



# BERNDT NEWS

Berndt Museum of Anthropology

URL: [www.berndt.uwa.edu.au](http://www.berndt.uwa.edu.au)



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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## THE LEGACY OF KOORAH COOLINGAH

The legacy of *Koorah Coolingah* continues with the Powerhouse Museum in Brisbane hosting an exhibition of artworks by contemporary Nyungar artists, some of whom include Sandra Hill, Lance 'Tjylllyungoo' Chadd, Graham 'Swag' Taylor and Charlie Colbung, whose work is influenced by the child artists of Carrolup. The Carrolup art style has brought a sense of pride and ownership to Nyungar people and its influence on contemporary Nyungar artists is prevalent in the works exhibited at the Powerhouse Museum.

*Koorah Coolingah* means 'children long ago' and is the story of Aboriginal children from Carrolup Mission whose fine artworks sold internationally during the 1940s and 1950s with the help of an Englishwoman named Florence Rutter.

During the opening of the exhibition the artists, some of whom are descendants of the Mission children, spoke of their love of painting. The artists work is influenced by their relatives, or recognized as their own style, and is a continuing reminder of the Stolen Generations and the impact of past Government policies towards Nyungar people.

Sandra Hill spoke passionately about the injustice of past Government policies while standing in front of her painting titled '*Just how Aboriginal are you?*' Sandra's painting depicts the classification of Aboriginality according to the colour of one's skin, which determined who was taken.

The exhibition was run in collaboration with Mungart Boodja Art Centre in Katanning and The Berndt Museum which exhibited 25 of the original Carrolup childrens' artworks.

The exhibition opened on Tuesday the 28th April and ran through to Sunday the 17th of May.



Sandra Hill with  
'*Just how  
Aboriginal are  
you?*'

© Patricia  
House: Courtesy  
Mungart Boodja  
Art Centre 2009



Artist attending the opening of the exhibition. Pictured Left to Right: Margaret Eades, Sandra Hill, Lynette Kelly, Ezzard Flowers, Alan Kelly, Grace Kelly, Caroline Narkle, Frank Krakouer.

© Patricia House: Courtesy Mungart Boodja Art Centre 2009

## QUICK NEWS

- We have two new staff members, Barbara Matters, Assistant Curator and Fiona Gavino, Relocation Assistant, who have joined our very talented team. Barbara is a Ballardong Nyungar woman and Fiona hails from Darwin. We welcome Barbara and Fiona to the team.
- In November, 2008 Nell hosted Nedlands Primary School students during their visit to the Museum. Fun was had all round, not to mention lots of sharing of educational information.
- Just so you all know Nell is pregnant with her first child. Congratulations Nell.
- John has been busy giving talks around Perth visiting the Kimberley Society to talk about Kimberley Art, Assertion and Response and provided the University of the Third World with an inspirational lecture on Aboriginal culture and history.
- The Museum has been awarded a grant to commence the digitisation of the Arnhem Land photographic collection, which will run over a two year period.

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### The new face of our Web site

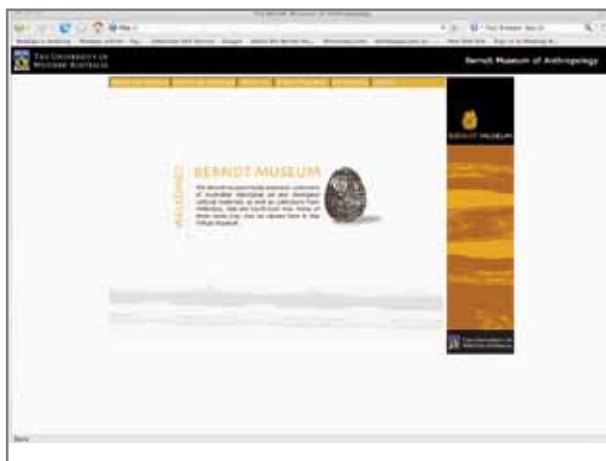
WHEN the Museum first launched its Web site back in 1998, with funding from the National Priority (Reserve) Fund, we never thought that the Web would become such a central part of people's lives.

From the beginning, though, we realised that the digitisation of images of works and photographs held by the Museum are a crucial resource for Aboriginal community members, scholars and students, both in Australia and throughout the world. Barb discusses the digitisation

process on the opposite page. It is now a major activity for the Museum but, as she notes, there is still a long way to go.

The Web site provides the Museum with a public face far beyond Perth itself, or indeed the shores of Australia. We monitor how people use the site, where they have problems and what parts of it are most used. The Museum database of objects and historical photographs is the central part of the Web site, and the most used.

The new look of our Web site will provide better facilities for users, including an ability to download PDF files of things like *Berndt News*, as well as other documents. Virtual tours of elements of the collections are also being planned, together with brief video clips of interviews with staff, visitors, and the like.



## DIGITISATION

The Berndt Museum has purchased a new slide scanner and now has two staff members working on the digitisation project on a regular basis. The slide scanner has the ability to process slides and film which is necessary as some of our earlier works have been photographed and still exist on film negatives.

Karyn Cameron, our part-time staff member and myself have been happily scanning and digitising and we have now processed over 2,000 images since January 2009. Despite this milestone we have a long way to go as the Museum houses over 26,000 photographs and 11,000 objects.

The digitisation project is ongoing and will be of assistance for community, students and academics making access to our collections and photographs more convenient and availability easier. At this stage we have processed the Leuman collection, some historical photographs, images of objects and a fantastic collection of bark paintings from Croker Island. Adding to this process are photographic requests.

Photographic requests come in quite often and The Berndt Museum continues to develop its relationship with community, students and academics. Photographic requests can be utilised for specific purposes. Some are requested for student papers or lectures and some are requested for community programs while other photographs are requested for use in film and documentaries. Photo requests add value to our digitisation process because some of the images requested have not yet been digitised, and this adds to our extensive database collection.

The Berndt Museum is currently working on developing a future public teaching program in partnership with communities who are developing traineeships in museology and curatorship in association with FORM participants.

This proposal has come about due to an interest in our Kimberly collection by Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre (KALACC) and members of the Kimberley community who are working on developing their own electronic database.

Apart from curatorial duties and theory in museology digitisation will play a large role in this process and will be a key driver for the public teaching program. Proposed training will include slide and digital photography, registration of images, scanning of images, and knowledge of the electronic database.

Digitisation is an important process in the world of technology and communication. It will help communities in remote areas to study our collections and allow faster access to information for people who are researching Aboriginal Australia.

Digitisation at the Museum will be an asset for the University and coincide with the redesigned Web site.

Keeping up with the latest in digital technology allows the Museum to be more effective in education and in protecting and keeping knowledge and culture safe.

Slide scanner (34276e)



- Barbara Matters

## LIFE AT 21 DEGREES: Notes from the Relocation Assistant

One of the most important processes in caring for objects and artworks is that the temperature inside the Museum remains constant. At The Berndt Museum it is approximately 21 degrees Celsius everyday. Australian Indigenous art and objects are even more vulnerable to changes in temperature and humidity as the objects are commonly made out of natural materials – wood, feathers, plant material, ochres etc. These types of materials readily absorb moisture in the air which is why everyday when I come to work as the Relocation Assistant my life at work through wet and dry, autumn, winter, spring, and summer is set at 21 degrees. As The Berndt Museum's Relocation Assistant, the continual safekeeping of the objects whilst being packed and transported is one of my key responsibilities.

Sunny days or rainy, inside the packing room the environment stays the same for me, the art and objects; so for a relocated Northern Territorian like myself I get homesick at times for the bone dry air of the dry season and the moist hot air of the wet, (not to mention those fantastic lightning storms (magpie goose) season. However, having the opportunity to care for and ensure that one of Australia's most significant Indigenous cultural material and art collections is kept safe through The Berndt Museums' relocation process is an important job, and I feel privileged to be involved in this historical time in the Museums growth and development.

### Tips and Tricks to be Art Safe

In this article of the *Berndt News* we will cover a few basic packing methods that aim to minimise risk of damage to paintings whilst in transit.

Whilst being transported art or objects are at high-risk of being damaged. Paint pigments may rub off through excessive vibrations, stretched canvases can warp and permanent marks can be left on the image of the artwork (just to name a few).

### Framed/Stretched Acrylic Works

Wrap the front of paintings in clean tissue paper or Tyvek\*. Where either of these materials are unavailable clean calico or cotton material such as bed sheets are acceptable. Next step wrap in bubble plastic. Note bubbles to the outside, if packed facing the paint surface pressure or rubbing marks may occur. Fold and tape excess bubble plastic to the back of the painting. Pack in cardboard, padding out an extra space to stop painting from moving around in transport.

Where possible always pack the artwork by itself. If two paintings are exactly the same size it is permissible to pack them face to face and or back to back after they have been wrapped. When packing face-to-face use cardboard in between the paintings to further protect the painted surface of the artwork.

Make sure you mark the box with – THIS WAY UP - in the direction you would like the paintings to be transported. For example framed and stretched acrylic paintings should be transported in the same orientation as they are hung on the wall.

It is always a good idea to take a photo of the packed painting in case any damage does occur whilst in transit. This will assist with any insurance claim if unfortunately you need to make one.

Tyvek, Bubble Wrap, Gloves (P34273e)



\*Tyvek is synthetic material, best described as a breathable plastic paper. It is available from

- Fiona Gavino

## RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Since our last Newsletter, The Berndt Museum has continued to purchase recent works by artists from Western Australia, the Northern Territory and South Australia, and has also received many generous donations of items from Australia and Papua New Guinea. The work pictured here is entitled *Wunubi Spring* and was donated by the artist, Mr Freddie Timms.

Stephanie Stonier, CEO Jirrawun Arts, Giancarlo Mazzella, Freddie Timms, *Wunubi Spring*, (P34207e)



*Wunubi Spring* is constructed out of natural earth pigments and acrylic binder on stretched Belgian linen canvas. In addition to a fine example of Freddie's style, this painting is also unique for what lies embedded within the paint on its surface. This incredible painting is the first in the world to be chemically encoded through the use of a technique developed by Ms Rachel Green, a forensic scientist at The University of Western Australia. By encoding Freddie's paint with a 'chemical cocktail' which cannot be removed or imitated, the technology provides a way of verifying the work's authenticity, thereby distinguishing it from forgeries.

The technology used, and the generous involvement of Freddie and Jirrawun Arts, evolved over nearly four years of research and consultation. Rachel Green first visited Warmun, Jirrawun and Waringari Art Centres in June, 2005, to discuss her research and the possibilities

for future implementation. After a period of research into media used throughout the Kimberley, the encoding technology was developed and the encoding materials were prepared and sent to Jirrawun Arts in May 2007. The materials would be incorporated into what has to become the world's first chemically encoded painting.

Freddie Timms, President of Jirrawun Arts, volunteered to create the encoded work. Freddie was able to mix the encoding materials with the paints used in *Wunubi Spring* and the encoded painting was completed in February of 2008. The donation was formally accepted and celebrated at The University of Western Australia on the 25th September 2008.

Freddie's painting is of particular relevance and significance to the Berndt Museum. Not only does the work enhance the Museum's existing collection of materials from the East Kimberley, but this painting also signifies the beginning of an important shift in the Aboriginal art market. The encoding technology provides a way for Aboriginal artists to help ensure that their works are protected from the fraudulent practices that continue to exist throughout the world. Freddie has ensured that *Wunubi Spring* can never be forged. Such activity may, in time, help to actively prevent fraud in the future.



Freddie Timms and Rachel Green, *Wunubi Spring*, (P34203e)

- Nell Ustundag

## CURTIN UNIVERSITY VISIT

In maintaining our partnerships with tertiary institutions, Curtin University continue to support The Berndt Museum by encouraging students to visit the Museum. Visiting the Museum increases knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal culture and heritage and exposes students to a broader viewpoint of a contemporary Indigenous Museum in a post modern society.

Each year Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia hosts a group of Anthropology students from Elon University, North Carolina, USA. The highlight of this year's trip of 29 students and two professors was a visit to The Berndt Museum. The group was given a tour of the Museum hosted by John and discussed Aboriginal culture and heritage along with some historical periods in Australian history relating to Aboriginal issues which affected the lives of so many displaced people.

In addition to students visiting from overseas Curtin University's Aboriginal students visited in March to take an educational tour of the Museum hosted by John and Barbara. The students gained insightful information on Indigenous culture and heritage and took time to look at the photographic collection and learn more about the digitisation process.

Access to our extensive database gave the students and staff hands-on experience and allowed practical interaction using our database program.



Curtin University Students and staff (P34141e)

## VOYAGE OF THE BEAGLE

Inspired by Charles Darwins around the world expedition in 1831-1836, a group of one hundred American tourists hired a private jet and began a journey of discovery as they followed Darwins historical voyage. During their journey around the world this group of intrepid explorers stopped in Perth for a special educational visit to The Berndt Museum.

This large group of visitors arrived in January and received a tour of the Museum hosted by John, watched a documentary DVD on the Carrolup child artists and spent a couple of hours being enthralled by the unique objects and artworks of Aboriginal culture on display within the Museum.

This local component of the tour was arranged by Pinnacle Tours whom we would like to take this opportunity to thank for their co-operation and professionalism in helping us to organise such a large group. Special thanks to Rita and Museum staff who patiently worked with everyone involved to make the visit the huge success that it was.

## CAMPAIGN

Lisa Rossi has recently joined UWA as the new Campaign Manger. Lisa's role will be to fund raise for a new home for The Berndt Museum and any future Indigenous acquisitions. Having recently returned from living interstate, Lisa says she feels privileged to have the opportunity to work on such a special project and is enthusiastic about the challenges that lie ahead. Lisa has a strong background in corporate marketing and fundraising and has specialised in managing capital campaigns both here in Western Australia and in the Eastern States.

We look forward to Lisa's contribution to the Berndt Campaign and welcome Lisa to the team.

- Barbara Matters

## EXHIBITION - 'Crayon to Etching'

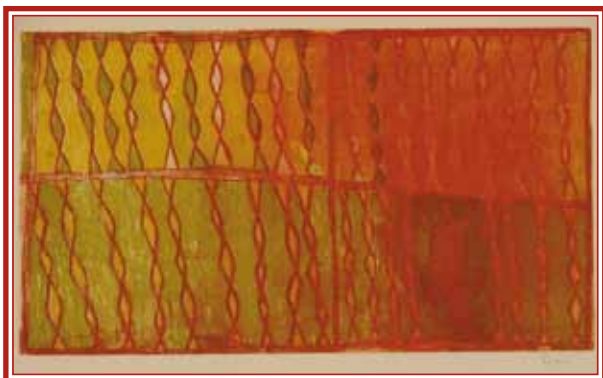
Our linkages with Buku Larrngay Mulka Centre and Mossenson Galleries continues with a very special art exhibition titled *Crayon to Etching* held on the 17th February, 2009 at Mossenson Galleries in Subiaco. The exhibition consisted of 28 etchings created by contemporary artists from Yirrkala, North East Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.

The Buku Larrngay Mulka etchings are inspired by the crayon drawings collected by Professor Ronald and Dr Catherine Berndt, Anthropologists, while visiting Yirrkala in 1946 and 1947. The crayon drawings tell the story of Yolngu culture and history. One hundred of these works on paper held by the Museum were specifically chosen by the artists as inspiration for the etchings and have a direct influence on contemporary Yirrkala artists and their work.

Djolu Yunupingu's painting titled *Gurtha*, meaning fire, belongs to the Gumatj clan. Djolu was inspired to paint this story after seeing the crayon drawing that her father had produced for the Berndts. The impact of sighting the original crayon drawing and the influence on the artists can be seen in Djolu's statement:

*'When I saw the Berndt crayon drawing of my father I wanted to do the same drawing'.*

*Gurthu* Fire Artist: Djolu Yunupingu - (WU11210)



The other interesting observation regarding this exhibition is the development of a new innovative technique in printmaking called soft-ground etching. This technique allowed the artists to recreate the stories in pencil upon an etching plate.

For the artists of Yirrkala, in 2009, the process of using a new print making techniques such as soft ground etching is as new to them as the crayon drawings were to the Yolngu elders in the 1940s. However the practice of using art in celebrating and renewing traditional Yolngu law continues and its strength lies in these beautifully created works.

Waturr Gamana and Baluka Maymurrur opening the *Crayon to Etching* exhibition (P34161e)



The exhibition was opened by Diane Mossenson, Dr John Stanton, Will Smith, Waturr Gamana and Baluka Maymurr. Other members of the Buku Larrngay Mulka Centre also attended the exhibition.

*Crayon to Etchings* was very successful with numerous sales of works happening on opening night.

The Berndt Museum purchased a complete set of Buku Larrngay Mulka etchings for its collections.

- Barbara Matters

## BARBARA MATTERS

I was born at Bruce Rock, Western Australia. I am a Nyungar woman of Balladong decent. My mother is a Pickett and my father is a Bynder.

While my children were young I worked in various jobs during school hours and attended TAFE where I concentrated on improving my artistic skills. I found the arts a tough industry to break into, however I have some minor success with the sale of my hand painted silks.

I began teaching art voluntarily to local communities hoping this would lead to part time work. Through community work I founded Liveringa Art Gallery in Pinjarra with assistance from Murray Arts & Crafts. This was extremely rewarding and I began working in the arts on a volunteer basis.

Once my youngest child attended school and after some contemplation about being unemployed I decided to finish my education. I studied at Edith Cowan University and graduated in June 2008. I worked in tourism for a short term and then came here to The Berndt Museum.

Since my arrival I have spoken with students and visitors to the Museum regarding the true history of Australia and the importance of an Indigenous Museum in a post modern age.

In my role as Assistant Curator I have the opportunity to educate people to the linkages of Aboriginal art and its connection to Country, whilst passing on the importance of valuing Aboriginal culture and heritage, and to help people understand the search for identity of those who were stolen.

I look forward to meeting some of you and I hope our time together is productive and enjoyable.

## VISITING TIMES AND CONTACT DETAILS FOR THE MUSEUM

Everybody is welcome to visit the Museum; we especially encourage school groups. If you want to see what we have on display the Museum is open on Mondays and Wednesdays 2:00pm - 4:30pm and on Fridays 10:00am - 2:00pm.

We are happy to book appointments outside the set hours if there is something specific you would like to see or do; for example looking at the photographic collection or research for a community project or academic purposes.

Please phone the Museum and make an appointment with one of our staff members. This will also assist staff members to prepare for your visit.

The Museum has disabled access however contacting the Museum before your visit will assist staff to identify your disabled needs.

### To find the Museum go to:

Social Science Building  
Entrance No.1, Hackett Drive  
The University of Western Australia

Phone: (08) 6488 4785

Fax: (08) 6488 1165

Curatorial Staff: (08) 6488 2854

John Stanton (Director): (08) 6488 3854

Email: [bMuseum@cyllene.uwa.edu.au](mailto:bMuseum@cyllene.uwa.edu.au)

Website: <http://www.berndt.uwa.edu.au>



Barb having a yarn in the Museum (P34140e)

- Barbara Matters