

secession

Vereinigung bildender KünstlerInnen Wiener Secession
Friedrichstraße 12, A-1010 Wien
T. +43-1-587 53 07, F. +43-1-587 53 07-34
office@secession.at, www.secession.at

Press release

Karrabing Film Collective

They pretending not to see us...

April 28 – June 18, 2023

Grafisches Kabinett

Preview for the press: Thursday, April 27, 2023, 10 a.m.

Opening: Thursday, April 27, 2023, 7 p.m.

The Karrabing Film Collective is an intergenerational grassroots media group of around thirty Indigenous filmmakers and Elizabeth Povinelli, who has known and worked with Karrabing members and their parents and grandparents for almost forty years. Karrabing lands stretch along the coast from across the Darwin harbor to Anson Bay, Northern Territory. Karrabing's films reflect their multidimensional relationships with each other, their land, their ancestors, and human and more-than-human life. They tell stories of their fraught relations with the Australian government, the lingering effects of white settler capitalism, repression by the police and authorities, and white Australians' failure to recognize Indigenous ways of life.

In Emmiyangal, one of the traditional languages of Karrabing members, "karrabing" means "low tide turning." When the tide is out, reefs, coves, and mangroves are accessible for collecting seafoods and many of the group's sea-based totems are visible. "Karrabing" is thus a word that refers to one condition of the tide but also a concept. It points to the ancestral and ecological interconnections among their lands and the violence of Western forms of property as boundaries. Filmmaking serves several functions for Karrabing. On the one hand, it is a way to seize the initiative and agency and tell the filmmakers' own stories. On the other hand, it is a "school" for the group's children—filmmaking lets them transmit knowledge across generations, and traveling to exhibitions and screenings, they get to know the world. Last but not least, the films meet quite pragmatic needs: they are occasions to come together, strengthen the group's vision, and travel the land. And as they travel to make their films, the group follow the tracks laid down by their human and more-than-human ancestors. This form of care—visiting totemic ancestors—keeps them from becoming "jealous," feeling disregarded. To know their land is to "sweat into the land." To belong to a place is to be in its presence.

NO STORYBOARD NO SCRIPT WE MAKE OUR FILMS FROM OUR LIFE AND LANDS FOR OUR LIFE AND LANDS.

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This artistic manifesto describes the collective's technique and approach to filmmaking. Working in the tradition of an oral history, the group develops the ideas for its films in a communal and conversational process; most of the footage is recorded on iPhones. Over the years, the Karrabing Film Collective has developed a characteristic film language in which layering and superimposition suggest the multidimensional interweaving of plot strands and reflect the simultaneity of temporal registers in their everyday lives. Just as the "ancestors" are not gone, racism and colonialism, for the Indigenous population, are not in the past.

At the Secession's Graphic Cabinet, the Karrabing Film Collective premieres its most recent film, *Night Fishing with Ancestors* (2023, 24 min 37 sec). "The film asks what other history could have been possible if the Europeans had never invaded and Indigenous people and Macassans had continued to trade foods, stories, and other things. We think that would have been a great history. Unfortunately, the Europeans came and they just keep coming, disaster after disaster. Makes your hair stand on end just thinking about it."⁽¹⁾

Divided into six chapters with a total running time of just under twenty-five minutes, the film traces an arc from the era before European colonization, illustrated by the amicable exchange with the neighboring Macassans, across Captain Cook's arrival in 1770 and the traumatic experiences of the Indigenous population brought on by the ensuing colonialism such as massacres, epidemics, and forced displacement, to past gold and diamond rushes and today's excessive mining and, in the final scenes, the noticeable effects of climate change.

In the staircase leading up to the gallery, sprawling collages of images and writings in Karrabing's characteristic layering technique spotlight central challenges that Indigenous peoples have confronted since the dawn of colonialism and still confront today. Historic photographs and maps, video stills and texts blend into one another, speaking to historic and present-day injustices, to colonial power relations and the quest for self-determination and independence. The messages could not be any more explicit: "They pretend not to see us," "white people only want what is valuable in their eyes," "then they tried to massacre us so we wouldn't be there," "another history still exists in the sands."

1. Natasha Bigfoot, Katrina Lewis-Bigfoot, Rex Edmunds, Cecilia Lewis, Elizabeth A. Povinelli in conversation in the book published in conjunction with the exhibition.

In the book accompanying the exhibition, the group's members provide insight into the genesis and context of their most recent film. A collage of images and writings introduces us to fish traps built by the ancestors, the bonds between people and their land, and their efforts—which include their films—to pass down their traditions and myths to their children. An extensive essay by the anthropologist, filmmaker, and activist Massimiliano Mollona discusses Karrabing Film Collective's work with reference to Third Cinema and positions it within Indigenous or Fourth Cinema, which, as an instrument of decolonization, points the way toward "unlearning imperialism."

The digital publication is available for free at https://secession.at/category/digital_publication.

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Cameron Malcolm BIANAMU, Akaydia Angelina LEE, Shekinah Aaliyah LEWIS, Katrina LEWIS, Cecilia LEWIS, Natasha LEWIS, Peter Joseph WINSLEY as well as Elizabeth POVINELLI travelled from Australia to Austria to be here for the opening. The youngest members are only 8 and 4 years old.

Programmed by the board of the Secession

Curated by Bettina Spörr

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Publication

Karrabing Film Collective. No Storyboard, No Script

Format: 21 x 29,7 cm

Details: Softcover, dustjacket, 96 pages

Series design concept: Sabo Day

Graphic design: Sabo Day, Royen Eveleigh

Texts: Massimiliano Mollona, Karrabing Film Collective (Natasha Bigfoot, Katrina Lewis-Bigfoot, Rex Edmunds, Cecilia Lewis, Elizabeth A. Povinelli)

Languages: German, English, Creole (Karrabing Film Collective)

approx. 100 images

Secession 2023

Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, Köln

EUR 18,00

Intervention by the artists: Karrabing Film Collective has created a limited-edition series of four cards for the publication, one of which is enclosed with each copy. The faces of the cards show image-text collages in Karrabing's characteristic technique of layering and superimposition. Historic photographs and maps, video stills and texts blend into one another, speaking to historic and present-day injustices, to colonial power relations and the quest for self-determination and independence. The messages could not be any more explicit: "They pretend not to see us," "white people only want what is valuable in their eyes," "then they tried to massacre us so we wouldn't be there," "another history still exists in the sands." Stamped on the reverse of the cards is a creative manifesto that outlines the group's practice and approach to filmmaking: NO STORYBOARD NO SCRIPT WE MAKE OUR FILMS FROM OUR LIFE AND LANDS FOR OUR LIFE AND LANDS.

In the book accompanying Karrabing Film Collective's exhibition *They pretending not to see us...*, some of the Indigenous Australian group's around thirty members provide insight into the genesis and context of their most recent film, *Night Fishing with Ancestors*. A collage of images and writings introduces us to fish traps built by the ancestors, the bonds between people and their land, and their efforts—which include the group's films—to pass down their traditions and myths to their children. An extensive essay by the anthropologist, filmmaker, and activist Massimiliano Mollona discusses Karrabing Film Collective's work with reference to Third Cinema and positions it within Indigenous or Fourth Cinema, which, as an instrument of decolonization, points the way toward "unlearning imperialism."

The **Karrabing Film Collective** is a grassroots Indigenous based media group. Filmmaking provides a means of self-organization and social analysis for the Karrabing. Screenings and publications allow the Karrabing to develop local artistic languages and forms and allow audiences to understand new forms of collective Indigenous agency. Their medium is a form of survivance—a refusal to relinquish their country and a means of investigating contemporary social conditions of inequality. The films represent their lives, create bonds with their land, and intervene in global images of Indigeneity.

Karrabing consists of over 30 members, all but one Indigenous stakeholders for the land, with ages from new-born to elder. The Karrabing Indigenous Corporation seeks to integrate their parents, and

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grandparents' ways of life into their contemporary struggles to educate their children, create economically sustainable cultural and environmental businesses, and support their homeland centers.

Massimiliano Mollona is an anthropologist and filmmaker based at the Department of the Arts (DAR) at the University of Bologna and specializing in economic and political anthropology and the anthropology of art. His projects focus on extractivism, class and labor struggles, militant cinema, and art/commons. He is one of the founding members of the Institute of Radical Imagination (IRI) and of the Laboratory for the Urban Commons (Athens).

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Current exhibitions

Hauptraum

Vivian Suter *A Stone in the Lake*

April 28 – June 18, 2023

Galerie

Margaret Salmon *Monument*

April 28 – June 18, 2023

Grafisches Kabinett

Karrabing Film Collective *They pretending not to see us...*

April 28 – June 18, 2023

Publications

Vivian Suter

Softcover, dustjacket, 168 pages, EUR 24,00

Margaret Salmon: Cinematographa. Introduction to Analogue Filmmaking

Publication date: beginning of June

Karrabing Film Collective. No Storyboard, No Script

Softcover, dustjacket, 96 pages, EUR 18,00

Permanent presentation

Gustav Klimt, *Beethoven Frieze*

Beethoven – Painting and Music in cooperation with
Wiener Symphoniker

Opening hours

Tuesday – Sunday 10 a.m. – 6 p.m.

Admission

Regular € 12,00 | Students under 26 € 7,50

Seniors 65+ € 10,00 | Free admission for children under 12

Press contact Secession

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Press images

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Karrabing Film Collective

Werklite | List of works

Night Fishing with Ancestors, 2023

Video, black-and-white and color, sound, 25 min

Stiegenhaus | staircase

Wandgestaltung aus digitalen Collagen unter Verwendung
von Videostills und historischen Landkarten, 2023

Wall design from digital collages using video stills and
historical maps, 2023

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Art Education Program

Friday, 12.5., 4:30 pm

Focus Film: Margaret Salmon & Karrabing Film Collective

Curator's tour with Bettina Spörr and Annette Südbeck in German. Free of charge.

Thursday, 4.5., 5 pm

Integrationswochen

Guided tour with focus on the Karrabing Film Collective. Free of charge. Registration:

kunstvermittlung@secession.at

Thursday, 24.5., 5 pm

Dialogue tour through the exhibition by Vivian Suter

with Jeanette Pacher, curator, and Florian Langhammer, Collectors Agenda. Free of charge.

Friday, 16.6., 10 am – 6 pm

Karlstag

In cooperation with the cultural institutions at Karlsplatz. Guided tours free of charge.

Sunday, 18.6., 5 pm

Nearly missed it?

Join us on a last-minute guided tour of the exhibitions by Vivian Suter, Margaret Salmon, and Karrabing Film Collective.

Wednesday, 3.5. and Wednesday, 7.6.

The Secession Turns 125

The Secession first opened its doors 125 years ago, on November 12, 1898. Come celebrate with us! On occasion of the anniversary, we offer free admission on the first Wednesday of every month throughout 2023.

Every Saturday

History of the Secession, architecture, and current exhibitions Overview tours at 11 am in English and at 2 pm in German.

Admission plus € 3,- guide fee per person. Kids under 12 free of charge. The guided tours are also available by appointment.