

FRIDAY 7 JUNE TO FRIDAY 20 SEPTEMBER 2024 ———

FEATURING KRISTIAN COULTHARD, CLEM COULTHARD, TED COULTHARD
AND WINNIE RYAN (ADNYAMATHANHA) WITH SASHA GRBICH / ANTONY
HAMILTON / KYOKO HASHIMOTO AND GUY KEULEMANS / JOHN R WALKER
————— ESSAY BY DARREN JORGENSEN

Mulka Yata

MULKA YATA/THE KNOWLEDGE OF PLACE



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— INTRODUCTION

Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place, features work spanning four generations of Adnyamathanha carvers – Kristian Coulthard, Clem Coulthard, Ted Coulthard and Winnie Ryan. The name Adnyamathanha means ‘rock people’ and relates to the unique rock formations in and around the Flinders Ranges. The title *Mulka Yata* references the cultural objects that have been created from, and of, these lands.

The Flinders Ranges, including Ikara (Wilpena Pound), have been the ancestral home to the Adnyamathanha people, from some 50,000 years past. They are still with us today, among them the Coulthards – caretakers of Adnyamathanha culture and knowledge – who prevailed amidst the colonial intrusions of mining, agriculture and settlement.

In the late 19th century while working pragmatically with pastoralists, Ted Coulthard forged a generational art movement around wood carving, that he traded with settlers: walking sticks, snakes, lizards, boomerangs and shields, made with high standards of craftsmanship. This Adnyamathanha art movement of carvers is now sustained through Ted’s great-grandson, Kristian Coulthard, an accomplished artist–keeper of tradition, based near Blinman.

Kristian’s imaginative carvings have provided inspirational foundations for the exhibition. His *akurra* – ambitiously scaled, carved serpents, made from locally sourced timber – are spectacular embodiments of the artist’s enduring relationship to Country.

Significantly, it is also the first time his work has been exhibited alongside that of other, non-Indigenous, contemporary artists.

The work of these artists – John R. Walker; Antony Hamilton; Guy Keulemans & Kyoko Hashimoto; and Sasha Grbich – achieves original expression through their immersive and meditative engagement, over time, with the geologically and culturally significant Flinders Ranges.

As Darren Jorgenson in his exhibition essay insightfully suggests, *Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place* brings two different worlds together, a ‘double nation’, each traversing ancestral Country and its hidden power, in distinct ways.

Erica Green, Director, Samstag Museum of Art

Essay by Darren Jorgensen

The landscapes of Adnyamathanha country, better known as the Flinders Ranges, have long been a part of the national unconscious. Settler Australians looked to its gum trees and dry mountain ranges as symbolic of the arid interior of the continent. Less known—and just as important to the country’s self-imagining—is the Adnyamathanha art movement. Generations of Adnyamathanha carvers have burned silhouettes of the *irta* (bird), *urdlu* (kangaroo), *warraty* (emu) and *nandhu* (horse) on the *wadna* (boomerang) and *thiparra* (shield). The earliest surviving carving from the Adnyamathanha art movement is a *yakadi* (walking stick) shaped by Ted Coulthard and collected by a pastoralist in the mid-1890s. Its shaft forms the shape of two snakes curling around each other, and at its top a *wildu* (eagle) holds one of the snake’s heads in its talons. A pattern of circular engravings suggests scales and feathers. This *yakadi* is likely the earliest surviving example of figurative Aboriginal Australian carving—certainly the earliest gifted or traded with a settler—and marks the beginning of Adnyamathanha’s modern school of carving.

Amidst the growth of the Aboriginal carving movement across South and Central Australia, where lizards and snakes were created and sold alongside boomerangs and shields, Ted Coulthard insisted that Adnyamathanha artists maintained a quality of craftsmanship. The carvers worked side by side around a fire, and included Ted’s wife, Winnie Ryan, whose distinct hand can be seen alongside many of Ted’s own works. *Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place* also includes carvings by Ted’s son, Clem Coulthard, representing generations of the Adnyamathanha School. During the 1950s, Ted’s grand-nephew Roy Coulthard remembers Ted telling those around him that if their boomerang, walking stick or shield was no good, to toss it into the fire and start another.^{1[i]} Ted was part of a community that had come together to forge their own way amidst the arrival of sheep. They worked in the new pastoral economy, making a living as the land that was traditionally theirs became dotted with shepherd’s huts and stations, fences and roads. In the late twentieth century, the artist Anthony Hamilton (1955 – 2020) moved into this country to make work that commemorated this heritage of labour. His *Hung White Fox and Shadow* (1999), with fencing wire strewn underneath the body of an albino fox, commemorates the rough history of this region, where Adnyamathanha worked alongside the settlers to run fence lines, shear sheep, and trap dingos, foxes and rabbits.

Coming together, the Indigenous people of the region called themselves Adnyamathanha, settling first at Mount Serle and then at Ram Paddock Gate, all the while under pressure from drought and depression.^{2[ii]} Ted supported his family by being part of a courier service, taking on fencing contracts, working on the dingo fence, and running a donkey team. A newspaper from 1914 reports that the Adnyamathanha were ‘industrious and thrifty’, and that at Mount Serle:

They look after the old people and the little ones, and in cases of sickness try and get anything the patient fancies. They are all more or less related in a way, and they do not like any of the tribe breaking away and clearing out.^{3[iii]}

Kristian Coulthard—Ted’s great-grandson and the artist behind the great *Akurra* that are central to this exhibition—has inherited this industriousness. He keeps Adnyamathanha tradition alive at his shop, Wadna, in the tourist town of Blinman. Here he carves and sells souvenirs, as well as speaks with visitors about what makes this country special.^{4[iv]}

This is the first time Kristian’s work has been exhibited alongside that of contemporary artists, those who come from the east and south of Adnyamathanha country. *Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place* reverses the emphasis of *Arid Arcadia: Art of the Flinders Ranges*, a 2002 exhibition at the Art Gallery of South Australia that included unnamed carvers of the region as an afterthought to its settler landscapes. *Arid Arcadia* is not the only exhibition that has included these carvings without the names of their artists, simply because nobody took the time to travel to ask their descendants, their families. As a part of his Wadna business, Kristian has a small museum of carvings and can name the artists who made each one. Their differences, their styles of doing kangaroos and emus, personalise their carvings, giving an insight into the mind and hand of the generations that came before him.

In this exhibition, Kristian has the opportunity of scaling up his abilities with wood to create the kind of spectacular installations that have come to characterise contemporary art, amplifying this Adnyamathanha history and the modernity of this art movement. The two *Akurra* sitting in the centre of this exhibition embody the wooden shapes of the country as well as the creation of the land. They place the non-Indigenous artists around them into an unveiling with the deep time and spirit of the country. The episodic encounter of the visitor with this spirit, with the high reach of its mountains and waterways, is realised in two paintings by John R Walker. Typically, landscape painting lies heavily upon the image of Australia. Rather than a distant gaze, *Eagle Spirit, Vathiwarta* (2021), *Near Parachilna* (2021) and *Glass Gorge Walking* (2021) bring the eye close to rocks and trees, alluding to the totality of mountain slopes through the clutter of detail that lies upon them. There is no middle ground in Walker’s paintings, but instead an impression of the country through the gestural brush. Walker began painting like this in the late 1990s as a result of seeking ways to represent the land as a journey or narrative. Working this way, the late curator Andrew Sayers wrote that Walker makes a “narrative of incident, feeling, gesture and intuitive response.”^{5[v]} There is a sense of walking, of looking at the detail at one’s feet while glancing upwards to where the path is going, of shifting from one precise spot in the landscape to another, while always being in relation to the whole that reveals itself on the way.

This is not to make too fine a distinction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous ways of picture-making. Hans Heysen’s landscapes of the Adnyamathanha mountains, some of the most popular images in the history of Australia, can be interpreted as an attempt to overcome the alienation the artist experienced from his adopted home. As his native Germany went to war with Australia twice, Heysen was shunned and questioned about his loyalty.^{6[vii]} His landscapes were not produced out of a jingoistic, settler nationalism, but attempt to build a spiritual bridge to a country to which he did not entirely belong. Neither does this Australian landscape tradition belong entirely to settler artists of European descent. Aboriginal artists including Albert Namatjira and Bella Kelly embraced the painting of gum trees in landscapes as ways of illuminating their Arrente and Noongar countries of Central and South-West Australia. For Namatjira, the gum tree was an ancestor, an old person who had become a part of the country.^{7[viii]} That Heysen and other non-Indigenous ‘gum tree school’ painters gravitated to this icon of Australian art suggests that, while ignorant of the gums’ place within the long cultural history of the continent, they may have been responding to the ancestral power that lies within their white trunks.

In auctions of indigenous art from Africa, Oceania and Aboriginal Australia, carvings such as the pyrographed boomerangs of the Adnyamathanha School are called ‘transitional’ – that is, influenced by colonialism but the work of an Indigenous hand. As problematic as the term is, Ted’s *yakadi*—as much as Kristian’s *Akurra*—are certainly the product of transcultural encounters. The transitional concept, however, works just as much the other way; artists in *Mulka Yata* themselves make work after their encounters with Indigenous knowledge and ways of seeing. After visiting Kristian, Guy Keulemans and Kyoko Hashimoto worked on ways of bringing the materiality of the country to exhibition without the appropriation of materials or imagery that this would normally imply. Theirs are transitional objects, with paper made from Acacia trees from the region such as wadi and mulga and paper mache models of Adnyamathanha rocks. Kyoko refers to a Shinto tradition that regards rocks as having a spiritual essence, so that certain rocks of importance should not be moved from their place in nature.^{8[viii]} In this part of Australia, the layers of rock have been pushed from below so that it is possible to see millions of years stretching back in reds, yellows and purples that transform with the sun. There is a sense in which these mountains, like Guy and Kyoko’s rocks, are in a permanent state of transition, from one materiality to another. In *Bioregional Rings (Northern Flinders subregion)* (2024) and *Prints on Paper* (2024), the artists lighten the overwhelming presence of this country.

To combine understandings of country that are both Indigenous and not Indigenous, to picture the Flinders Ranges without picturing them, is to begin to disentangle the art, pastoral and mining history that has overlaid them. It is with this in mind that Sasha Grbich speaks of the ways in which imaging tends to contribute to a colonial mode of seeing Australia, and, in the case of the Flinders, to the iconographic weight by which the nation pictures itself.^{9[ix]} In *The water’s edge, where the trees begin, has recently been underwater...* (2024) and *A track that moves past the remnants of older campsites, rusted cans, beer bottles and single use plastics...* (2024), Sasha draws upon her experiences of Nukunu country to the south by recording the sounds of Saltia Creek Gorge and a mangrove on the southern coast. The gorge is a bird highway echoing with their calls, and the mangrove is dense with insects and water. These recordings lend time to the landscape, by slowing us down to listen to it. Going back to these places several times, on the advice of Nukunu man Dr. Jared Thomas, and with professional audio describer Lara Torr, Sasha recreates the landscape in sound. The work decolonises the visual space of the country and the gallery simultaneously, bringing us close to a place well-trodden.

Public amenities, partially blocked by orange municipal bunting, a council worker standing in the flat bed of a ute.

A track across sandflats, dotted with mounded shrubs and tiny white, purple and yellow wildflowers.

Sasha’s work speaks not only to the anxieties of working with a landscape so freighted with Indigenous history and the history of settlement, but also to the way settlement recreates this landscape through its access roads and walking tracks, its amenities, fence lines and firepits.

MULKA YATA/THE KNOWLEDGE OF PLACE

ESSAY

Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place is one of the rare exhibitions in the history of Australian art in which the 'double nation' of distinct artworlds—the Indigenous and non-Indigenous—come together.^{10[x]} While the Indigenous artworld is grounded in community, in family, consultation, and ongoing negotiations, non-Indigenous Australian art history has played itself out with a conceptual relationship to the country. The works of John, Sasha, Guy and Kyoko were created as much out of their relationships with Kristian and Jared as they were with the inspiration of the country itself in mind. Kristian's spectacular *Akurra* carry on an Adnyamathanha tradition of impressing non-Indigenous visitors with the power of the country, while the non-Indigenous artists of the show allude to that which is not all visible in the way they transition the country from walking into painting, rock to paper, and sitting quietly into sound. As the Flingers Ranges once reinvented the image of Australia, today these ranges are reinventing the relationship of artists to the continent, to ways of working in relation to an ancestral country.

Darren Jorgensen

Darren Jorgensen lectures in art history at the University of Western Australia. His writing on Australian art has appeared in *Art Bulletin*, *Artlink*, *Aboriginal History*, *History Australia*, *Third Text* and *World Art*. He is currently running a research project on illustrated literature from remote Aboriginal communities and is finishing a study of art and literature from sheep and cattle stations in nineteenth and twentieth century Australia.

Endnotes

- [i] Roy Coulthard, private conversation with the author, November 13, 2019.
- [ii] Peggy Brock, *Outback Ghettos: A History of Aboriginal institutionalisation and survival*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, 138-141, 147; Julie Ellis and Bob Ellis, *Nepabunna: A Brief History*, Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association, Port Augusta, 2009, n.p.; Christobel Mattingley, d. with Ken Hampton, *Survival in Our Own Land: 'Aboriginal' Experiences in 'South Australia' since 1836*, Hodder and Stoughton, Sydney, 1988, 229.
- [iii] 'Educating the Brothers: Leighs Creek', *Chronicle* (Adelaide), 11 April 1914, p. 4.
- [iv] See Peggy Brock, *Outback Ghettos: A History of Aboriginal institutionalisation and survival*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 147; and "Leigh Creek News: We are Brothers," *Port Augusta Dispatch*, 17 April, 1914, p. 4.
- [v] Andrew Sayers, "One View," in *John R. Walker. Space & Time: 10 Years in the Landscape*, Maitland Regional Art Gallery, Maitland, 2011, p. 5.
- [vi] Veronica Tello, *Counter-Memorial Aesthetics: Refugee Histories and the Politics of Contemporary Art*, Bloomsbury, London, 2016, p. 97.
- [vii] John Kean, private communication, November 23, 2021.
- [viii] Kyoko Hashimoto and Guy Keulemans, private conversation with the author, 27 March, 2023.
- [ix] Sasha Grbich, private conversation with the author, 11 March 2023.
- [x] Ian McLean, Terry Smith, Sam Beard and Darren Jorgensen, 'Doubled Histories: The Futures of Australian Art', *Dispatch Review* special issue, 21 December 2023, <https://dispatchreview.info/Double-Histories-Special-Issue>

Kristian Coulthard
 (Adnyamathanha)

Born Hawker, Flinders Ranges, 1973, resides on Country near Blinman, Flinders Ranges, South Australia.

Akurra Miru (curved male serpent), 2024
 carved Mallee root with incised and burnt designs and images, echidna quills, manna Xanthorrhoea resin/Yakka
 77.8 x 95.6 x 71.5 cm
 Collection of the Artist.

Akurra Ngarri Mudlanha (curved female serpent), 2017 - 2019
 carved Acacia, with incised and burnt designs and images, emu feathers, Xanthorrhoea resin/yakka
 68 x 145 x 83 cm
 Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Akurra Miru, Makara (The Pleiades, Seven Sisters large serpent), 2024 carved Eucalyptus camaldulensis, red gum, Xanthorrhoea resin/Yakka
 29 x 354 x 39.5cm
 Collection of the Artist.

Wabma, 2024 (smaller, long serpent) carved wood, with incised and burnt designs and images, Xanthorrhoea resin/yakka 17.6 x 225.5 x 23cm
 Collection of the Artist

Akurra Miru & Ngarri Mudlanha (male and female serpents travelling together), 2024
 carved Purple-wood wattle, Acacia carnei
 19.8 x 138 x 26.5 cm
 Collection of the Artist.

Set of Miniatures, 2024
 carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images
 37 x 30 x 11cm
 Collection of the Artist.

Ikara, 2024
 acrylic on canvas
 90 x 1830 cm
 Collection of the Artist.

Clem Coulthard
 (Adnyamathanha)

Born 1927, Floods Creek, Mustering Camp, Wooltana Station, Flinders Ranges, died c. 1992

Set of Miniatures, Port Augusta, created before 1991
 carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images
 base 29 x 5.6 cm, height 22.2 cm
 Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Set of Miniatures, Port Augusta, created before 1984
 carved Mulga wood with incised and burnt designs and images
 base 22 x 4.9 cm, height 29.6 cm
 Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Set of Miniatures, Port Augusta, created before 1991
 carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images
 base 25.5 x 6.1 cm, height 32.5 cm
 Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Set of Miniatures, Port Augusta, created before 1984
 carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images
 base 25.5 x 4.6 cm, height 25.4 cm
 Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Toy Boomerang puzzle, Port Augusta, South Australia, c. 1991
 carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images featuring two ducks
 1.2 x 22.6 x 19.1 cm
 Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Boomerang, Port Augusta, South Australia, created before 1991
 carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images featuring two ducks, two emus and a kangaroo (depicted from right to left),
 1.7 x 4.4 x 49.4 cm
 Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

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Clem Coulthard

Set of Miniatures, created between 1940 – 1950s carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images. base 29.6 x 8.2 cm, height 28 cm Collection Kristian Coulthard, Flinders Ranges.

Two Walking sticks, Finke River, Flinders Ranges, created - between 1920 – 1930s carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images; clasped hand handles, insects, birds, kangaroo and snake on shaft. Carving by Ted Coulthard, with incised and burnt designs and images by Winnie Ryan. 85 cm (10 cm approx. width of the handle) Collection Kristian Coulthard, Flinders Ranges.

Sasha Grbich

Born Melbourne, 1980, worked for the ABC North and West, Nukunu Country, Flinders Ranges, 2010 – 2011.

The water's edge, where the trees begin, has recently been underwater... 2024
Sound installation with audio description (writing): Lara Torr, audio description (voicing): Rosemary Nursey-Bray for *Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place*. Duration 6.46 mins. Collection of the Artist

A track that moves past the remnants of older campsites, rusted cans, beer bottles and single use plastics... 2024
Sound installation with audio description (writing): Lara Torr, audio description (voicing): Rosemary Nursey-Bray for *Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place*, Duration 7:18 mins. Collection of the Artist.

Antony Hamilton

Born Euroa, Victoria, 1955, died Beltana, Flinders Ranges, South Australia, 2020, where he lived and worked for almost thirty years.

Hung white fox and shadow, 1999 and 2024 Fox, fencing wire, carcass hooks. 287 x 237 cm (diam.) Collection the Artist's Estate, Beltana, South Australia.

Kyoko Hashimoto & Guy Keulemans

Kyoko Hashimoto, born in Shizuoka prefecture, Japan, in 1980, and Guy Keulemans, born in Sydney, New South Wales, in 1975, currently live and work in Adelaide, South Australia.

Bioregional rings (Northern Flinders subregion) 2024
Wood and paper from native timbers, yakka resin, ochre, 16 rings, various sizes, largest 15 x 5 x 6 cm Collection of the Artists, courtesy Sally Dan Cuthbert.

These rings explore distinctions between regenerative and non-renewable materials of production. Native timbers of Acacia and kurrajong were processed into handcrafted paper, for the creation of paper mache shapes simulating rocks and other objects found on Adnyamathanha Country. The rings supporting these paper shapes are digitally milled from the same timbers.

Copper and copper ore mirrors (large and small) 2024
copper, copper ore, large 51 x 21 x 16 cm, small 30 x 18 x 15 cm Collection of the Artist, courtesy Sally Dan Cuthbert.

The Blinman copper mine stands out as a site of colonial territorialisation juxtaposed to the indigenous materiality of Adnyamathanha Country. Copper mining began in Mesopotamia, an ancient source of Western culture. Mesopotamian mirrors were made from copper in styles developed by the Greeks and Romans into forms symbolic of women. These mirrors explore the tension that arises from geographic displacement of material culture. Collection of the Artists.

Prints on paper, 2024
native timbers, ink, 41 x 29 cm Collection of the Artists, courtesy Sally Dan Cuthbert.
Ochre and Verdigris are used as inks to screen print digital representations of rocks, wood and bone found on Adnyamathanha Country.

Ted Coulthard and Winnie Ryan
 (Adnyamathanha)

Ted Coulthard born Mount Serle, Flinders Ranges, 1877, died Hawker, Flinders Ranges, 1959. Winnie Ryan born Mount Serle, Flinders Ranges, c.1889, died Nepabunna, Flinders Ranges 1952.

Walking stick, Finke River, Flinders Ranges, c. 1895 carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images, brass band on base; carved bird figure handle and lizard, spider and snake on shaft.
 87.5 x 8 cm

Donated Muriel E. Craige. Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Walking stick, Flinders Ranges, c. 1890s carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images; carved bird figure handle and lizard, spider and snake on shaft.
 98 x 6.5 x 4 cm
 Donated W. J. Pitman. Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Shield, Nepabunna, Flinders Ranges, created between 1940s – 1950s carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images depicting emu, serpent, kangaroo, goannas, spider. 6 x 9.8 x 32.6 cm.
 Donated John Erskine, Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Boomerang, Nepabunna, Flinders Ranges, created between 1940s – 1950s carved wood with animal motifs and applied pokerwork from left to right bird, kangaroo and emu shaking hands and a small bird.
 11mm x 48 mm x 303 mm
 Donated John Erskine, Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Container, Nepabunna, Flinders Ranges, created between 1940s – 1950s carved wooden with zigzag etching background and incised pokerwork shading of animal motifs of the Kangaroo and Emu facing each other like the coat of arms, two small birds and other small birds.
 37.5 x 11.3 x 4.5 cm
 Donated John Erskine, Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.

Set of Miniatures, created between 1940 – 1950s carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images. base 29.6 x 8.2 cm, height 28 cm Collection Kristian Coulthard, Flinders Ranges.

Two Walking sticks, Finke River, Flinders Ranges, created - between 1920 – 1930s carved wood with incised and burnt designs and images; clasped hand handles, insects, birds, kangaroo and snake on shaft. Carving by Ted Coulthard, with incised and burnt designs and images by Winnie Ryan.
 85 cm (10 cm approx. width of the handle)
 Collection Kristian Coulthard, Flinders Ranges.

John R Walker

Born Sydney 1957, lives and works in Braidwood, New South Wales, and regularly visits and works at Oratunga Station, Flinders Ranges.

Eagle Spirit, Vathiwarta, 2021 archival oil on polyester
 260 x 345.5 cm
 Collection of the Artist, courtesy Utopia Art Sydney.

Glass Gorge Walking, 2021 archival oil on polyester
 198 x 254 cm
 Collection of the Artist, courtesy Utopia Art Sydney.

Near Parachilna, 2021 archival oil on polyester
 152 x 243.5 cm
 Collection of the Artist, courtesy Utopia Art Sydney.

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John R Walker

Oratunga Creek II, 2016
concertina artist book
35 x 25cm
635cm fully unfolded.
Collection of the Artist, courtesy
Utopia Art Sydney.

Oratunga Gorge, 2016
concertina artist book
32 x 23cm
635cm fully unfolded.
Collection of the Artist, courtesy
Utopia Art Sydney.

**Dylan and Christopher
Crismani** (Wiradjuri/European)

Dylan Crismani, born Flinders
Park, South Australia, 1987, and
Christopher Crismani born
Adelaide, South Australia, 1960,
currently live and work in
Adelaide, South Australia.

Barraabarraa (make a rushing
noise), 2024 bronze plate and
rods on plinth, 100 x 900 x 1800
cm
Collection of the Artists.

Barraabarraa, 2024, music
performances presented during
the exhibition by Dylan Crismani.

Christopher Crismani and Dylan
Crismani were supported by
Government of South Australia
through Arts SA to create
their work *Barraabarraa*, 2024
as complement to the *Mulka
Yata/The Knowledge of Place*
exhibition at the Samstag
Museum of Art.

***Mulka Yata* documentary film
by Jared Thomas (Nukunu) and
Malcolm McKinnon**

Documentary film featuring
Kristian Coulthard filmed on
Adnyamathanha and Kaurna
Country with works from the
South Australian Museum
collections and courtesy of
Kristian Coulthard. Duration 7
minutes.

Mulka Yata directed and
produced by Jared Thomas and
Malcolm McKinnon.

Camera, sound recording, and
video edit by Malcolm McKinnon.

Archival images from the State
Library of South Australia and
South Australian Museum.

Commissioned by the Samstag
Museum of Art, University
of South Australia for the
*Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of
Place* exhibition, 7 June – 20
September 2024. © Reckless Eye
Productions, 2024.

Acacia. Common mulga (*Acacia aneura*), Western myall (*Acacia papyrocarpa*) and Wadi (*Acacia peuce*). Used for paper, paper mache and rings. Given to us by Kristian Coulthard, these hardwoods are native to the Flinders Ranges bioregion and produce dark paper. Their density and structural stability allow fine details via computer controlled digital milling.

Blue gum. *Eucalyptus globulus*. Used for paper and paper mache. Eucalyptus was used as a control variable in our paper making experiments, as this species has a history of use in paper manufacturing. Blue gum is now planted around the world in monoculture tree farms for paper pulp production. The wood produces a light-coloured paper.

Kurrajong. An unknown *Brachychiton* species. Used for paper, paper mache and rings. This was given to us by Kristian Coulthard on Adnyamathanha Country but comes from elsewhere, perhaps as far as Queensland. This illustrates bioregional porosity in a contemporary example of the traditional trade routes for wooden objects. The red heartwood and lighter sapwood combine to produce pink-brown coloured paper.

Ochre. Red, white, yellow and purple ochre foraged with Kristian Coulthard. Used as a screen-printing ink, and to colour rings and paper mache rocks. Ochre was the pre-eminent item of trade between the Adnyamathanha and their neighbours and requires respectful handling.

Yakka. The resin of *Xanthorrhoea* semi-planar, a grass tree. Used to repair milling imperfections in the timber rings, similar to its traditional use by Adnyamathanha to repair spear tips and other crafted objects. Prior to the invention of petrochemical plastics, yakka was widely used by colonial settlers as a glue and casting resin. This nearly led to the extinction of the yakka tree as the settlers harvested the whole, slowly growing tree, rather than use the sustainable Adnyamathanha method of collecting the resin naturally excreted from the tree in summer.

Copper. Used in mirrors and for creating Verdigris. Purchased commercially of unknown origin, but functionally similar to the copper produced at the Blinman Mine between 1862 and 1907.

Copper ore. Malachite. Use as a base to hold the copper mirrors. Foraged from the edges of the Blinman mine with Kristian Coulthard's permission. Malachite is a common forms of copper ore. These rocks contain low levels of copper.

Verdigris. Copper acetate. Used as a screen-printing ink. Harvested by suspending copper sheet over vinegar. Verdigris was a common source of green ink until the development of petrochemicals.



Kyoko Hashimoto & Guy Keulemans — *Bioregional rings (Northern Flinders subregion)*
2024. Wood and paper from native timbers, yakka resin, ochre, Collection of the Artists.
Photograph by Grant Hancock.



Antony Hamilton — *Hung white fox and shadow*, 1999

Fox, fencing wire, carcass hooks 287 x 237 cm (diam.) Collection the Artist's Estate, Beltana, South Australia. Photograph by Grant Hancock.



Kristian Coulthard (Adnyamathanha) — *Akurra Ngarri Mudlanha* (curved female serpent, with feathers), 2024 carved Acacia, with incised and burnt designs and images, emu feathers, yakka. 68 x 145 x 83 cm. Collection of South Australian Museum, Adelaide.



John R Walker — *Glass Gorge Walking*, 2021 archival oil on polyester 198 x 254cm
Collection of the Artist, courtesy Utopia Art Sydney.

The water's edge, where the trees begin, has recently been underwater. Pools of water remain in the sand. To the left, the remains of a feast- the shells of half a dozen cooked crabs are scattered among the mangrove roots. Orange, coral, pale pink and white- a bright point of contrast against the dark brown mud...

A track that moves past the remnants of older campsites- rusted cans, beer bottles and single use plastics, and turns toward the rocky cliff of an ancient geological range, which tapers gradually down towards a sheltered gully. Here, a series of winding, pebbled, creek beds, twist their way around clusters of gum trees and over innumerable, smooth, dusty pebbles...

Sasha Grbich, *The water's edge, where the trees begin, has recently been underwater...* 2024, Sound installation with audio description (writing): Lara Torr, audio description (voicing): Rosemary Nursey-Bray for Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place. Duration 7 mins. Collection of the Artist.

MULKA YATA/THE KNOWLEDGE OF PLACE

SAMSTAG ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the Samstag Museum of Art, University of South Australia, I would first and foremost like to extend thanks and acknowledgement to the Adnyamathanha people—their name derived from *adnya* (rock) and *mathanha* (people)—of the Northern Flinders Ranges. Most especially, my thanks to Kristian Coulthard for so generously welcoming us to his Country, patiently listening and sharing – a knowledge and respect that has come from the generations who came before, notably his grandfather Clem Coulthard, great-grandfather Ted Coulthard, and great-grandmother Winne Ryan. It has been inspiring to visit Wadna outside Blinman and see Kristian creating works on Country with his partner, Gabby Coulthard.

Thank you also to the other participating artists—Sasha Grbich, Antony Hamilton, Kyoko Hashimoto, Guy Keulemans and John R Walker—who have created the works featured in the exhibition, including new works that we have the privilege to premiere. Each featured artist has captured something of the essence of ‘place’ – the land, air, colours, sounds and materials from the Flinders Ranges region.

Our exhibition partner, the South Australian Museum, has assisted very generously with *Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place*, especially exhibition co-curator Dr Jared Thomas, William and Margaret Geary Research Fellow, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Material Culture and Arts.

Thank you to the South Australian Museum, particularly Dr David Gaimster, Director; Justine van Mourik, Director, Engagement; Alice Beale, Senior Collection Manager, Humanities and World Cultures; Kenny Monger, mounts and model maker, and Evan Packer, Public Programs Producer, who have also enabled this exhibition through the loan of works and by agreeing to partner with Samstag to present the Sprigg Salon discussion.

Accompanying the exhibition, Samstag presents a ‘sonambient’ sculpture by musician Dylan Crismani and his father, artist Christopher Crismani, with performances held by Dylan during the exhibition, including the opening. Along with Malcolm McKinnon, co-curator Jared Thomas has directed and produced a short film featuring Kristian Coulthard discussing works created by him and his family members in the South Australian Museum Collection and *Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place* exhibition.

Finally, my thanks to the Office of the Aboriginal Leadership and Strategy at the University of South Australia, as well as to Christopher Hodges and Brett Stone from Utopia Art Sydney, Gini Lee for welcoming and hosting so many artists’ to her place at Oratunga Station, and to Helen Fuller for sharing Antony Hamilton’s work with us as well as the visit to Tony’s house, the former Station Master’s stone cottage in Beltana.

Thank you to The Lane Vineyard and Mr Mick for their beautiful wines for the exhibition launch and Sprigg Salon. And thank you also to Uncle Mickey Kumatpi O’Brien for the smoking ceremony for the opening night, welcoming everyone to Samstag on Kurna Country.

On 17 July 2024, the South Australian Sprigg Salon celebrates Adnyamathanha culture, with speakers artist Kristian Coulthard (Adnyamathanha), researcher Dr Jared Thomas (Nukunu), and *Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place* essayist Dr Darren Jorgensen. The Sprigg Salon has been developed and presented by the University of South Australia and South Australian Museum, celebrating NAIDOC Week 2024.

Erica Green, Director, Samstag Museum of Art, June 2024

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SAMSTAG KUDLILA SEASON

Mulka Yata/The Knowledge of Place is a Samstag Museum of Art exhibition with the South Australian Museum:

Exhibition curators Erica Green, Samstag, and Jared Thomas (Nukunu), South Australian Museum.

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Essay by Darren Jorgensen

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