

**Sharon West**Visual Arts Teacher

The Elders' and students' time at the Unit has been a very productive one as the Unit follows the Indigenous events calendar by producing exhibitions in observance of Reconciliation and NAIDOC Weeks. This graduation show is the final stage in their study and so we offer them congratulations and good wishes in their next art adventures.

The working space of the Elders is permeated by talkback radio while down the other end of the Unit, loud and good humoured laughs could be heard resonating from the open studio space of Leah Walke, Elaine Williams and Lorraine Melson, When large canvases are on the go, it is a scene of great energy and activity. Leah explores harmony in form within her tonal oil works, Elaine devises thoughtful and well composed landscapes in her acrylic works while Lorraine constructs vibrant coloured inks on canvas. On the hotter days at the Unit their studio door is left open, the surrounding landscape of the bundoors campus forming a green and serene backdrop against their busy artworks.

The Aunties are the mentors of the Unit and an inspiration to the younger students conveying their passion for art and knowledge of culture. They arrive to the Unit each week by taxi, laden down with their heavy bags of art materials and new paintings. This is followed by coffee and conversation with staff and students in topics ranging from family, community and local news to debate and discussion on the latest art controversy.

The Elders represented in this exhibition are **Aunties Frances Gallagher** and **Gwen Garoni**. They both work within landscape depictions of their respective Gunditjmars and Taungerong tribal lands. Their paintings on first impression may appear as colourful renderings; however, they are visually honouring their lands, they convey an underlying message about importance of Country in Koori life.

Chulkuuk means 'respect' in the Gunditjmara dialect of Victoria's Western District. It was chosen by the Elders and students of the Indigenous Arts Unit to indicate the respect for ancestors and Country expressed within their art. This exhibition is a culmination of many years of visual arts study, conveying a passion for colour as well as an exploration of various art mediums traditional and western.

Belinda Wilson Program Manager School of Art MINT University

their artistic endeavours.

The learning I have received from each of our student's has been inspiring. It has been a wonderful journey to know each of these artists and I look forward to the next stage of

prints and jewellery.

Lorraine Nelson, Leah Walke and Elaine Williams artwork showcases traditions from community whilst employing contemporary art practices to create paintings, drawings,

The artworks in *Chulkuuk* tell a story about community, identify and art making. Our Elders' artworks highlight historical antidotes of their life. Viewing **Aunty Evances Gallaghers'** bush landscapes, speaks of happiness and vibrancy and an honest account of their homeland and where they grew up.

the life of the traditional owners.

Some of our students are women from Kalkadoon/Kandju, Bungalung Country, Yorta Yorta and from the Murray River Region. The work reflects these regions and expresses

audience.

Our graduating exhibition highlights the dedication of each student and showcases the caliber of work that has been produced during the years of study. Holding an exhibition at The School of Art Gallery, allows the work to speak in a venue of contemplation. The work goes beyond the studios to an environment that allows stories to be told to a wider

is evident in this exhibition.

The graduating exhibition from the School of Art Indigenous Art Unit showcases the work of Elders and students from the Diploma of Visual Art and notably all are women. The exhibition title Chulkuuk (meaning 'respect' in the Gunditjmara dialect) is fitting for such atrong dedicated Indigenous women and Elders who have completed their studies in Bundoora. The sense of camaraderie and community the Indigenous Art Unit brings in Bundoora.





Thank you to TAFE teaching staff Sharon West, Simon Rose, Kirsten Lyttle, Clare Humphries, Loretta Quinn, Program Manager Belinda Wilson, Administrator Ninna Cikoja and Technician Stephen Cottrill. Thank you to Uncle Herb and Prof. Jeremy Diggle, Head of School, Art.

For ongoing student support thank you to the RMIT Ngarara Willim Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

We would also like to thank the Gallery staff, Stephen Gallagher, Andrew Tetzlaff, Adriane Hayward and Anabelle Lacroix.



NGARARA WILLIM

Supported by BADDAGINNIE RUN

# Chulkuuk Respecting Country Respecting Ancestors

Aunty Frances GALLAGHER Aunty Gwen GARONI Lorraine NELSON Leah WALKE Elaine WILLIAMS

Acknowledgement of Country by Uncle Herb Patten
To be opened by Prof. Jeremy Diggle, Head of School, Art

BUILDING 2 LEVEL 2, BOWEN STREET, MELBOURNE

Managed by the RMIT School of Art

COORDINATOR Stephen Gallagher ADMINISTRATOR Andrew Tetzlaff
INTERNS Adriane Hayward, Ariella Blum and Yanxin Li

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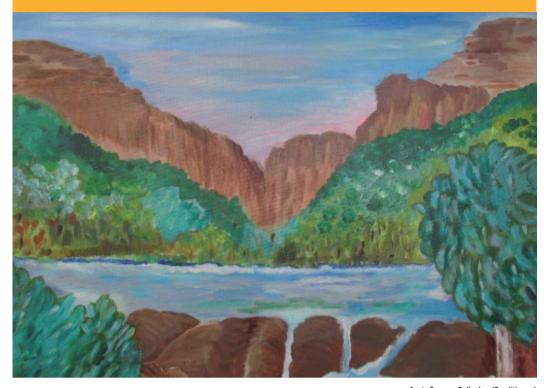
GALLERY OPENING HOURS Monday – Friday 10.00am to 5.00pm

THURSDAY 25 OCTOBER TO FRIDAY 2 NOVEMBER 2012 **OPENING** WEDNESDAY 24 OCTOBER 5-7PM RMIT SCHOOL OF ART GALLERY BUILDING 2 LEVEL 2, BOWEN STREET, MELBOURNE

## CHULKUUK

Respecting ancestors
Respecting Country
We travel this journey together
In all the different cultures of Aboriginal Australia
Remembering the old ways
Creating new ways of passing knowledge
For everybody to come together to understand and share our culture
For future generations to come

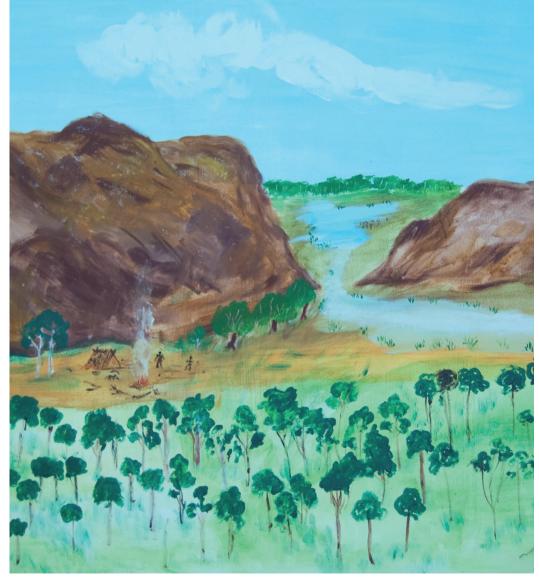
By Lorraine Nelson, Leah Walke and Elaine Williams



Aunty Frances Gallagher (Gunditjmara)
My Country in The Grampians, Gunditjmara Land, 2011
Acrylic on canvas
60 cm x 45 cm

## **Aunty Frances Gallagher**

I grew up on Framlingham Mission and my Aboriginal tribe is Gunditjmara. Coming to the Unit helps me to relax and I like to paint peaceful scenes of my country in the Grampians, and to capture the beauty and colour of the mountains. I am concerned about the state of the landscape especially after the Black Saturday fires. In the old days the Aboriginal people would nurture and look after their land through fire stick farming. Because it is no longer practised the land now suffers.



Aunty Gwen Garoni (Taungerong)
Taungerong Camp in the Yarra Valley, 2012
Acrylic on canvas
100 cm x 82 cm

# **Aunty Gwen Garoni**

I am descended from the Taungerong people of the Yea and Yarra Valley districts of Northern Melbourne. I have 3 children, 17 grandchildren and 18 great-grand children. Painting gives me enjoyment and pleasure and I also like the companionship of the other students and Elders at RMIT. I like to paint about my Country and the changing nature of the land from the tribal days through to today. This includes painting the devastation caused by the Black Saturday fires in my Taungerong land which greatly saddened me. My recent works have concentrated on the regrowth of the landscape.



Coming Home, 2012
Coloured inks on canvas
100 cm x 100 cm

### **Lorraine Nelson**

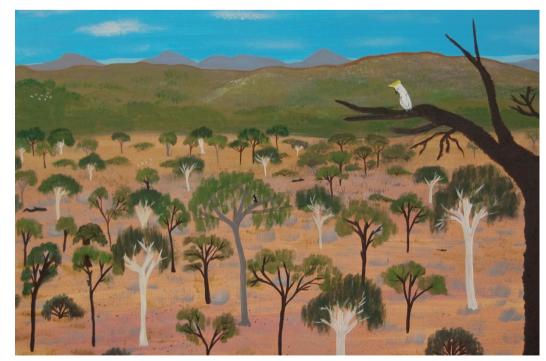
My paintings contain patterns from the Yorta Yorta possum skin cloak. I also use river designs representing the Murray River where my tribal lands are situated. My tribe lived along the river banks. I also paint about my culture, ancestors and Cummeragunga Mission where I was reunited with my mother. I am a member of the Stolen Generation and was separated from my family for 20 years. This was along time and I'm slowly getting to know them all. This was hard for me and my four siblings. Our mother was still there at Cummeragunga waiting for us to return and when we did, the tears and smiles she showed were happy ones.



Earth Connection, 2012 Oil on canvas 55 cm x 86 cm

## Leah Walke

I am a Saltwater woman from Bungalung Country. My inspiration comes from my ancestors and the land. Even though I am separated from my family most of the year, I think about them all of the time and how our art brings us together to celebrate life connections to the land and how it nourishes us. I want my work to allow people to connect to their own ancestral memories and emotions.



Elaine Williams (Kalkadoon/Kandju)
Father's Country, North Queensland, 2012
Acrylic on canvas

## **Elaine Williams**

I am a Kalkadoon/Kandju woman from Northern Queensland. I work in both traditional and contemporary art forms which express the many stories and customs that have been passed onto me, I also educate others about Aboriginal culture, and the strong connections I have for my people, animals and Country.