

Libby Harward (Ngugi), *WARIBUL WAYIRA (hungry waterways)*, 2020, Mulgumpin-Lake Carrurra, digital film, 2min 43sec. Courtesy of the artist.

Rewriting Landscapes

Exhibition Kit

This exhibition kit has been developed by ACE Education to support student learning and engagement with the ACE exhibition *Rewriting Landscapes*. Inside, you'll find a curatorial overview, background information on the artists, and insights into selected artworks.

The kit includes discussion prompts to encourage critical thinking, along with a flexible activity designed for use in the classroom or gallery setting. Educators can adapt the content to suit primary or secondary students, integrating it into broader visual arts, history, or cultural studies learning.

ACE

About the Exhibition

Rewriting Landscapes is an exhibition that challenges traditional ideas of "landscape art" and offers bold new perspectives from contemporary Aboriginal artists. Through photography and video, the artists explore Country as more than just scenery to be admired or claimed, they reveal it as a living, sentient, and deeply storied entity.

For many years, the history of landscape art in so-called Australia has been tied to colonial ideas of discovery and possession, often ignoring Aboriginal voices, knowledge, and relationships to Country. *Rewriting Landscapes* provides an alternative, where Aboriginal artists reclaim the power to represent their own stories and connections.

The works in this exhibition are courageous, curious, and sometimes playful. They show how modern tools like photography and video can be used to question history, challenge stereotypes, and reimagine what it means to see and understand Country. Rather than presenting simple or one-dimensional views, the artists invite audiences to think deeply about the ongoing presence, strength, and adaptability of Aboriginal culture today.



Rewriting Landscapes exhibition view, 2025, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

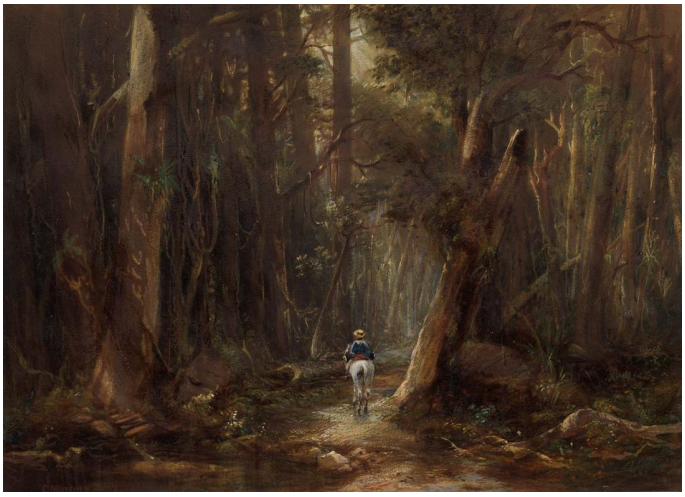
About the artist(s)

The exhibition brings together a group of leading and emerging contemporary Aboriginal artists who use their practices to reframe and re-present the idea of "landscape." Each artist brings their own cultural knowledge, creative vision, and personal story:

- Troy-Anthony Baylis (Jawoyn) – known for exploring identity, memory, and history through multidisciplinary practice.
- Patrick William Carter (Nyoongar) – a visual artist and performer whose work combines video and sound to create unique, experimental experiences.
- Dylan Crismani (Wiradjuri) – an artist who engages with sound, material, and technology to examine cultural memory and continuity.
- Adam-Troy Francis (Kaurna, Ngarrindjeri and Wirangu) – a contemporary artist exploring identity, community, and connection to place.
- Colleen Strangways (Arabana and Mudbura) – a photographer and filmmaker whose work blends cultural storytelling and contemporary Blak identity.
- Libby Harward (Ngugi) – a visual artist who uses installation, performance, and video to reassert Aboriginal sovereignty and presence.
- r e a (Gamilaraay, Wailwan and Biripi) – a pioneering artist using photography, video, and digital media to investigate identity, representation, and Aboriginal histories.
- Darren Siwes (Ngalkbun) – an Australian artist using staged photography to explore the intersections of First Nations and European cultures, challenging colonial narratives and reasserting Blak presence.

Together, these artists use their voices and creative tools to rewrite how landscapes are seen and understood, offering audiences new ways to connect with and respect Aboriginal perspectives of Country.

Selected Artworks



Conrad Martens, *Forest, Cunningham's Gap* exhibition view, 1856, watercolour on paper, 30.5sm x 42cm.



Troy-Anthony Baylis (Jawoyn people), *Making Camp at 'Forest, Cunningham's Gap, 1856'* (2009), from the series Making Camp 2009, pigmented inks on etching paper, 29.5cm x 42cm.

Troy-Anthony Baylis's *Making Camp at 'Forest, Cunningham's Gap, 1856'* is a critical re-imagining of Conrad Martens's 1856 colonial landscape *Forest, Cunningham's Gap*. Martens, one of the most influential colonial painters of the nineteenth century, shaped settler understandings of the Australian environment. His landscapes framed Country as empty, passive, picturesque, and available for occupation, using techniques such as the European "Claudian formula" with darkened foregrounds, luminous middlegrounds, and stabilising framing trees. These images helped normalise settlement while erasing Aboriginal presence from both the land and the national imagination.

Baylis intervenes in this art-historical lineage by returning to Martens's once-revered composition and placing a Blak, queer body directly within the scene. This presence, embodied in his drag alter-ego, Kaboobie, "makes camp" in a space historically painted to exclude him and others like him. Kaboobie, part self-mythology and part avatar of irreverantly queer Blak identity, appears with kangaroo features and a multi-meeting-place dress, striding into the ordered wilderness of Martens's composition. Through costume, performance, and humour, Baylis transforms the colonial landscape from a site of erasure into one of belonging, resistance, and reoccupation.

By inserting Kaboobie into a canonical colonial scene, Baylis reframes the landscape as a space of mobility, performance, sovereignty, and pleasure. Rather than being excluded from Country, as so often occurs in nineteenth-century painting, the Blak, queer body asserts itself unapologetically, opening imaginative and political possibilities for rethinking histories and landscapes. This strategy of intervention aligns with Baylis's broader practice, which consistently unsettles canonical images through wordplay, theatricality, and the strategic insertion of queer Aboriginal subjecthood.

Making Camp at 'Forest, Cunningham's Gap, 1856' is part of Baylis's larger 'Making Camp' collage series (2009), in which he overlays works by Glover, Johnstone, and Martens with photographs of his soft-sculpture works from the (pink)Poles series. These knitted poles, referencing ceremonial burial poles across Aboriginal and Pacific Islander cultures, stand as monuments to grief, survival, and queer-Aboriginal memory. Created through what Baylis describes as a "migratory studio practice," which asserts his aboriginality wherever he is, they embody both physical labour and emotional endurance, looping endlessly until each soft sculpture reaches its final form.

This work has become a key example of how contemporary artists critically engage with the colonial archive. Its inclusion in Rewriting Landscapes underscores its pedagogical value, demonstrating how art can challenge dominant narratives. By placing himself within Martens' landscape, Baylis reframes art history through contemporary lenses of identity, sovereignty, queerness, and cultural reclamation, inviting audiences to question who has been depicted, who has been excluded, and how artists today can actively re-story the past.



r e a, *GARI (language)*, 2024, vinyl banners, dimensions variable, Rewriting Landscapes installation view, 2025, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

GARI (language) by r e a (Gamilaraay, Wailwan, Biripi) is a commanding installation that combines language, activism, and identity to explore the intersections of Aboriginal sovereignty and queer visibility. Created in the wake of the 2023 Voice referendum, this work continues r e a's long-standing practice of cultural reclamation and resistance, one that transforms personal and collective histories into bold acts of visibility.

A pioneering interdisciplinary artist, curator, researcher, and activist, r e a's practice challenges colonial narratives that have erased Aboriginal presence from the landscape and from history. Their work, often grounded in lived experience and rigorous research, spans photography, video, installation, and text-based art. Through these forms, r e a reclaims representation, giving voice to those silenced by systems of power and oppression.

In *GARI (language)*, r e a draws on the power of language and protest to connect Indigenous and queer struggles for survival, recognition, and rights. The work features large banners emblazoned with the words for "sun" in the Gamilaraay, Wailwan, and Biripi languages, the artist's ancestral tongues, interwoven with two politically charged statements: "SILENCE = DEATH" and "LAND = RIGHTS." The first, a rallying cry from 1980s AIDS activism, declared that silence and invisibility could be fatal; the second, a foundational slogan of the Aboriginal land rights movement, asserted that sovereignty and survival are inseparable. By placing these messages side by side, r e a creates a dialogue between different histories of resistance, linking the fight for land, life, and voice across communities and generations.

The title *GARI*, meaning "sun," symbolises light, renewal, and the ongoing cycles of life. Just as the sun rises each day, r e a positions queer Blak power as enduring and unyielding, a force that cannot be silenced or erased. The repetition of language across the banners reaffirms the strength of culture and the importance of reclaiming ancestral words in the face of ongoing cultural loss.



Patrick William Carter, *Balay Demons*, 2025, digital video, colour, sound, 19 minutes 23 seconds; rubber masks, acrylic paint, Rewriting Landscapes installation view, 2025, Adelaide Contemporary Experimental. Photography by Sam Roberts.

Balay Demons by Noongar artist Patrick William Carter is a powerful and immersive video work created during his 2025 artist residency at ACE. Installed in a darkened screening space, the artwork draws audiences into Carter's unique creative world, one where painting, music, movement, and storytelling come together in deeply personal and expressive ways. Carter's art is grounded in his connection to family, Country, and lived experience, and his practice often blurs the boundaries between art forms. He paints, sings, performs, and directs films, weaving meaning through sound, image, and emotion to express his relationship with the world around him.

The title Balay Demons comes from the Noongar word "balay," meaning "watch out!" The work was inspired by Carter's experiences during painting trips on Noongar boodja (Country) with other artists, where he felt a strong sense of ancestral presence and spiritual energy. Alongside moments of peace and connection, Carter also sensed fear and intensity, feelings he channels through his love of the horror genre. Drawing from his fascination with horror films, Carter began making improvised, home-made horror movies with his collaborators during these trips. These playful yet haunting experiments became the foundation for *Balay Demons*, where Carter directed scenes of suspense and transformation without a traditional script, instead relying on instinct, collaboration, and atmosphere to tell the story.

In *Balay Demons*, Carter embodies a powerful alter-ego that expresses his demand for agency and control over his own story. Through this persona, he explores both his internal struggles, his "demons", and the unsettling yet fascinating experience of being on Country. The resulting work blends humour, tension, and emotion, encouraging audiences to think about how fear, spirit, and imagination can exist together in both art and life.



Gallery Discussion

- For a long time, colonial artists painted Country as empty and untouched. How do the artists in Rewriting Landscapes challenge these ideas? What new stories or truths about Country do they reveal?

- Many of the artworks show Country as alive—with memory, spirit, and emotion. How do the artists express this idea through sound, movement, or imagery?

- Works like r e a's GARI (language) and Troy-Anthony Baylis's Making Camp reclaim space and visibility for Blak and queer identities. How do these artists use art to resist stereotypes and assert strength?

- Artists such as Darren Siwes and Libby Harward reimagine traditional "landscape" art to include Aboriginal perspectives and presences. How do their works change the way we see Australian history?

Classroom Activity

- Brainstorm words, images, or ideas that come to mind when you think about landscape and Country. These could relate to:
  – Place (rivers, trees, sky, weather)
  – Memory (stories, ancestors, experiences)
  – Change (time, erosion, destruction, renewal)
  – Belonging (identity, connection, community)

- Choose one or two ideas and create an artwork that explores your personal relationship with place. You might use drawing, collage, painting, digital art, or sculpture to express how you see or "rewrite" the landscape around you. Consider how you can layer materials, textures, or colours to show memory, history, or emotion. Think about what is visible and what might be missing or hidden in your landscape. You could include words, symbols, or natural materials that connect to a specific place or story.

- Bring the class artworks together as a group installation titled Rewriting Our Landscapes. Reflect on how the individual works interact when displayed together. What shared themes or contrasts do you notice? How do these works challenge or expand traditional ideas of what a "landscape" can be? What new stories about place, identity, or belonging emerge when everyone's landscapes are viewed side by side?

Curriculum Links

Australian Curriculum / Visual Art /
Years 11–12 SACE Objectives

- Implement ideas and representations
- Apply literacy skills
- Analyse and interpret visual language, expression and meaning in art
- Evaluate art practices, traditions, cultures, and theories
- Experiment in response to stimulus
- Create meaning through the knowledge and understanding of art materials, techniques, technologies, and processes
- Realise responses to communicate meaning

Australian Curriculum / Visual Arts /
Years F-10

- Use materials, techniques and processes to explore visual conventions when making artworks (AC9AVAFD01 - AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVAFC02 - AC9AVA10C02)
- Explore ideas and artworks from different cultures and times, including works by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, to use as inspiration for their own representations (AC9AVAFE01 - AC9AVA10E01) (AC9AVAFE02 - AC9AVA10E02)
- Respond to art works and consider where and why people make them, including visual art works of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (AC9AVAFE01 - AC9AVA10E01) (AC9AVAFE02 - AC9AVA10E02)
- Develop ways to enhance their intentions as artists through exploration of how they use materials, techniques, technologies, and processes (AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVA10D02)
- Practice techniques and processes to enhance representation of ideas in their art making (AC9AVAFD01 - AC9AVA10D01) (AC9AVAFC02 - AC9AVA10C02)

Visit Us

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Tours

We welcome visits from education groups, primary through to tertiary, and encourage self-guided visits to our exhibitions. For more information about how to book, visit our website or email us.

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Curator: Danni Zuvela

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