range of embryonic and slightly disfigured glass forms, bush plums recalling human reproductive cells, on found hospital cribs. Gothic photographs of the lonely and desolate Woomera cemetery, taken by the artist, covered the walls.³

The medical or laboratory aesthetic recurs in installation works such as *The cultivation of whiteness* 2013, from the collection of the National Gallery of Australia, and *Weak in colour but strong in blood* 2014, commissioned for the Biennale of Sydney and held privately. Both series riff on other motifs in Scarce's work – the white ethnographic gaze and the blood quantum debate. The reappropriation of anthropologist Norman Tindale's photographs of her ancestors taken in 1928 at the former Koonibba mission, including her great-great grandmother Dinah, are acts of sovereignty and reclamation. In recasting the photographs as aesthetic rather than ethnographic, Scarce is empowering the subjects – in effect, articulating the subjectivity, and humanity – of her ancestors:

Those photos are a clear representation of how Aboriginal people – my family – were seen as something else other than human. But it also shows how strong my family were during those times that Tindale was taking samples from them under duress and without their permission.⁴

Tindale not only photographed his subjects but recorded their genealogies and subjected them to detailed anthropometric tests including the taking of cranial and other physical measurements which would be regarded as invasive even by today's standards. In some cases, blood samples were taken – and then deposited on cards. In *Dinah* 2016, Scarce has produced a deeply affecting memorial to her ancestor and a counter-image which speaks truth to power in a way that Tindale could never have intended.

It is not possible to divorce Scarce's practice from the personal, 'emotionally-driven' aspect of her work – to decode it in formal aesthetic terms, void of cultural meaning, would be to miss the point. That she was born in the shadow of a prohibited military zone and is a descendant of the Kokatha people alienated from their country during the British nuclear tests are simple but reverberant facts that drive her artistic practice. When asked to explain the political motivations that underpin her work, Scarce explained that it was passed on to her, almost epigenetically, from her grandparents. 'If it wasn't for them, I wouldn't be where I am today – telling their stories'. This is also a critical point; Scarce is articulating the stories of her ancestors.

Yet she also gives voice to broader cultural histories veiled by a conspiratorial (Great Australian) silence: for example, the massacre at Elliston Downs in 1849, during which Kokatha and Wirangu men were herded onto cliffs and driven into the sea off the Eyre Peninsula, and the human fallout from the secretive British nuclear tests conducted at Emu Field and Maralinga in the 1950s. In the field of memory politics, what is recalled as public history or memorialised and what is veiled or hidden are crucial factors in the construction of national identity. Scarce's work clearly speaks into the void and the silences in Australian public history, exposing submerged if not entirely opposite and contradictory narratives.

Scarce is always reaching for new meaning and ever more polymorphous forms – from the embryonic signature bush yams to 1950s atom bombs. This sense of experimentation, and of the aesthetic power of the medium, has been a recurring theme of her practice. Scarce's boldly experimental nature also drives fruitful collaborative projects that reach across artforms. Recently, she collaborated with the Melbourne architecture studio Edition Office to create *In absence* 2019, a temporary monument for the National Gallery of Victoria's Architecture Commission at least partly inspired by the Soviet era monoliths she encountered in the former Eastern Bloc. Although temporary, the cathedral-like building memorialised the erasure of permanent stone dwellings, encampments and villages, and the economies and systems of food production that existed before 1788 – the Indigenous

built environment, if you like.

As the plumes from the first nuclear explosions on the Australian mainland at Emu Field in 1953 moved noiselessly across country, they were closely observed by the Yankunytjatjara and Pitjantjatjara. The late Kunmunara Lester was encamped at nearby Wallatinna Station with his family and many years later gave compelling evidence to the Royal Commission that the elders shook their spears at the sky and feared the 'shiny, oily' black mist that descended on the camp was *mamu*, a bad spirit. Many of the Yankunytjatjara encamped at Wallatinna, just 170 kilometres north-east of ground zero, experienced skin rash, diarrhoea and vomiting – symptoms widely associated with radiation sickness.

One of the most haunting resonances in Scarce's work is the fact that the silica in the desert sand at the former nuclear testing sites also underwent the same alchemical process she recreates in the 'hotshop'. The manufacture of Scarce's glass forms, in extreme heat, parallels the crystallisation of the desert sand at the Breakaway site, which reached melting point and became glass. In the late 1990s an abortive plan was devised to encase, or vitrify, radioactive waste in molten glass, presumably to render it inert.

Scarce's monumental works, *Thunder raining poison* 2015 and *Death zephyr* 2017 both mirror the form of towering radiation clouds produced in the immediate aftermath of the British nuclear tests. Their structure is based on photographs taken on the ground shortly afterwards, frozen in time. To my mind, these works actually stand as a metaphor for Scarce's work more generally – visual memories conjured in the aftermath of a disaster.

- 1 Yhonnie Scarce, correspondence with the author, February 2021.
- W.E.H Stanner, After The Dreaming, The 1968 Boyer Lectures, Australian Broadcasting Commission, Sydney, 1969; see also Anna Clark, 'The Great Australian Silence 50 Years On', The Conversation, 3 August 2018, https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-the-great-australian-silence-50-years-on-100737.
- 3 Yhonnie Scarce, Strontium 90, THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne, 6 September-26 October 2016.
- 4 Yhonnie Scarce, correspondence with the author, February 2021.
- 5 Yhonnie Scarce, correspondence with the author, February 2021.

p.97: Yhonnie Scarce, *Ectopia* 2019 (detail), UTS Graduate School of Health, Sydney. Courtesy the artist and Barbara Flynn.

pp.98-99: Yhonnie Scarce, *Strontium 90* 2016, sandblasted hand-blown glass, found steel hospital cribs, archival photograph, dimensions variable. Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY. Melbourne

pp.100-101: Yhonnie Scarce, *Death zephyr* 2017, hand-blown glass, nylon and steel armature, dimensions variable. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, purchased with funds provided by the Aboriginal Collection Benefactor's Group 2017. Installation view, *The National: New Australian Art*, 2017, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Photography AGNSW







Remember Royalty Hannah Presley

There is an inner strength within Yhonnie's practice that is familiar to First Nations audiences, a voice that speaks to us and for us in spaces that we are all still working to be a part of. I was keenly aware of this when I began my research to curate *A Lightness of Spirit is the Measure of Happiness* at ACCA in 2018, as part of the Yalingwa program, and Yhonnie was one of the first artists I reached out to in my early research. Our initial discussions evolved over the following months with the outcome to commission a new work that would see Yhonnie create larger than life portraits of her family past, accompanied by intricate hand-crafted glass gifts or offerings, later titled *Remember Royalty* 2018.

Yhonnie has been focused throughout her career on developing her skills in the male and non-Indigenous dominated field of glass blowing. Her personal strength and determination to follow her creative journey into areas not often explored by First Nations artists is an inspiration and can be linked to understanding her family history and in large part, her relationship of respect and admiration for her ancestors.

Yhonnie belongs to the Kothaka and Nukunu peoples of South Australia, Country that covers large swathes of desert with sandy plains and plentiful bush tucker. Her families were displaced to missions in the nineteenth century, and due to the nuclear testing that took place on their traditional Country between 1956 and 1963, and much of her iconic work shares this story, drawing attention to the impact these events had personally, spiritually and culturally. In the years since, Yhonnie's family travelled throughout South Australia, making connections in Koonibba Community, Point Pearce Community, Tjutjuna/Ceduna, Adelaide, Ardrossan and Andamooka opal fields.

As with many Aboriginal families, photos from the past are rare and treasured items, often held in state and national archives. For Yhonnie's extended family, any images found over the years are shared joyously with all the relatives. The three earliest images to feature in *Remember Royalty* were uncovered in the Lutheran archives by a cousin researching their family history. The find revealed portraits of Yhonnie's Granny Melba taken at the age of eighteen, around 1917, and her husband, Papa Willy hard at work in the 1920s alongside a rare family portrait they believe to be taken in 1911.



Collaborating with the exceptional team at Spacecraft studios on this project, Yhonnie proposed that each photograph was transferred onto materials that referenced the lives they had lived. Granny Melba's portrait was delicately transferred onto vintage French linen, inspired by her dress in the precious found photograph, with an accompanying gift in the form of glass yams pinned to her dress. The delicate string of yams, like pearls, mirrored Melba's strength and beauty, signalling rosary beads, they gave her a reverence seen in so many of our ladies across the country.

Yams are a recurring theme in Yhonnie's practice, referencing the bush tucker that has grown always on her traditional lands, making a direct connection through time to her ancestors and Country. A selection of glass yams were included in her gift to Papa Willy, nestled inside a flash red toolbox of crisp new tools, a prize he would not likely have owned in his lifetime. Papa Willy was a shearer and, in recognition, the portrait of him hard at work with a sheep in hand, is printed on a thick woollen blanket.

The earliest photo in the series shows Melba with her parents and younger siblings taken out the front of the schoolhouse at Koonibba mission. Their portrait has been lovingly transferred onto a vintage cotton sheet once manufactured by Actil in South Australia. Placed in a trunk at their feet sits a collection of large glass spheres made with a star-speckled lustre referencing the universe – to Yhonnie this was her way of gifting the kids the world.

The final portrait in the series introduces her grandmother Fanny taken at the Andamooka opal fields in the late 1950s. When talking to Yhonnie about Fanny she described her as a woman who liked the finer things in life – nice gloves, crisp white linen and taxis – which were quite a luxury in her time. Yhonnie created ten glass bush plums, a delicacy Fanny would have savoured, which were placed in a case alongside a pair of elegant vintage gloves and embroidered handkerchiefs. Fanny was a strong woman who I can see Yhonnie takes after in many ways, self-assured and powerful in who she was and how she lived her life.

Remember Royalty is a significant work in Yhonnie's career to date, showing the breadth of her experimentation with materials beyond her chosen medium of glass – the work reflects her creative ambition and embodies the care and kindness she shows to her kin. The imposing work invited her ancestors into the gallery; we could see and feel their presence in the space, watching over us and imploring us not to forget those who have come before and paved the way for us to be where we are today.

Yhonnie's family story of displacement and survival across generations is a story that belongs to all of us, all First Nations people in this country have been touched by forced removals and loss, these are themes that resonate deeply within the Aboriginal community. By creating *Remember Royalty*, Yhonnie reminds us to be proud of who we are, to draw strength and inspiration from our ancestors and to acknowledge our families as the first people to know this land, proper Royalty.

Yhonnie shares 'As far as I am concerned my grandparents, great grandparents and those people who walked my Country before me, are Australia's royalty'.





Memory keeper: In absence Louis Anderson Mokak

As I approached the entrance of Melbourne's National Gallery of Victoria (NGV), I was struck immediately with thoughts about the relationships between Australian art institutions and First Nations peoples and their cultures: broken and exploitative relationships governed by the colonial imperative through two hundred and thirty years of theft, dispossession and silence.

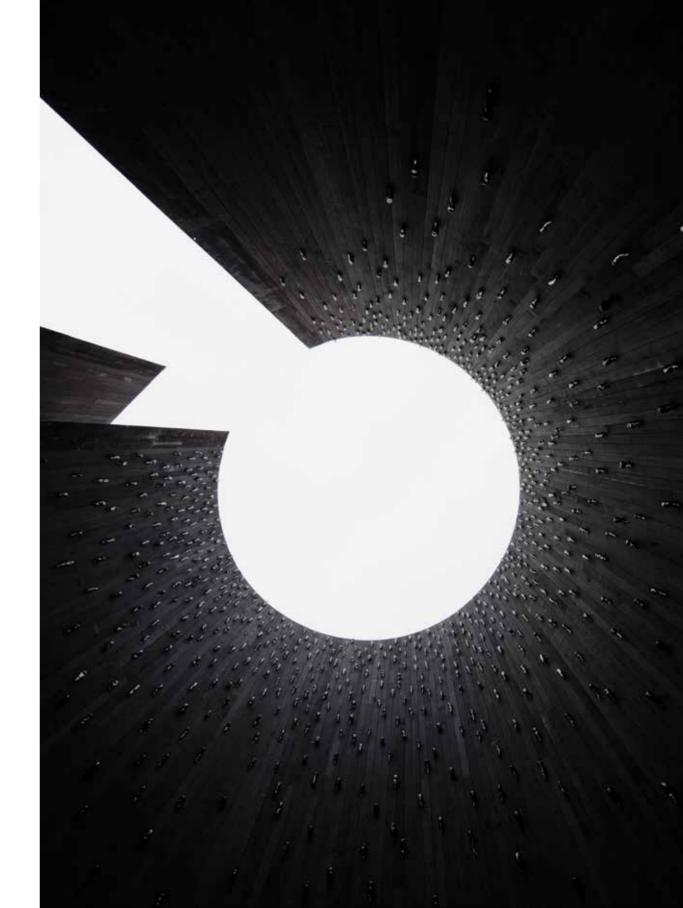
Walking through Sir Roy Grounds' building towards the garden, a monolithic form, in both stature and structure, immediately confronted my senses. The form appears as an imposing eucalypt, burnt by the wrath of fire – yet resilient and strong to its core, its black and charred skin protecting it from the fury – healing and regenerating from within.

The 2019 NGV Architecture Commission, *In absence*, is a collaboration between Kokatha and Nukunu artist Yhonnie Scarce and Melbourne-based architecture studio Edition Office. Situated directly outside the heavily walled NGV building, *In absence* beckons for the truth of a history that has long been void of proper truth-telling.

The axial relationship between the commission and the NGV building forces a dialogue between the tower's physical form and the ideas that manifest within. Eyeballing the NGV, a celebrated icon of the Western canon of architecture, the structure breathes life and connects to earth, sky, Birrarung and Country. This is no ordinary museum exhibit encased within a glass box or accumulating dust in a distant archive.

The nine-metre-high tower is clad in stained Tasmanian hardwood, coarse in texture and rich in the scent of ash and eucalypt. Edition Office director Aaron Roberts states, 'The building asserts a physical presence and a physical manifestation of the ongoing colonial project. In a very clear way, it talks about the absence of truth'. The exterior acts as a shield – sheer, strong and resistant – protecting and nurturing its womb from perpetual settler-colonial violence.

Set directly on axis, a narrow vertical aperture bisects the two chambers, leaving a void in its wake – addressing the conditioning of terra nullius and the consequential psyche devoid of truth-telling. The chambers are exactly mirrored, symmetrical in shape and proportion; a platform that removes power imbalances and opens up conversation and dialogue. Inside the space, one



cannot be neutral, unaffected nor an outsider looking in. In Scarce's words, 'The door's open; however, there comes responsibility walking through'.

Inside, two curved chambers contain 1,600 black hand-blown glass yams, which seep out of the cracks in the chambers' walls. These yams resonate with history, bear memory and reflect and reclaim agricultural practice that reaches back beyond two thousand generations. 'Given life through breath', Scarce explains, 'the glass is fragile to some extent, but these yams reference the resilience of Aboriginal people. They have this strength about them. They take on their own personality, their own existence'.

The diameter of the chambers and their circular form abstractly reference in plan and in scale Aboriginal peoples' stone-based permanent dwellings. The spatial intimacy and transparency is a response to the persistent absence of truth, whereby colonial and, indeed, contemporary Australia has sought to mask any trace of evidence that might dispute the myth of Aboriginal people as nothing more than nomadic hunter-gatherers.

From within, the city and its white noise disappears. Mind, body and spirit connect to the vast sky and the sun as it passes overhead. Each noise that is projected into the space comes with vitality and responsibility as your voice reflects off the walls and rebounds back to you. This deeply spiritual and acoustic reverence reveals timeless cultural protocols of deep listening, reciprocity and reflection. This is where the beacon of truth-telling lies.

Foundational to the project is its public program. Edition Office director Kim Bridgland shares, 'Fundamentally, what this building is doing is being a memory keeper, as well as a memory sharer. It's an enabling platform for stories from Indigenous community to be heard, and to be able to have that conversation in the way that they want to have that conversation'. Meaningful relationships that centre Aboriginal people and their voices in the project are vital.

In absence reaches far beyond a Western methodological viewpoint of an object within a landscape. The incorporation of Aboriginal sovereign foods and materiality acknowledges the past, present and future, dismissing a history that has been falsified while urging a rapprochement with Aboriginal people and the land itself. The basalt rock – a material used for stone-making for thousands of years – forms pathways through space. Kangaroo and wallaby grass wrap around the tower, spread among three species of planted yams. When the pavilion is dismantled, a mature native bed will lay bare, revealing yams ready for harvest and kangaroo and wallaby grass ready to

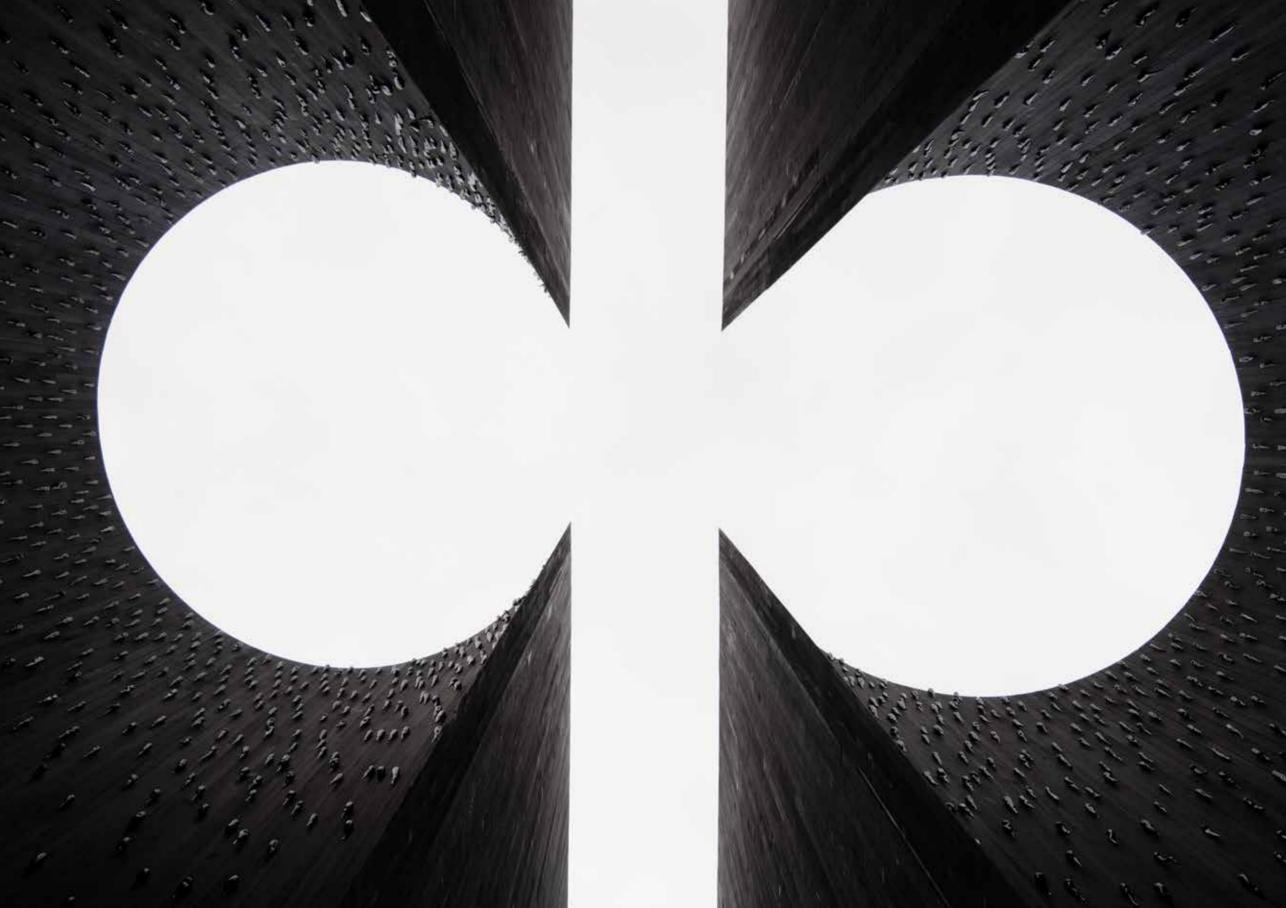
ground seeds into flour. In contrast to decommissioning and destruction, this work will renew, restore and regenerate.

In absence is a stark reminder of the great white lie of *terra nullius*. Aboriginal people exercised their sovereignty and custodianship of land and waters while maintaining law, creating kinship systems, planting and harvesting grain, forming settlements and caring for Country. This land was not free for the taking.

How can architecture reconcile with the brutality of an unlawful and violent colonial history in which the mortar that binds us is comforted by invisibility, absence and untruth? *In absence* has the capacity to do more than become a 'feel-good' decolonising motif for the wider architecture community to revel in. This is an interrogation that should go well beyond the life of a sixmonth exhibition. But what comes next – an elevated platform for Aboriginal sovereign voice within the built environment, or merely a temporal thematic engagement, ultimately judged as worthy by a jury of non-Indigenous peers?

Architecture has the unparalleled potential to bring us to a place where voices rendered silent for so long can be heard, where disruptive and difficult questions can be asked, and forgotten truths can be told. Fundamentally, it's a question of power. *In absence* has illustrated the power of architecture to reveal, to resonate and to rethink.

This text was originally published as Louis Mokak, 'In absence: 2019 NGV architecture commission: Edition Office with Yhonnie Scarce', *Architecture Australia*, vol. 109, no.2, March-April 2020, pp.78-83, accessible online at: architectureau.com/articles/in-absence/





Yhonnie Scarce: A biography

Lisa Waup

Woomera

Yhonnie Scarce was born in Woomera, South Australia, in 1973 and belongs to the Kokatha and Nukunu peoples. She was named by her mother after a non-Indigenous baby girl who lived for just one month in the town's iconic Philip Ponds Homestead during the 1950s before sadly passing away; a common occurrence in that area at that time. Yhonnie cherishes her unique name, its story and its connection back to her birthplace.

Woomera was named by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) after an Aboriginal word for a tool that extends the length a spear can be thrown. Defined as an artificial town, Woomera was established by the Long Range Weapons Board of Administration in 1949 as an experimental site in the South Australian desert.

In effect, the town was an RAAF base and station used to test rockets, weapons and missiles from the 1940s to the end of the 1960s. The mysterious 'no go' zone of the Woomera Prohibited Area (WPA) extends beyond the town for 127,000 square kilometres – which amounts to one-eighth of South Australia – and includes the historic nuclear testing sites of Maralinga and Emu Field. The radioactive nature of these nuclear experiments resulted in devastating consequences: the Woomera cemetery is filled with graves of stillborns and young babies; the Aboriginal community suffered thyroid problems and cancer in large proportions; and damage may also have been transmitted to future generations via DNA mutations. People broke their silence about their experiences of the goings-on only on their deathbeds after being sworn to secrecy.

The history of this town is also an international one. In 1969, the US Air Force began construction and installation of the Nurrungar Joint Tracking Facility in Woomera – a controversial and secretive operation for surveillance of missile launches and nuclear detonations. Following the closure of this facility in 1999, the Woomera Detention Centre was established on the same grounds, before closing just four years later.

This history of Woomera in the second half of the twentieth century was fraught with deaths, secrets, political complexity, shifting borders and fragmentation – it can be seen as a fortress-like site, one that parallels colonial Australia. However, before Woomera, and still today, the town and its extensive prohibited area is situated on the traditional lands of six Aboriginal groups: Maralinga



Tjarutja, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yunkunytjatjara, Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara, Arabana, Gawler Ranges, and Kokatha Country, to which Yhonnie belongs. The effects of the testing in Maralinga and Emu Fields were far reaching – while the Nukunu people's Country is further south and is bordered by the Flinders Ranges for protection, the fallout from the sites travelled to this area and even as far as Adelaide.

This Country is a home, strikingly beautiful, abundant with bush food, shifting in colour and flora and fauna; it is also some of the harshest, most unforgiving land on the continent with very little rainfall. Deep and intimate knowledge is required to survive there, and Yhonnie's people did so for tens of thousands of years. However, Aboriginal people were removed from their land, herded up and placed on missions in an act of control when the government decided to establish Woomera on their Country. The adoption of Aboriginal words for the town and its projects ('woomera' in reference to the launching of missiles, and Nurrungar meaning 'to listen', referencing government surveillance) is symbolic of that control, of taking what is not theirs, of their complete disregard and overwhelming sense of entitlement to land, culture and human life.

Thinking Big

Yhonnie's childhood was transitory, and she moved with her family from Woomera, to Adelaide, Perth, Hobart and then settled in Alice Springs. In her younger years, she built resilience from the personal challenges she faced; sometimes growing up in a sad situation helps you learn how to deal with life.

Despite not being much of a drawer as a kid, Yhonnie loved reading. Through books, her mind would go on journeys. She spent most of her time outside when living in Alice Springs: living there, you either had hills at the front of your house or hills at the back of your house. There was space for exploring: 'I would walk for 20 minutes and find myself in a bush setting.'

Yhonnie spent many hours being by herself, listening to music, reading, building a cubby house, which she would then maintain and care for: 'I still spend time on my own. I still listen to music and love reading.' As there was not a lot to do as a teenager in Alice Springs, Yhonnie tuned in to the one TV station available, the ABC (which at the time she wasn't too happy about but looking back she sees the benefit of that simplicity). On this local network, she watched world history and Countdown, and for the first time a window opened up to a global view.

The isolation and dry heat of the desert of Alice Springs had a homeliness about it for Yhonnie. And while living in such a location might seem limiting, Yhonnie grew up with a lot of space around her and this excited her. To be able to view a horizon line in front of you, that is a place for Thinking Big; and Thinking Big is something Yhonnie still does today.

Art School

At the age of nineteen, Yhonnie left Alice Springs and returned to Adelaide, where she lived for fifteen years. Working in an administration role at the Centre for Australian Indigenous Research and Studies at the University of Adelaide, Yhonnie made the decision to embark on tertiary studies in art, despite the fact that studying fine arts at that time was generally frowned upon and seen as a 'lazy' degree. In 2001 she enrolled in a Bachelor of Visual Arts, with majors in glass making and painting, and was the first Aboriginal student to graduate from the glass making program in 2003.

Her long-standing connection to Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute in Adelaide was, and has continued to be, hugely supportive and motivating for Yhonnie. She worked at Tandanya on and off for many years, completing an arts traineeship there, and met numerous inspiring artists. She also learnt how to spot carpetbaggers of Indigenous art from a mile away. It was at Tandanya that Yhonnie had her first solo exhibition following university in 2006, Forget Me 'Not'.

Yhonnie's experience of art school is one she describes as having changed her life forever, and the best decision she ever made. During her time at art school, Yhonnie recalls being poor but happy. Art school opened the door to overseas travel and enabled her to work with, and learn from, artists and academics who have been influential in the direction of her practice. In particular, Yhonnie acknowledges Gabriella Bisetto, a senior lecturer and contemporary artist, who taught Yhonnie many glass making skills and processes.

This was also the time when Yhonnie's research deepened. She had the space to explore her artistic ideas, but also the very real histories and atrocities from around the world that felt connected to her personal and ancestral experience. It was during this time that Yhonnie made key early works: *The day we went away* 2004, a found suitcase of clear hand-blown glass bush fruits that represent the forced removal of First Nations children from their families and people from their land, the clarity of the glass revealing the truth of that shameful history; and *What they wanted* 2006-10, a wall-based composition comprised of small glass figures hung in a crucifix formation.

In 2008, Yhonnie moved to Melbourne to pursue a Master of Fine Arts by Research at Monash University. This move was prompted by the receipt of a prestigious Women in Research Fellowship, for which she was an artist in residence at the university. Yhonnie has lived and worked in Melbourne since, frequently returning to South Australia to visit, connect with Country and make her work.

Turning Points

Over her career to date, Yhonnie has been the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships; her work has been exhibited widely nationally and internationally in critical solo and group shows, and biennales; she has received a number of large-scale public commissions; and her work is held in significant public and private collections in Australia and overseas. Her achievements are vast, and each has contributed to Yhonnie's vibrant and meaningful practice. There are, however, a selection of turning points that defined her purpose and path along the way.

In 2008, Yhonnie was the inaugural South Australian recipient of the Qantas Foundation Encouragement Award, which enabled her to travel to Germany, Paris, the Netherlands and the United States. Yhonnie visited numerous memorials for victims of genocide, including Sachsenhausen in Germany, Anne Frank's house in the Netherlands among others. She spent time chasing the memorialising work of French artist Christian Boltanski in Paris. In Berlin she accessed archives to research the impacts of Hitler's Germany. This was a significant moment in her life, a trip that led to her realisation that the memorials she was visiting did not exist for First Nations people in Australia. Since then, she has travelled extensively overseas, deepening her knowledge and experience of memorials, as well as sites of genocide, human experimentation and nuclear devastation, including Auschwitz-Birkenau, Chernobyl, Fukushima and Wounded Knee.

Yhonnie recalls other turning points as being the inclusion of her work in *Everywhen: The Eternal Present in Indigenous Art from Australia*, an exhibition at Harvard University Art Museum curated by Stephen Gilchrist; and most recently, Yhonnie was the 2020 recipient of the Yalingwa Visual Arts Fellowship, a prestigious award that supports the development of contemporary Indigenous art and curatorial practice. She was granted this fellowship in recognition of her outstanding career as an artist, teacher and mentor

Of course, there is also the ongoing influence of her relationship with the JamFactory in Adelaide, which began ten years ago. The JamFactory is the space where Yhonnie continues to create her increasingly ambitious works

in glass and build collaborative connections with other artists and practitioners who are culturally sensitive to the work that she makes.

Glass

Yhonnie came to the medium of glass intuitively. Describing herself as an opshopper, she recalls the day when she found a purple and clear glass vase in a secondhand store and took it home. Perhaps this was the turning point, and the moment that her connection to, and appreciation of the material of glass was realised.

Learning about the process of glass being made, Yhonnie found connections back to her Country. The way lightning hits sand – a kind of freak of nature, where the sand turns into glass – made her think about about how her Country is made primarily of sand, of having come from the desert with connections to the sea, and of the experiments conducted at Woomera, Maralinga and Emu Field. From these connections, glass became a natural material to which Yhonnie gravitated: 'It was sitting there waiting for me. I think that I went looking for it, yet the glass object made the decision'.

Yhonnie's glass works are translucent, breath-infused, womb-like fruits. They hang, cell-like in the air, or clustered in groups on shelves and vessels, and critically staged in dialogue with the often medico-white gallery spaces that they inhabit. Yhonnie's hand-blown bush bananas, bush plums and bush yams, from the artist's Country, are blown in glass and have various intentional clarities: some more black, some more white, some sandblasted, others with a mirror-like lustre, and at times containing uranium. While glass might seem like a fragile material, it has the potential to be strong and withstand pressure; and when it does break, there is always something left behind; attributes that are metaphorically vital to Yhonnie's work and politics.

Family

As Yhonnie's glass bush foods honour her ancestors through their forms and materiality, her photographs are archival portraits that keep her family close. She celebrates her family in these images, nurturing them with offerings and gifts. Yhonnie travels with these images of her family, accompanying them, as their chaperone, when they are exhibited. *Remember Royalty*, for example, is a 2018 work comprising large-scale portraits of Yhonnie's ancestors, with sculptural offerings to them in a shrine-like installation, first commissioned for the exhibition *A Lightness of Spirit is the Measure of Happiness*, curated by Hannah Presley for ACCA.

Remember Royalty subsequently, and unusually, travelled internationally to Paris Photo without Yhonnie: 'When they left, these fullas took off without me. They were cruising the world. This was the first time that the family went without me, I always accompanied them everywhere.' Yhonnie felt a sense of yearning and being left behind as her family (or images of them) hopped on the plane while she attended the unveiling of the National Gallery of Victoria's 2019 Architecture Commission, *In absence* 2019 – a large scale architectural work for which she and her collaborators Edition Office subsequently won the 2020 National Architecture Award for Small Project Architecture.

Before this time, her family had limited opportunity to travel, but now they make appearances in exhibitions all over the world. Yhonnie has given her ancestors that opportunity, but it works both ways; as she described, without them she wouldn't have the education or strength of knowledge to be who she is and be doing what she does. Yhonnie, therefore, lets them be free: 'When they started cruising around the world without me, I had to cut the apron strings'.

Yhonnie now visits her family in institutions all over the world. As she describes it, the doors are always open. At the same time, her ancestors are always with her in spirit, supporting her and providing strength wherever she goes.

Politics

Yhonnie's interdisciplinary practice explores her people's experience of removal, experimentation, exclusion and containment; experiences that intimately reflect the activities of Woomera and the extended prohibited area, including Maralinga and Emu Field. In her works, the motivation of colonial eradication and classification is intertwined with a celebration of resilience and the all-binding nature of the artist's culture, achieved through an intimate knowledge of her specific mediums, their aesthetics and political potential. While the politics present in Yhonnie's work is inevitably connected to her research into related experiences of genocide and ethnic cleansing across the world, her work specifically reflects on tragedies inflicted upon her ancestors since colonisation and the lack of memorials to these events.

In the absence of public memorials such as those found overseas, Yhonnie's works stand as memorials, while also speaking about the need for more concrete reminders of these atrocities inflicted on the First Nations people of this country. In the work *Burial ground* 2009, for example, Yhonnie created eighty individually blown black glass yams that represent Aboriginal bodies. It is a work that speaks of the killing times and massacres of Aboriginal people

that happened across the country since colonisation. *Blood on the wattle (Elliston, South Australia, 1849)* 2013, another memorial form, was shown in *Personal Structures, Time Space Existence*, an official satellite exhibition of the 2013 Venice Biennale. This work presents a Perspex coffin containing four hundred blown glass black bush yams, memorialising a distressing large-scale massacre of Aboriginal people at Elliston, South Australia in 1849, also known as the Waterloo Bay massacre.

Yhonnie's works specifically reference the devastating removal of her people from their Country, a Country that is still in part inaccessible due to its demarcation as a 'prohibited' land. She also focuses on the harrowing human experiments conducted on First Nations people by eugenicists. The glass bush fruits and vegetables in her works appear as organs, still born babies, clouds of medical tests – a metaphor for First Nations people who have been categorised, bred out, moved on, segregated, disfigured, contained, murdered. Weak in colour but strong in blood 2014 – first presented at the Art Gallery of New South Wales as part of *Imagine What You Desire: 19th Biennale of Sydney* in 2014 – chillingly references these medico-eugenic practices of the early 1900s. Glass fruit skins that range in tone are squashed into beakers; the lighter skins are separated out from the rest and ordered on trays, while the darker bush plums are discarded. This work represents the dangerous forms of stereotyping and ethnic cleansing practices that have been inflicted on First Nations people in Australia.

In another work, *Not willing to suffocate* 2012, three glass bush bananas are clamped and squeezed in what appears to be a strange scientific experiment. However, they do not break under the force. Through her choice of material, Yhonnie emphasises the resilience of Aboriginal people who have been removed from their land and forced to suffer extensively under racist colonial experiments. While Yhonnie's sculptural works explore these dark realities through metaphor and material, her photographs return the gaze of those white ethnographers, anthropologists, genealogists and eugenicists. Yhonnie confronts and refutes the injustices of white settlement and the 'underlying weapons of colonial power'.

Missile Park

Yhonnie's survey at ACCA and the IMA is called *Missile Park*, a name borrowed from the plaza at Woomera where the public can visit to see the remains of the missile and aircraft experiments that happened there from the 1940s to 1960s. However, this park is also a reminder of what occurred on Yhonnie's Country, although it is neither acknowledged nor memorialised there. This survey itself is a culmination of the past fifteen years of work, including a new commission,

made for, and which lends its name to, the show. *Missile Park* 2021 is a series of corrugated metal sheds or hangers, like those architectural structures found in Woomera and Maralinga. They are containers for trauma and light. Percolating in Yhonnie's thoughts for some years, this piece, now realised in this travelling survey exhibition, is a work that brings powerful clarity to a secret and shameful history.



Selected exhibitions and publications

Yhonnie Scarce (Kokatha and Nukunu, born 1973 Woomera, South Australia; lives and works Melbourne) completed a Bachelor of Visual Arts, Glass (Honours), at the University of South Australia, Adelaide, in 2004, and was awarded a Master of Fine Art (Research) Monash University, Melbourne in 2010. Scarce is the recipient of numerous awards, commissions and residencies, including the Yalingwa Fellowship, Melbourne, 2020; NGV Architecture Commission, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne 2019; Indigenous Ceramic Award, Shepparton Art Museum, Shepparton, 2018; the Kate Challis RAKA Award, 2018; Guirgius New Art Prize, Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat, 2017; and Qantas Foundation Encouragement for Australian Contemporary Art Award, 2008, among others.

Solo exhibitions include Yhonnie Scarce: Missile Park, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, and Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane, 2021; In Absence, (with Edition Office), NGV Architecture Commission, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2019; Personal Histories, Benalla Art Gallery, Benalla, 2019; Installation Contemporary, Sydney Contemporary, Sydney, 2018; Hollowing Earth, Tarrawarra Museum of Art, Healesville, 2017; Strontium 90, THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne, 2016; Blue Danube, Michael Reid Gallery, Berlin, Germany, 2015; Yhonnie Scarce, THIS IS NO FANTASY at Art Basel Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 2015; The Silence of Others, dianne tanzer gallery + projects, Melbourne, 2014; The Cultivation of Whiteness, dianne tanzer gallery + projects, Melbourne, 2013; Border Plantings, (with Alberto Baraya), Australian Experimental Art Foundation, Adelaide, 2013; What They Wanted, Kluge Ruhe Aboriginal Art Museum, University of Virginia, USA, 2012; Target Practice, dianne tanzer gallery + projects, Melbourne, 2011; Ectopia, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra, 2011, and dianne tanzer gallery + project, Melbourne, 2010; Forget Me 'Not', Tandanya National Aboriginal Cultural Institute, Adelaide, 2006; and Yhonnie Scarce, BANK Gallery, University of South Australia, Adelaide, 2004.

Selected group exhibitions include *Looking Glass: Judy Watson and Yhonnie Scarce*, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, 2020; *Monster Theatres: Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2020; *Australia: Antipodean Stories*, Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea, Milan, 2019; *Ways of Being*, Museum London, Ontario, Canada, 2019; *Violent Salt*, Artspace Mackay, Mackay 2019, and touring; *After Technology*, University of Technology, Sydney, 2019; *Indigenous Ceramic Award*, Shepparton Art Museum, Shepparton, 2018; *Biennale of Australian Art*, Ballarat, 2018; *A Lightness of Spirit is the Measure of Happiness*, Australian Centre for

Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2018; The 1818 Project, Newcastle Art Gallery, Newcastle, 2018; *Measured Response*, National Art School Gallery, Sydney, 2018; Indigenous Australia: Masterworks from the NGA, National Gallery of Modern Art, New Dehli, 2018; Colony: Frontier Wars, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2018; Defying Empire: 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2017; Guirgius New Art Prize, Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2017; The National: New Australian Art, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2017; Versus Rodin: bodies across space and time, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2017; Under the Sun: Reimagining Max Dupain's Sunbaker, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, and touring. 2017: Re-Visioning Histories, Bundoora Homestead, Melbourne, 2016; Border Crossing, Galway Arts Centre, Galway, Ireland, 2016; Everywhen: The Eternal Present in Indigenous Art from Australia, Harvard Art Museum, Boston, 2016; Weak in Colour but Strong in Blood, Canberra Contemporary Art Space, Canberra, 2016; Lifelines: Indigenous Contemporary Art from Australia, Musée de la Civilisation, Québec, Canada, 2016; Tarnanthi Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2015; You Imagine What You Desire: 19th Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, 2014; Melbourne Now, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, 2013; Personal Structures, Time Space Existence, Palazzo Bembo, 55th Venice Biennale, Italy, 2013; Victorian Indigenous Art Awards 2013, Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat, 2013; Western Australia Indigenous Art Awards 2013, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Perth. 2013; Heartland, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2013;

Recent publications include Hetti Perkins, *Looking Glass: Judy Watson and Yhonnie Scarce*, TarraWarra Museum of Art and NETS Victoria, Melbourne, 2020; Eugenio Viola (ed), *Australia: Antipodean Stories*, Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea and Silvana Editoriale, Milan, 2020; Hannah Presley and Max Delany (eds), *A Lightness of Spirit is the Measure of Happiness*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, 2018; Tina Baum (ed), *Defying Empire: 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial*, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, 2017; *The National 2017: New Australian Art*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Carriageworks and Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, 2017; Victoria Lynn (ed), *Yhonnie Scarce: Hollowing Earth*, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Healesville, 2017; Nici Cumpston and Lisa Slade (eds), *Tarnanthi: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, South Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, 2013.

Yhonnie Scarce is represented by THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne thisisnofantasy.com/artist/yhonnie-scarce

Annotated list of works

Yhonnie Scarce

Kokatha/Nukunu born 1973 in Woomera, South Australia lives and works in Melbourne

The day we went away 2004 hand-blown glass, found suitcase 42.0 x 46.0 x 37.0 cm
Private collection, New Zealand

The earliest work in the exhibition, *The day we went away* was produced during Yhonnie Scarce's final year at the South Australian School of Art in 2004, where she undertook a major in glass. The medium of glass has continued to lie at the centre of the artist's practice. Scarce has become an expert glassblower and frequently works in collaboration with artisans at the neighbouring JamFactory in Adelaide. As catalogue essayist Daniel Browning has observed, 'Scarce has almost single-handedly created a medium-based genre of Indigenous art that is without precedent'.

A found suitcase containing a collection of bush bananas, *The day we went away* speaks to the histories of displacement and dislocation related to the removal of Aboriginal children from their homelands and families, and to the experiences of Aboriginal people being sent to missions, to foster families, into domestic servitude, and to work as itinerant labourers. In counterpoint, it might also refer to the suitcases of colonisers and missionaries who imposed themselves on Aboriginal communities, extracting resources as well as exploiting human labour.

What they wanted 2006–10
hand-blown glass and cotton twine
150.0 x 100.0 cm (overall)
Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide
Shirley Cameron Wilson Bequest Fund 2007

From the moment the British colonised Australia in 1788, settlers encountered active resistance from First Nations communities as sovereign people defending their lands. Known as the frontier wars, thousands of Aboriginal men, women and children were killed in these exchanges, with violent massacres

strategically deployed by colonists to eradicate Indigenous people from their Country.

Yhonnie Scarce's practice has a memorial function, exploring the far-reaching impacts and legacies of colonisation, government policies and historical atrocities committed against Aboriginal people. Acknowledging the lack of public monuments dedicated to the frontier wars, *What they wanted* is one of numerous works by Scarce that memorialises First Peoples who were murdered as a result of colonial violence and subsequent genocidal government policies. The cruciform format of the work also alludes to the historical role of the church in these events.

Burial ground 2009

hand-blown glass dimensions variable Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne

Bush foods, such as yams, bush plums and bush bananas appear repeatedly in Yhonnie Scarce's work, attesting to the abundant and sustaining nature of the land, as well as to the significance of Indigenous ecological knowledge and connection to Country.

In works such as *Burial ground*, and the accompanying *Blood on the wattle* (*Elliston, South Australia, 1849*) 2013, the elongated heart-shaped yam figures are uncannily anthropomorphic. They lie in memorial to ancestral figures who lost their lives in the frontier wars defending sacred ground. As a resting place exploring the darkest parts of Australia's colonial history, *Burial ground* also refers to ecological destruction – to the devastation of Country – as a direct result of colonisation.

The collected 2010

hand-blown sandblasted glass, found wooden boxes, transparent synthetic polymer resin, metal 10.9 x 15.6 x 24.6 cm; 7.4 x 30.7 x 27.5 cm; 13.1 x 33.5 x 27.0 cm National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased, NGV Supporters of Indigenous Art, 2011

Yhonnie Scarce spent her tertiary years in Adelaide, which is renowned as an international centre for cultural anthropology. Significant collections

of Aboriginal material culture in institutions such as the South Australian Museum still include the remains of family members and ancestors originally gathered as objects of scientific research. These collections are especially sensitive to Aboriginal people, for whom such artefacts remain disconnected from Country, family and the communities to whom they belong, and are unable to be released as ancestral spirits who might heal and guide First Nations communities in the present.

Scarce's work often incorporates found objects that reference the disciplinary forms of such colonial institutions and their methods of representation, informed by religion, ethnography, medical science, museology and taxonomy. *The collected* encompasses a series of bureaucratic cabinet drawers, which reference colonial archives, records and ethnographic collections of human and cultural artefacts found in such museums.

Florey and Fanny 2012

hand-blown glass and found cotton aprons dimensions variable City of Yarra Council collection, Melbourne

Family history, and an abiding respect and admiration for her forebears and ancestors, is central to Yhonnie Scarce's work. Nukunu women, Florey and Fanny were Scarce's great grandmother and grandmother respectively. Fanny has appeared elsewhere in Scarce's work, notably in the multi-panelled *Remember Royalty* 2018, first shown at ACCA in 2018, photographed with her partner Barwell in the opal fields of Andamooka. Their daughter Beverly appears in the background with Barwell in *Working class man (Andamooka opal fields)* 2017.

Florey and Fanny are represented through the white aprons that were the standard uniform for young Aboriginal girls sent into domestic servitude. Scarce has sewn Florey and Fanny's names into these garments to restore her family members' identity to these otherwise anonymous costumes. Carried in the pockets of these cotton aprons are glass bush plums, relating both to bush tucker and also to the metaphoric umbilical cords of family connection. In this work these women are secretly carrying these bush plums as a way to keep close to Country, as they would have carried language and culture, whilst being constrained and controlled by the uniform apron strings of domestic servitude.

Blood on the wattle (Elliston, South Australia, 1849) 2013

hand-blown glass and transparent synthetic polymer resin 60.0 x 210.0 x 75.0 cm

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne

Purchased with funds donated by Kerry Gardner, Andrew Myer and The Myer Foundation, 2013

As white European settlers took up farmlands in remote South Australia in the nineteenth century, they were met by resistance from local Indigenous communities who fought to retain their traditional homelands, hunting grounds and waterholes. Now documented as part of the frontier wars, the 1849 Elliston Massacre was the culmination of a series of reprisal attacks that resulted in Aboriginal people being shot or herded to their deaths over the cliffs of Waterloo Bay, South Australia. Whilst colonial records are limited and underestimate the death toll, recent scholarship confirms that at least fourteen Wirangu people were killed at the site. However, oral histories have circulated since at least 1880 that more than two-hundred Aboriginal people lost their lives at Waterloo Bay.

Yhonnie Scarce's work *Blood on the wattle (Elliston, South Australia, 1849)* memorialises this distressing, and until recently, unacknowledged and contested history. Scarce's Perspex coffin contains four-hundred blown-glass, black bush yams, which stand in for the unknown number of Indigenous people killed at Elliston, and for the many unknown Aboriginal people who have died as a result of colonisation. Seeking to redress the lack of memorials dedicated to the Aboriginal narratives of Australia's frontier wars and massacres, *Blood on the wattle* preceded a public memorial to this event that was eventually established at Elliston in 2017 after much public contestation.

The cultivation of whiteness 2013

hand-blown glass, painted metal and found glass beakers 60 glass sculptures in 60 beakers dimensions variable National Gallery of Australia, Canberra Purchased 2014

Symbolically deploying the material of glass as both a lens and a mirror, *The cultivation of whiteness* focusses attention on historically racist scientific theories of assimilation. This work is underpinned by the litany of harsh and degrading abuses suffered by Aboriginal people in the name of scientific and medical research, including the practice of eugenics and biological theories in

the construction and 'cultivation of whiteness'. These practices also led to the forced and systematic removal of Aboriginal children from their families, known as the Stolen Generations, who were placed in white Australian families as a means to 'breed' out their Indigeneity.

In *The cultivation of whiteness* Scarce presents sixty bush bananas, yams and plums in sixty glass beakers, each bearing an uncanny and disturbing resemblance to embryos, hearts, and kidneys. Extending the length of the gallery walls, these organ-like objects are presented in taxonomic fashion, like an enduring timeline of the continuing legacy of policies and practices that continue to have traumatic repercussions for Indigenous communities today.

Weak in colour but strong in blood 2014

hand-blown glass, found steel trolleys and medical equipment dimensions variable Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne

First presented at the Biennale of Sydney in 2014, Weak in colour but strong in blood is one of several works in the exhibition that critically refers to histories of scientific, medical and anthropological research conducted on Aboriginal people, including harmful and degrading theories and quasi-scientific practices of eugenics, anthropometrics, the blood quantum debate and the racialised ethnographic gaze.

Presented in the 'white cube' of the gallery space, the clinical and forensic environment of Scarce's installation is further emphasised by industrially scaled infirmary curtains and cold steel hospital trollies. Our attention is drawn to collections of glass forms, presented as specimens on display, which are subject to varying degrees of scrutiny, categorisation, contortion and deformation by scientific and medical implements. These 'eviscerated organs', as writer Daniel Browning has referred to them, recall the historical collection and dissection of human remains by colonial museums around the world in the name of scientific and ethnographic research.

The title *Weak in colour but strong in blood* also offers a counterpoint to these troubling and traumatic histories, referring to the strength and resilience of First Nations peoples in maintaining cultural knowledge and identity, and keeping culture strong despite these historical abuses.

Dinah 2016

inkjet print from archival photograph and hand-blown glass dimensions variable Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne

Dinah Coleman is Yhonnie Scarce's great great grandmother. Her photo was taken at Koonibba in the 1920s, a Lutheran mission on Wirangu country near Tjutjuna/Ceduna, in remote South Australia. The photographer is unknown, but the image coincides with photographs taken by anthropologist Norman Tindale who visited Koonibba in 1928. *Dinah* is one of a number of works by Scarce that retrieve historical photographic images from the containment of colonial archives and liberate them from the restrictive focus of the ethnographic gaze by recasting them as treasured, aesthetic, family portraits.

In these works, the artist makes delicate, hand-crafted glass gifts, or offerings, to her ancestors, in an act of appreciation, reverence and respect. Here Dinah is presented as though above a mantelpiece, in the manner of a family portrait at home, accompanied by a collection of precious bush plums. This act of reclamation serves as an intimate memorial to Scarce's great great grandmother, whilst also affirming the enduring influence and importance of ancestors and family connection to the present.

Working class man (Andamooka opal fields) 2017

inkjet print from archival photograph, hand-blown glass, found steel bucket 150.0 x 107.0 cm (print); installation dimensions variable Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne

Working class man (Andamooka opal fields) is a portrait of the artist's grandfather, Barwell Coleman, pictured with his daughter Beverley – one of a long line of assured, resilient women in Scarce's family – looking on confidently in the background. In search of a better life for his family, Scarce's grandfather worked in various jobs, including as an itinerant labourer, shearer and miner. The photo is taken on the Andamooka opal fields, not far from Woomera, where Scarce was born.

The original image of Barwell is enlarged from an intimate family photograph, imbuing her grandfather and aunt with presence and dignity. In this shrine-like installation, Scarce gifts her late grandfather a collection of glass yams, bestowed in an antique bucket, which echoes that in the pictorial field. In Scarce's work, the anthropomorphic figure of the yam attests to the inherent connection between people and country and, equally, to the importance of

family networks across country. These precious and sustaining bush foods also refer to Scarce's inheritance of the fruits of her grandfather's knowledge, labour and love of family. As with the accompanying portrait of Dinah, Scarce pays homage to her ancestors, sharing their significant stories in the present.

Missile Park 2021

zinc sheet, steel frame, earth magnets, bitumen paint, shellac, hand-blown glass $300.0 \times 300.0 \times 400.0 \text{ cm}$ (shed 1, flat); $300.0 \times 300.0 \times 400.0 \text{ cm}$ (shed 2, pitched); $300.0 \times 300.0 \times 400.0 \text{ cm}$ (shed 3, vaulted)

Architectural design: Mikhail Rodrick Glass blowing assistance: Kristel Britcher

Material fabrication and construction: Corey Thomas, Caravan Studios

Courtesy the artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY, Melbourne

Yhonnie Scarce's new commission *Missile Park* continues the artist's research into the British nuclear tests carried out in Australia in the 1950s and '60s. Born in Woomera, and belonging to the Kokatha and Nukunu people, Scarce's extended family were displaced from their homelands after tests were carried out at Emu Field and Maralinga – a region now zoned as the Woomera Prohibited Area. Scarce has returned repeatedly to her birthplace to investigate the effects that nuclear tests and radiation have had on local Indigenous populations and the landscape, much of which remains inaccessible today.

The installation *Missile Park* encompasses three sheds that reference the temporary dwellings established by the military at Maralinga during the height of nuclear testing in the region. Echoing vernacular Australian architecture, each structure houses twenty bush plums, a native food found on Kokatha land. These glass orbs, redolent of Country and sustenance, bear a strange resemblance to both atomic bombs and the umbilical cords of fallout babies. Contained within these dark and tomb like structures, *Missile Park* becomes a memorial to the scores of unmarked graves, to hidden burial grounds, with each plum symbolising a life lost. Glass is a material of particular significance for Scarce: made of silica, or sand, it is derived from the landscape, from the materiality of Country. Silica naturally melts to glass at intense heats – or when struck by lightning or nuclear fission, as is the case with the vitreous landscapes at Maralinga. For Scarce, glass serves as an especially relevant lens to expose and memorialise these histories.

The name 'Missile Park' refers to the public plaza situated at the front of the now closed Woomera History Museum. It contains a collection of rockets and rocket launchers, bombs, target drones, guidance systems, experimental

aeroplanes and space junk related to the history of Woomera; a town established at the outset of the Cold War in 1947, specifically for the launching of British experimental rockets, and the development of air and space defence systems. Today, Woomera is still administered by the Australian Department of Defence and continues to operate as a rocket testing range. It also encompasses the Joint Defence Facility Nurrangar, a space-based surveillance and early missile detection facility operated between the Australian Defence Force and United States Air Force, operational from 1969 and decommissioned in 1999. In more recent years, Woomera has also become known (and infamous) for the now closed Woomera Detention Centre, as well as being the proposed future site of a nuclear waste dump.

The idea of *Missile Park*, as the title for Yhonnie Scarce's exhibition, also delineates a much greater area, known as the Woomera Prohibited Area, or Woomera Exclusion Zone. This area extends across remote South Australia, from Woomera to Maralinga, and from Emu Field to nearby William Creek, and back down to the well-known mining sites Roxby Downs and Olympic Dam. The Woomera Prohibited Area now encompasses 127,000 square kilometres, and is said to be equivalent to the size of England or the US State of Florida.

It is in this sense that the idea of *Missile Park* refers to a much bigger 'parkland', and a much bigger history. Extending across the traditional lands of six Aboriginal groups – Maralinga Tjarutja, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara, Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara, Arabana, Gawler Ranges, and Kokatha, to which Yhonnie belongs, most of the area continues to remain inaccessible to its Traditional Owners. The existence of the Woomera Prohibited Area speaks profoundly not only to the history of the Cold War, atomic tests and war games, but also to the ongoing effects of colonisation of Aboriginal land, the resulting displacement of First People from their homelands, and the impact of government, military, industrial and technical administration.

Contributors

Daniel Browning

is a radio journalist, broadcaster, freelance arts writer and sound curator. A saltwater Goori from the far north coast of New South Wales, he produces and presents Awaye!, the Indigenous culture program on ABC Radio National.

Max Delany is Artistic Director & CEO, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne; and adjunct Associate Professor, Curatorial Practice, in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture, Monash University.

Natalie Harkin is a Narungga woman and poet from South Australia. She is a Senior Research Fellow at Flinders University and a member of the creative-arts research collaboration the Unbound Collective. Her poetry books are Dirty Words with Cordite Books. 2015, and Archival-Poetics with Vagabond Press, 2019.

Louis Anderson Mokak

is a Djugun man from West Kimberley. Louis is an interdisciplinary designer, who is the cofounder of First Nations Futures, and member of the First Nations Advisory Working Group and Cultural Reference Panel at the Australian Institute of Architects.

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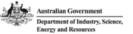












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