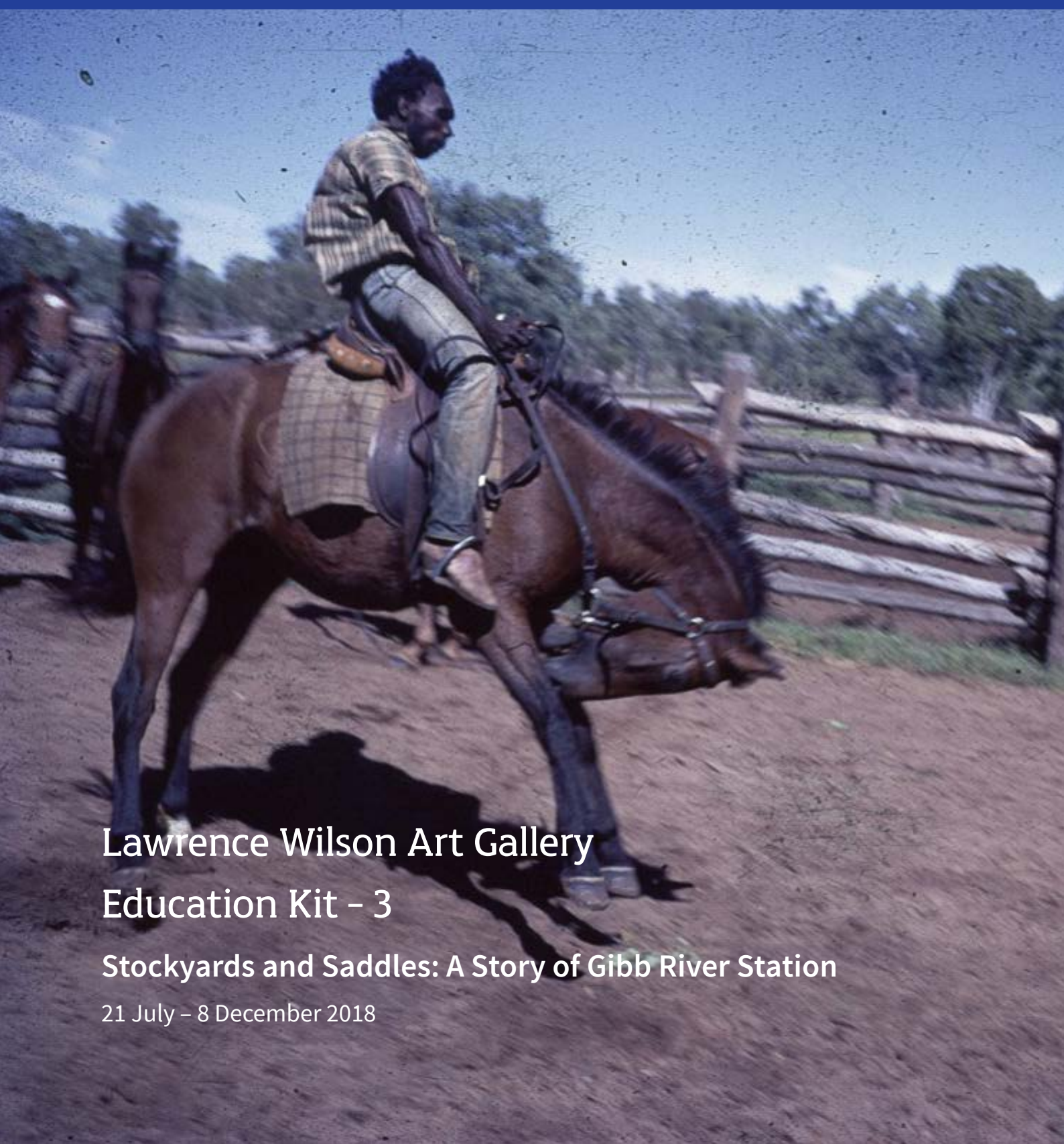




THE UNIVERSITY OF
**WESTERN
AUSTRALIA**



Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery Education Kit – 3

Stockyards and Saddles: A Story of Gibb River Station

21 July – 8 December 2018

PART A – SHARING HISTORIES

“The images centre on the Russ family and a close knit community of Aboriginal stockmen and women from the early 1900s until the 1980s. It sets the scene for new narratives around remote station life that revisits history in terms of general stereotypes of station experiences that refer to harsh conditions and mistreatment, by adding another dimension. They show a relational kinship between a particular cohort of people living in an extremely remote location which then adds to our national truth telling beyond genealogical bonds. Here we see an opportunity to advocate for a shared experience between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal.”

Dr Vanessa Russ
Associate Director, Berndt Museum



*Topsy and Pauline next to the copper boiler at the wash room.
Reproduction of a colour photo © Colin Russ*

Cross Curriculum Outcomes Priorities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Culture

This exhibition allows students and teachers the opportunity to address **cross curriculum outcomes priorities** through viewing this shared history. Students will be able to deepen their knowledge of Australia by engaging with the stories and recorded experiences of Aboriginal people. The exhibition will provide opportunities for students to connect with the stories, and students should gain a broader understanding that Aboriginal communities are diverse, resilient and strong.

Links to content can be explored through, but not limited to, the following Western Australian School Curriculum and Standard Authority courses:

- Visual Arts
- Design
- Aboriginal and Intercultural Studies
- Humanities and Social Studies
- Year 6 HASS Addressing key concepts such as continuity, change, cause and effect, perspectives and empathy which can be investigated within the historical context of the development of Australia as a nation.
- Year 10 HASS Curriculum : Depth study 2: Investigating rights and freedoms. (1945–the present)



Working out near the airstrip – getting the billy ready for smoko (afternoon tea). Left-Right: Archie in back, Pompey, Leslie, Alfie, Jerry.
Reproduction of a colour photo © Colin Russ

Points to consider as you view the exhibition.

1. From viewing the exhibition, what is your general impression of the way of life at Gibb River Station for the Aboriginal people there at that time?
2. How have different cultures interacted with their environment and with each other at Gibb River Station?
3. Culture, what is it? How is it formed?
4. Consider the diversity amongst the ways in which Aboriginal people have lived and worked throughout our shared history.
5. How have past as well as present issues in politics impacted upon the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?
6. How do the social interactions of Aboriginal people impact upon the development of cultural identity?



Taking cattle to branding yard. Left-Right: Alfie, Frank, Fred, Archie, Chapman.
Reproduction of a colour photo © Colin Russ

Resources for the further Investigation

aiatsis.gov.au/research/finding-your-family/family-history-sources/land-and-pastoral-station-records

education.abc.net.au/home#!/media/154310/?id=154310

charternorth.com.au/the-kimberleys-history/

For Further Research

1905 Act

noongarculture.org.au/impacts-of-law-post-1905/

Map of Indigenous Australia

aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia

Timelines

humanrights.gov.au/timeline-history-separation-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-children-their-families-text

australianmuseum.net.au/indigenous-australia-timeline-1500-to-1900

Stolen Generation Testimonies

stolengenerationstestimonies.com/

PART B – CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PHOTOGRAPHY AND PHOTO MEDIA

Links can be made to:

- VET Courses: Certificates in Visual Arts
- CUA50915 Diploma of Photography and Photo Imaging
- Year 11 ATAR Design Unit 1 and 2
- Year 11 and 12 General and ATAR Visual Arts

Photography as Documentary and Artform

The photograph can provide us with archival records of personal, local, community and world events, it can capture a subject instantly bearing witness and recording moments in time. Through the documentation of place and time, photographers can explore how we and others conceive identity, history and sense of place.

In contemporary photography and photo media the subject, context, inspiration or message can drive the use of visual conventions and techniques applied by the artist. Purposeful manipulation of photographic conventions and visual language can be used to communicate the artist's intention to their audience. Through such an accessible visual medium, artists can ask their audience to question pre-existing narratives and texts (*Photography and Digital Imaging*, NSW Education Standards Authority). Ideas can be communicated through such things as humour, parody, irony and narratives, where viewers can form meanings through the analysis of the artworks, exposing patterns and assumptions in mainstream values.

Themes and issues related to history, culture, social conditions and politics can be discussed, reviewed and reframed through the photographic medium. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists featured in this Education Kit are moving beyond documentary and are utilising new technologies in photo media to communicate in broader conceptual ways. Through this versatile medium, their work seeks a deeper understanding of what it means to be Indigenous. Themes such as culture, inequity, trauma, untold histories and identity are explored as both personal and shared experiences.

Artists in Focus

The following contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists will be in focus for this Education Kit.

Michael Cook

Destiny Deacon

Fiona Foley

Darren Siwes

Christian Thompson

A brief outline of biographical information and artwork are provided as a spring board for further investigation in the classroom. A list of associated links to useful websites will be included to help guide classroom activities.

Consider these further questions when viewing and analysing artworks:

- How do the artworks provide archival records of personal, local, community and world events?
- How does the artwork affect the way people conceive their own histories and identities?
- Does the artwork provide deeply felt personal and sensory experience?
- Does the artist use intuition and imagination?
- How is meaning understood?
- How does the artwork represent the collective interests of cultural groups, ideologies, classes, political groups and/or gender issues?
- How has the artist used signs and symbols in their artwork?
- How does the art reframe, retell stories and direct the audience to question preexisting patterns?

When viewing and analysing these contemporary artworks, students may find The Frames a useful way to interpret images.

Subjective Frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do I see in the artwork? • What do I feel? • What does it remind me of? • What do others (critics/historians) see and feel about this artwork?
Structural Frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What materials and techniques have been used? • Discuss the composition. Where does my eye travel when I look at the work? • What elements and principles have been used in the organisation of the work? • What techniques and processes have been used in the construction of the work? How does this contribute to the meaning of the work?
Cultural Frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What time period or culture does the artwork belong to? • What does the work reveal to you about that culture or society? • What style or movement does the work belong to? • What social and cultural issues or concerns are raised in the work – class, race, gender, religion or politics? • What stylistic influences can be observed?
Postmodern Frame	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have past works been used in a new way? • Have any images been appropriated and re-contextualised? • In your opinion, what meaning, values, beliefs or opinions does this work communicate today? • How do the opinions of others (critics/historians) support or oppose your judgement of the work?

The Frames

Subjective Frame	
Structural Frame	
Cultural Frame	
Postmodern Frame	



Michael Cook, *Civilised #13*, 2012, inkjet print on paper, 100 cm x 87.5 cm © the artist

MICHAEL COOK

Biographical Information

Born 1968
Language group: Bidjara

Artform

Digital Photography

Meaning and Purpose Social, Historical and Cultural

The construction of narratives using juxtaposition, restaging and irony, and at times imaginative and other worldly subject matter, assists Cook to provide a contemporary Aboriginal perspective on European settlement. See as an example his recent series *Invasion* (2018). Cook's artwork aims to challenge unconscious biases and beliefs about Aboriginal people's lives; placing them at the forefront rather than being manipulated to live within the confines of the white man's world. Cook's artworks invite the viewer to consider alternative realities through his reimagining of colonial histories, speculating that Aboriginal people's and white people's roles are reversed and so an alternative history is written. Striking examples can be seen in his *Civilised* series (2012). Icons of contemporary Australian life, native animals, costumes and colonial backdrops all provide Cook with tools to pose hypothetical questions and to allow the viewer to engage with issues associated with the colonization of Australia.

thisisnofantasy.com/artist/michael-cook/
michaelcook.net.au/projects/civilised



Destiny Deacon, *Fish out of Water*, 2017, lightjet print, 98 × 79.5cm, © the artist

DESTINY DEACON

Biographical Information

Born 1957 in Maryborough, QLD
Language Group: Kuku and Erub/Mer (Torres Strait) people

Artform

Performance, photography, video, installation

Meaning and Purpose Social, Historical and Cultural

Deacon sees herself as a political artist and uses artforms to communicate her thoughts and opinions on Indigenous and feminist issues. Her work deals with both historical issues and contemporary Aboriginal life. The work explores the discrepancies between the way in which non-Aboriginal people have represented Aboriginal people and the realities of Aboriginal life.

For example, see her exhibitions *Not Just Fun and Games* (2017) and *Race* (2016). Using humour, irony and narratives, Deacon's artwork challenges and reframes the Aboriginal archetypal narrative through carefully staged photographic images. The cruelty of everyday racism is explored through the way in which she embeds satire and black humour into her work, ultimately exploring the lives, events and tales of imagined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/artists/deacon-destiny/
mca.com.au/artists-works/artists/destiny-deacon/
roslynnoxley9.com.au/artists/2/Destiny_Deacon/profile/



Fiona Foley, *Native Blood*, 1994, type C photographs (set of 3), 50 x 41cm. © Courtesy the artist and Niagara Galleries, Melbourne

FIONA FOLEY

Biographical Information

Born 1964 in Maryborough, Queensland.
Language Group: Badtjala of Fraser Island

Artform

Multi disciplinary including sculpture, painting, printmaking, drawing, performance, video and photography.

Meaning and Purpose Social, Historical and Cultural

Foley's artwork brings to the audience's attention, themes of Australia's violent past treatment of Aboriginal people, in particular those events in Queensland. Many of her works address the historic role that photography has played in the depiction of Australian Aboriginal people. In some of Foley's work she has restaged old photographs and uses beauty as lure to summon forgotten acts of violence and brutality. These images express the complex relationship between ethnography, art history and Aboriginal politics. Her artistic practice seeks to question and evaluate prevailing cultural assumptions about Aboriginal identity and belonging. Foley often deals with difficult issues such as dispossession, racial attitudes and frontier violence.

mga.org.au/exhibition/view/exhibition/125

asset.artmuseum.uq.edu.au/interpretive-resources/FionaFoleyLearningResource.pdf



Darren Siwes, *Gold Male*, 2008, photographic print on Kodak Endura Metallic Paper, 90 x 120cm, © courtesy of GAGPROJECTS | Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

DARREN SIWES

Biographical Information

Born 1968

Language group: Dalabon, Arnhem region

Artform

Siwes uses large format cameras and long exposure times using traditional nineteenth century photographic techniques. He chooses locations for his photo shoots that are often linked to this era of photographic technology, often selecting Victorian or Edwardian settings.

Meaning and Purpose

Social, Historical and Cultural

Darren Siwes' photographs explore themes of personal identity, colonialism and the reframing of history, often in a colonial setting. He creates eerie nocturnal images through time-lapse photography that results in ghostly atmospheres.

His artworks also often explore subtle inversions of an alternative history of Australia where Aboriginals have lead the nation, addressing themes associated with imperialism, hierarchy and the monarchy. For example see his series *Mulaga Gudjerie* (Man, Woman) where he casts an Aboriginal couple as sovereign heads of state.

australianphotographers.org/artists/darren-siwes
artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/works/239.2013/



Christian Thompson, *Lamenting the Flowers*, 2012, C-Type print, 100 x 100cm, from the series *We Bury Our Own*.
Image courtesy the Artist and Michael Reid Sydney and Berlin

CHRISTIAN THOMPSON

Biographical Information

Born 1978 in Gawler, South Australia
Language group: Bidjara

Artform

Sculpture, photography, video, sound, installation and live performance.

Meaning and Purpose

Social, Historical and Cultural

Thompson's work can be described as being flamboyant, with a touch of kitsch. (S. Bunbury, 2015). See his exhibitions *The Imperial Relic* (2015) also *We Bury Our Own* (2012) and *Australian Graffiti* (2007). His multidisciplinary work explores themes of gender, sexuality, identity, race, culture hybridity, colonialism and memory. Thompson addresses complexities of Aboriginal identity through portraiture and performance, using himself as an armature on which to build his artworks. He utilises objects and props that assist him to create polished and somewhat theatrical images, occupying a variety of costumes, personas and backdrops.

christianthompson.net/single-post/2015/05/06/Christian-Thompson-tells-Indigenous-Australias-story-in-The-Imperial-Relic

christianthompson.net/single-post/2015/10/30/Australian-artist-Christian-Thompson-on-being-mentored-by-Marina-Abramovi%C4%87

gabriellepizzi.com.au/exhibitions/gallery_gabrielle_pizzi_0803thompson

Resources for the further Investigation

educationstandards.nsw.edu.au

Tell: Contemporary Indigenous Photography, University of New South Wales, 2018

Retrieved from

artdesign.unsw.edu.au/unsw-galleries/tell-contemporary-indigenous-photography

For Further Research

1905 Act

noongarculture.org.au/impacts-of-law-post-1905/

Map of Indigenous Australia

aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia

Timelines

humanrights.gov.au/timeline-history-separation-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-children-their-families-text

australianmuseum.net.au/indigenous-australia-timeline-1500-to-1900

Stolen Generation Testimonies

stolengenerationstestimonies.com/



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The University of Western Australia
35 Stirling Highway
Crawley WA 6009
Tel: +61 8 6488 3707
Email: lwag@uwa.edu.au
lwag.uwa.edu.au
Gallery open
Tues - Sat, 11am - 5pm
FREE ADMISSION

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Cover image: *Reggie riding a buck-jumper, breaking in the horses.* (detail)
Reproduction of a colour photo © Colin Russ