



**Belinda Wilson**  
Program Manager  
School of Art  
RMIT University

**Sharon West**  
Visual Arts Teacher

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 their artistic endeavours.

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

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

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

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 audience.

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 Gunditjmarra dialect) is fitting for such strong dedicated Indigenous women and Elders who have completed their studies in Bundoorra. The sense of camaraderie and community the Indigenous Art Unit brings is evident in this exhibition.

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 Nelson**. 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 Bundoorra 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 Gunditjmarra and Taungarong 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.

for many years of visual arts study, conveying a passion for colour as well as an exploration of various art mediums traditional and western.



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.

## 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



NGARARA WILLIM  
CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL AND  
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

Supported by



**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

**GRAPHIC DESIGN** Gracia Haby & Louise Jennison **EMAIL** schoolofartgalleries@rmit.edu.au

**WEB** www.schoolofartgalleries.dsc.rmit.edu.au **TELEPHONE** +61 3 9925 4971

**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.



Lorraine Nelson (Yorta Yorta)  
*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.



Leah Walke (Bungalung)  
*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  
110 cm x 100 cm

### 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.