

# Manggan

gather  
gathers  
gathering



The Manggan project has been in development for over six years and has had a number of manifestations, including a film and exhibition. It has culminated here in a gathering together of ideas, knowledge, conversations, people, venues, artworks and objects which will, on its extensive journey across Australia, gather together more people, organisations, ideas and conversations.

Connection to country and traditional culture is at the core of this project, which is aimed at growing awareness of a unique group of Aboriginal people in the wet and dry tropics region of Far North Queensland.

The land and sea environment of this area incorporates the coastal rainforest fringe, floodplains, freshwater streams and rivers, tropical islands, mangrove eco-systems, dense mountain jungle and well-watered open savannah plains in the rain-shadow of the Great Dividing Range. Aboriginal people drew on the environment for the raw materials with which to create the tools and weapons they used for daily living and protection.

Objects from this country are significantly different to those from over 90 per cent of the rest of Australia. The diversity of resources meant that there was a variety of implements made and used. Weaving was done by both men and women and a range of styles was developed for multiple uses such as to carry babies, catch shrimp and small fish, process toxic foods and so on. Softwoods and hardwoods became weapons such as shields and large swords, fire making tools, and boomerangs to name a few. There are tools to dig with, and even a fighting stick for women's use. Everything that was made had a use; they were practical items, but more often than not had usage protocols and spiritual characteristics which remain relevant today.

The utility and intrinsic value of objects is in transition today as contemporary life intrudes and traditional objects are more and more being made for aesthetic purposes. Nevertheless, the country, culture and the objects remain relevant.

The Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre has had a successful record of engagement in the arts industry since it began full-time operations in 2008 and its profile has been heightened significantly through the development of innovative products that highlight local culture and traditions. A continuing close connection to place and the honouring of Aboriginal law and protocols provide inspiration for artwork, which embraces traditional and contemporary concepts.

A traditional owner organisation founded by Elders in 1996, the Girringun Aboriginal Corporation is based in Cardwell to support 9 Traditional Owner tribal groups in the wet and dry tropics region of Far North Queensland. These groups represent the Nywaigi, Gugu Badhun, Warrgamay, Bandjin, Warungnu, Girramay, Gulnay, Jirrbal and Djiru peoples.

This travelling exhibition would not have been possible without the amazing commitment and support of many people and organisations: the artists and staff working with the Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre; the South Australian Museum and their staff including Professor John Carty, Alice Beale and Tim Gilchrist, Valerie Boll (Honorary Research Associate); Museums & Galleries Queensland, in particular Debra Beattie and Andrea Higgins; and many others. The touring component is funded by Visions of Australia, and administrative support and artwork development was funded by the Queensland Government's Backing Indigenous Arts Initiative and the Department of Communications and the Arts' Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Program.

#### Valerie Keenan



VALERIE KEENAN PHD



VALERIE BOLL PHD

## ARTWORKS

### COVER L TO R

*Group of 3 Bagu*, Emily Murray, Theresa Beeron, Ninney Murray. Various sizes.

### PAGE 3 L TO R

*Murray Valley Landscape 7*, Debra Murray, 2015, digital photograph using archival inks. 77 x 111.8cm

*Jawun*, Abe Muriata, 2016, Lawyer cane. 81 x 39 x 26cm

*Jawun*, Daniel Beeron, 2013, aluminium and plastic-coated wire. 62 x 21 x 21.5cm

### PAGE 4 & 5 L TO R

*Jawun*, Doris Kinjun, 2016, Lomandra grass. 20 x 24 x 13cm

*Wungarr*, Eileen Tep, 2016, Lawyer cane. 100 x 9.5 x 9.5cm

*Mindi*, Emily Murray, 2013, plastic-coated wire. 41.5 x 14 x 13cm

*Bagu*, Maureen Beeron, 2016, ceramic with string. 32.5 x 13 x 6.5cm

*Bunyaydinyu Bagu*, Ninney Murray, 2011, ceramic with Lawyer cane. 53 x 17 x 7.5cm

*Jawun*, Tonya Grant, 2009, Lawyer cane. 105 x 42 x 27.5cm

*Bagu*, Alison Murray, 2016, ceramic. 26.5 x 11.5 x 6cm

*Bagu*, Clarence Kinjun, 2014, Milky pine with ochres, acrylics and charcoal. 184 x 40 x 16cm

### PAGE 6 & 7

*Bagu*, Judith Henry, 2014, Milky pine with ochres, acrylics and charcoal. 195.5 x 36.5 x 19.5cm

*Buni Bagu*, George Beeron Snr, 2014, ceramic with string. 40 x 17.4 x 5cm

*Bagu*, John Murray, 2016, ceramic. 67 x 12 x 7cm

*Bagu*, Nancy Cowan, 2016, ceramic with string. 68.5 x 12 x 6cm

*Bagu*, Nephi Denham, 2016, ceramic. 41 x 15 x 3.5cm

*Bagu*, Sandra Escott, 2016, ceramic with string. 28 x 7.5 x 3cm

*Bagu*, Sally Murray, 2016, ceramic. 43 x 14 x 5.5cm

*Bagu*, Theresa Beeron, 2016, ceramic with string. 62.5 x 26.5 x 9cm

### PAGE 8 TOP TO BOTTOM

*Bicornual Woven Basket (Jawun)* South Australian Museum accession number A2576

Artist unknown, 1890s, plant fibre 37.5 x 30.5 x 18cm

*Small Basket (Jawun)* South Australian Museum accession number A2544

Artist unknown, 1890s, plant fibre, plant fibre string with natural red ochre 26.5 x 15cm

*Bicornual Woven Basket (Jawun)* South Australian Museum accession number A2584

Artist unknown, 1890s, plant fibre 72 x 44 x 26cm

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## GLOSSARY

### BAGU

A traditional fire-making implement (body). The Bagu form was founded in the shape of a man, and a spirit design was created with traditional clays and the ochre colours of magera yellow, jillan, black with wallaby blood and garba white. Bagu is normally made from the boogadilla (Milky pine tree).

### JIMAN

A traditional fire-making implement (stick) usually made from mudja (wild guava tree).

### JAWUN

A traditional distinctive two-cornered or bicornual basket made from Lawyer cane and used to carry babies, bush foods, tools and for catching fish and processing food.

### WUNGARR

A traditional Lawyer cane trap used to trap freshwater eels in a creek.

### MINDI

A traditional grass basket historically used to carry message sticks.

### BURAJINGAL

A square-based Lawyer cane basket.

### GUNDALA

A traditional coil basket made from Lawyer cane.



**CLAUDE BEERON**  
**Girramay Elder**

Girramay Elder and cultural adviser Claude Beeron has had a long-standing relationship with the Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre and is an important supporter of community projects. Deeply knowledgeable about his country, Claude's advice and guidance were integral to the success of the exhibition, ensuring that respect and attention to protocols were central to the project.



**DEBRA MURRAY**  
**Artist**

Girramay Traditional Owner, arts worker and artist, Debra Murray is an emerging filmmaker and photographer. Debra is motivated by her connection to country and family. Touring with the exhibition are the two films *Manggan* and *Bagu with Jiman* that Debra has directed, and ten landscape photographs of her rainforest country.



**ABE MURIATA**  
**Artist**

Abe Muriata is a Girramay Traditional Owner from the Cardwell Range area. He is a nationally acknowledged weaver of the finely crafted, intricately constructed, bicornual baskets, Jawun, which are unique to the rainforest people. More recently, inspired by the traditional basket form, Abe has explored various techniques and materials to create his contemporary artworks.



**DANIEL BEERON**  
**Artist**

Daniel Beeron (Galaman) is a Girramay Traditional Owner who lives at Murray Upper in North Queensland. Daniel is an acclaimed painter, weaver and potter. Daniel began working with ceramics in 2009 and continues to explore and extend the forms and imagery of the sculptural work he creates.



**DORIS KINJUN**

**Artist**

Doris Kinjun is a Gulnay Elder of the Tully River area. She is a language speaker, a storyteller and a well-known and respected weaver specialising in traditional forms and styles including the Jawun, Burrasingal, Mindi and Gundala. Doris's practice has evolved to include pottery, textiles and painting.



**EILEEN TEP**

**Artist**

Eileen Tep is a Jirrbal woman of the Davidson Creek area. She is a skilled weaver of Mindi, Gundala and Jawun. Eileen learnt her weaving skills from her mother and is inspired by the traditions and environment of her rainforest Aboriginal ancestors. Eileen is an emerging painter and ceramicist.



**EMILY MURRAY**

**Artist**

Emily Murray identifies as a Girramay and Jirrbal Traditional Owner of the Davidson Creek area. Emily draws inspiration from traditional stories, calendar events in the lives of plants and animals, and places where she lives and camps. With her strong connection to place and heritage, she works across a number of mediums including weaving, painting and ceramics.



**MAUREEN BEERON**

**Artist**

Maureen Beeron is a Girramay woman of the Murray River area. Maureen is a weaver of Wungarr and Jawun and is skilled in traditional string making from bark. She was taught to weave by a close family member and continues to create traditional functional artworks using her unique skills.



**NINNEY MURRAY**

**Artist**

Ninney Murray is an expert and senior weaver of all the traditional basket types created by the Girramay and Jirrbal people. Taught by her Aunty, traditional forms created by Ninney include the Jawun, Burrajingal, Gundala, Mindi baskets and Wungarr. Today Ninney continues to pass her weaving skills and traditional knowledge on to her people through weaving workshops. She is also a respected painter and ceramic artist.



**TONYA GRANT**

**Artist**

Tonya Grant is a Jirrbal woman of the Davidson Falls area. Taught by her mother, Desley Henry, Tonya is an expert weaver of the Jawun. Tonya is also a painter and draws on traditional colours, patterns and designs for her inspiration, in particular drawing on the cyclone motif associated with her naming place.



**ALISON MURRAY**

**Artist**

Alison Murray is a Girramay Traditional Owner of the Murray Upper area. Alison's practice derives inspiration from a strong connection to place — where she lives and camps — and her heritage and traditional stories. She is known for her remarkable composition, colour and pattern making.



**CLARENCE KINJUN**

**Artist**

Clarence Kinjun is a Gulnay Traditional Owner of the Tully River area. He is an artist, a language speaker, a storyteller and a respected maker of traditional objects such as shields, boomerangs, and swords; objects which were traditionally made and painted by men. He holds significant cultural knowledge and has a close connection to country.



**JUDITH HENRY**  
**Artist**

Judith Henry is a Jirrbal Traditional Owner of the Davidson Creek area. She is a language speaker, and maker of traditional objects such as Bagu, boomerangs and weavings. She is a holder of cultural knowledge passed to her by her mother, Ida Henry, and has a close connection to country.



**GEORGE BEERON SNR**  
**Artist**

George Beeron Snr is a Girramay Traditional Owner who lives at Jumbun. His artwork, which embraces traditional and contemporary concepts, is inspired by his family, the environment and connection to place, honouring of Aboriginal law and culture, and contemporary rainforest life.



**JOHN MURRAY**  
**Artist**

John Murray identifies himself as a Girramay person and lives at Murray Upper. John began painting in 2008 and discovered his creativity as a positive outlet for expression and communication hitherto impacted by his disabilities. John's work brings to life the pleasure he takes in living in the rainforest environment, fishing, camping, his family and traditional stories.



**NANCY COWAN**  
**Artist**

Nancy Cowan identifies as a Warrgamay woman from the Kennedy area. Inspired by her saltwater environment, culture provides inspiration for Nancy's artworks. Nancy is a contemporary artist, a respected painter, print maker and ceramicist.



NEPHI DENHAM

**Artist**

Nephi Denham is a Girramay Traditional Owner of the North Murray Area and is a speaker of language. Nephi is one of the emerging artists from the Girringun area and has a sophisticated grasp of form and line. His work reflects his Aboriginal heritage, traditional stories and the environment in which he lives.



SANDRA ESCOTT

**Artist**

Sandra Escott was born in the Charters Towers area and moved a few years ago to Jumbun, where she now lives and works. Sandra is an emerging artist whose work responds creatively to contemporary life, her family and the environment. Through her ceramic artworks, Sandra explores and is influenced by local rainforest and coastal environments.



SALLY MURRAY

**Artist**

Sally Murray is a Jirrbal woman of the Davidson Creek area. Sally draws on her feelings for the landscape and its bounty, the plant and animal life, to visually express the environment and stories of her cultural heritage. She is a skilled weaver of the traditional coil basket, Gundala, and grass Mindi baskets. Sally is also an emerging painter and potter.



THERESA BEERON

**Artist**

Theresa Beeron is a Jirrbal and Girramay Traditional Owner of the North Murray Area. Theresa was taught to weave traditional baskets, made with rainforest and river grasses, by her mother and she holds traditional knowledge. Her work reflects her Aboriginal heritage, traditional stories and the environment in which she lives. Theresa is also a painter and potter.

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*Manggan* — *gather, gathers, gathering* is a travelling exhibition in partnership between Girringun Aboriginal Art Centre, the South Australian Museum and toured by Museums & Galleries Queensland.

This exhibition is supported by the Visions regional touring program, an Australian Government program aiming to improve access to cultural material for all Australians.

It is supported through the Australian Government's Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support program and the Queensland Government, and proudly sponsored by Conrad Gargett, Urban Art Projects and TED.