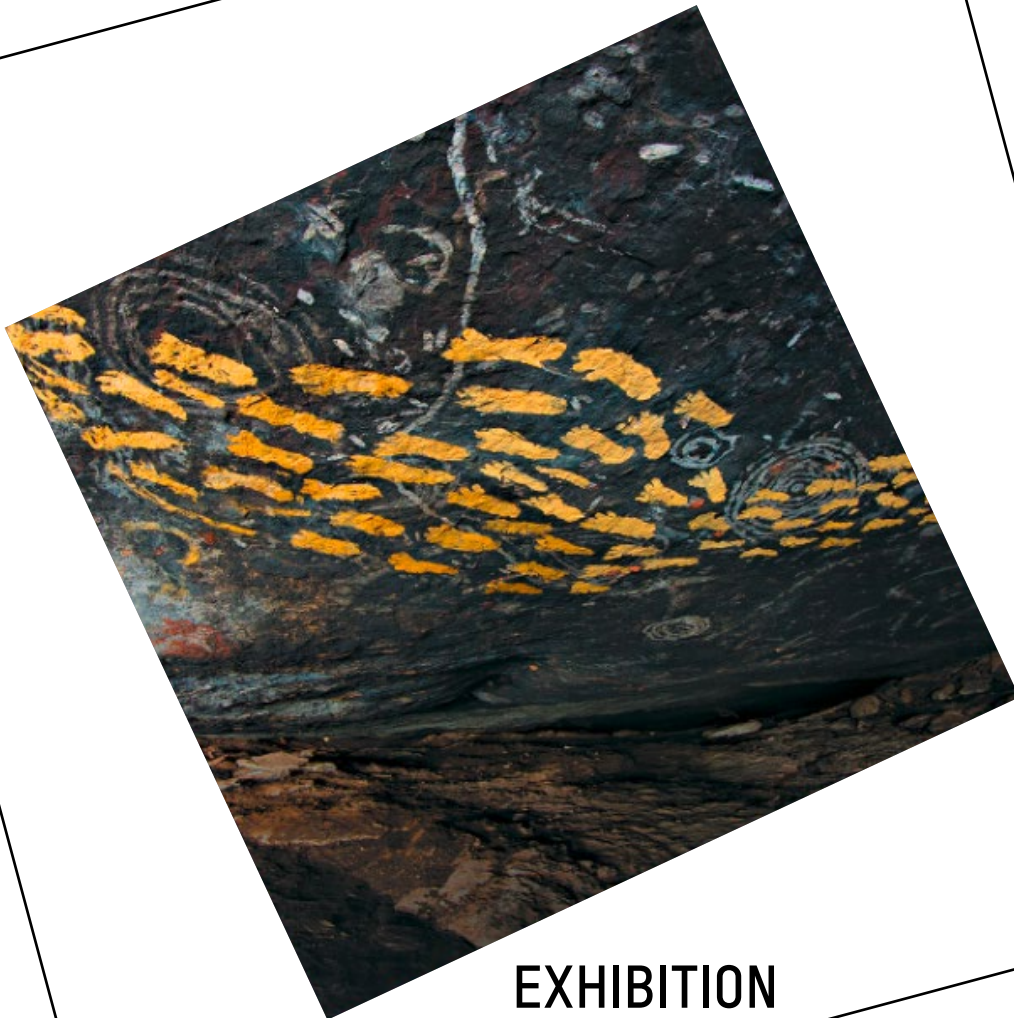


**HUMBOLDT
FORUM**


SONGLINES:

TRACKING THE SEVEN SISTERS



**EXHIBITION
EVENTS AND EDUCATION
PROGRAMME
17.06.–30.10.2022**

 **STIFTUNG
HUMBOLDT FORUM**
IM BERLINER SCHLOSS

 Staatliche Museen zu Berlin
Preußischer Kulturbesitz

**national
museum
australia**

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Songlines

Image: montage photographs by Sarah Kenderdine, Peter Morse and Paul Bourke. Seven Sisters rock art reproduced with the permission of Apangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara and the Walinynga (Cave Hill) traditional owners

“This grand drama of intrigue, mystery and beauty encompasses the passion and danger of creation, desire, love, flight and survival, and like all such narratives retains its relevance and universality. The lessons imparted continue to have critical contemporary relevance to movements such as the Black Lives Matter, Me-Too and other environment and climate concerns. Australian Aboriginal people managed this continent sustainably for 60,000 plus years. Yet in only 250 years since the arrival of the British, it is in dire straits. How? The answers lie in the Songlines.”

Margo Neale, Senior Indigenous Curator, National Museum of Australia

“This is a momentous occasion for the National Museum of Australia and our award-winning exhibition, *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters*—one of the first major international shows to be displayed at the Humboldt Forum in Berlin. We are immensely proud to be sharing the foundational Australian stories with German audiences, who I know will be as captivated by this award-winning show as Australian audiences were, when the exhibition showed in Canberra. It is fitting that Songlines is on display in Berlin’s newest cultural centre in 2022, as we celebrate 70 years of Australian – German relations.”

Mathew Trinca, director of the National Museum of Australia

“*Songlines* presents an extraordinary encounter with the art and cultures of Indigenous communities at the Humboldt Forum. The programme is an important contribution to presenting this new site of international polyphony, transdisciplinarity and experiential knowledge to a broad audience. And it opens up new perspectives on how the Humboldt Forum can become an important site for self-determination, participation, transmission and mediation.”

Hartmut Dorgerloh, General Director of the Humboldt Forum

SONGLINES: TRACKING THE SEVEN SISTERS



Seven Sisters und Wati Nyiru, 2018, Detail, Skulpturen der Tjanpi Desert Weavers
© the artists / Tjanpi Desert Weavers / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2022, Image: Nathan Mewett

Based on a unique cooperation for the preservation of Aboriginal knowledge, the exhibition tells one of the central creation stories of the Australian continent. Songlines are cultural routes that traverse all of Australia. Through story, song and visual culture, songlines map the routes and activities of the Ancestral beings, whose travels created the land. The Seven Sisters songlines tell the saga of seven women who cross three deserts fleeing from a male pursuer with magical powers.

The exhibition invites visitors on a journey across the Australian continent, combining an innovative multimedia exhibition design with Aboriginal art and performance. Welcomed and guided by lifesized digital videos of Aboriginal elders, visitors can retrace the story of the Seven Sisters along a journey featuring over 300 paintings, ceramics, sculptures, installations, photos and multimedia interactives. One of the exhibition's highlights is a multimedia dome, virtually transporting up to 30 visitors to Walinynga (Cave Hill), enabling them to experience a 360-degree vision of this rare Seven Sisters

rock art site. Inside the dome, the visitors will also encounter the Seven Sisters as digital animations of the expressive Tjanpi (grass) figures, created for the exhibition by artists of the Tjanpi Desert Weavers.

The exhibition is based on a unique, ten-year research and preservation project, initiated and led by representatives of Indigenous communities from the Central and Western Deserts in partnership with the National Museum of Australia and the Australian National University. Songlines was collaboratively curated by Margo Neale, Senior Indigenous Curator of the National Museum, and an Indigenous Curatorium, whose members were nominated by their communities.

A series of events and an educational programme, developed together with representatives of the National Museum of Australia, expand and deepen the exhibition experience. In a dialogue-based audio tour, the Seven Sisters address the visitors directly, inviting them to join their journey along the songlines. In June,

representatives of the Aboriginal Curatorium and artists from the exhibition will be guests at the Humboldt Forum and will engage in conversation with visitors. The book accompanying the exhibition is a profound source of the wide-ranging spiritual, economic, ecological and cultural Aboriginal knowledge inscribed in the Australian continent.

Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters is an international touring exhibition produced by the National Museum of Australia with the ongoing support of the traditional Aboriginal custodians and knowledge holders of this story.
16 June 2022 — 31 October 2022

Presented by the Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss (SHF) in partnership with the Ethnologisches Museum (EM) – Staatliche Museen zu Berlin.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION



Besucher vor dem Gemälde *Minyipuru*, 2015, der Martumili Künstlerin Mulyatingki Marney
© the artist / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2022, Image: Nathan Mewett

Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters is a journey along the Ancestral routes of the sisters as they flee across deserts, pursued relentlessly by a sorcerer. This is an epic tale of tragedy and comedy, obsession and trickery, desire and loss, solidarity and sorrow — a universal drama played out in the night sky by Orion and the Pleiades, and a terrestrial creation story in which the land has a starring role.

The Seven Sisters story is a saga of mythological dimensions and meanings. It is of a kind with Greek legends of gods transforming themselves into swans and bulls and showers of gold in order to seduce the women they desire. But the Australian desert story has a more ribald, raunchy element.

In retelling the Seven Sisters story here, the three deserts of the Martu, the Ngaanyatjarra and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara peoples are mapped across the gallery, the paintings become portals to place, and the films and audio pieces replicate the inma, or the ceremonies of song and dance that embody the story.

ABOUT SONGLINES

The National Museum of Australia and the Humboldt Forum acknowledge the primacy of songlines as the foundational stories of this continent. Songlines, or Dreaming tracks, map the routes and activities of Ancestral beings on their travels of creation across Australia. There are major songlines that cross the continent, and more localised tracks connecting only a few sites.

Individuals may hold the rights to sections of the songlines that traverse their Country. These rights are restricted to the proper custodians, whose authority depends on gender, kinship status and relationship to Country. Many people share responsibility for the songline of an entire Tjukurpa. A songline has many layers of knowledge, and many degrees of access, from its public version to the secret/sacred levels available to only the most senior custodians.

Like the epic poems of the great oral traditions, songlines are a way of holding and passing on knowledge. They contain protocols of behaviour and information for survival in

an unpredictable and volatile environment — where water and food can be found, where there is potential risk, and how to act to minimise that risk. By embedding information in a story, and performing that story in dance and song, an entire continent has been mapped by and for its people.

ABOUT THE EXHIBITION



Künstlerinnen der Tjanpi Desert Weavers lassen ihre tjanpi Schwestern fliegen, Papulankutja, West-Australien, 2015
Image: Annieka Skinner, Tjanpi Desert Weavers

THE SONGLINES CURATORIUM

Originally, stories were performed by custodians on Country, enacting the activities of the Ancestors in the places where they happened. As access to many of these places became difficult, and knowledge held by fewer and older people, new ways of passing on knowledge have become necessary. This exhibition is a direct response to an Anangu request to help preserve and communicate that knowledge. This and other material is deposited in Ara Irititja, an Aboriginal-managed archive.

Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters is the first exhibition of its kind, attempting to tell in an exhibition space an Indigenous founding narrative using Indigenous ways of holding and transferring knowledge. Members of the curatorium played a central role in the creation of the exhibition.

The curatorium comprises community-nominated representatives with senior status from Martu Country and Anangu Pitjantjatjara

Yankunytjatjara (APY) and Ngaanyatjarra lands. They are not a reference or advisory group, but knowledge holders of the cultural material in this exhibition who shaped its representation in collaboration with the National Museum of Australia.

THE SEVEN SISTERS

At first glance, the Seven Sisters songline is the story of an Ancestral shape-shifter and the women he pursues. It is also a tale of survival, resilience and endurance arising from the endless drama of flight and pursuit, and the ability of the women to overcome the threats and dangers that face them.

In the west, the sisters are collectively called Minyipuru and their male pursuer, Yurla. As they travel eastward, out of Martu Country into the lands of the Ngaanyatjarra and the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara, the sisters are known as Kungkarrangkalpa and Kungkarrangkalpa respectively, and the lovestruck man, Wati Nyiru.

The Seven Sisters are not simply victims in their own story. At times flustered and flighty, they can be as tricky and clever as the sorcerer who transforms into multiple guises to trick the sisters he attempts to possess. When the sorcerer's lust overcomes his reason, and part of him cuts loose in the form of kuniya the carpet snake, the sisters capture and wrestle it out of their Country, flinging it away and watching it flicker and gleam with the colours of the rainbow, while the shape-shifter chases it over the western horizon. The Seven Sisters story is more than a moral narrative of actions and their consequences. It reflects a world in which necessity drives behaviour, power is negotiable and flexible, and resilience is the quality that ensures survival.

EVENTS, FILM AND EDUCATION PROGRAMME

EVENTS



Margo Neale im Wati Nyiru Raum der „Songlines“ Ausstellung im National Museum of Australia
© the artists/Copyright Agency 2020, Image: National Museum of Australia

Songlines. Talk with Margo Neale

17 June 2022, 7 pm

Margo Neale, Senior Indigenous Curator of the National Museum of Australia, talks about the development and significance of the exhibition. English with German translation



Martumili Künstlerinnen Ngamaru Bidu, Kumpaya Girgirba und Ngalangka Nola Taylor vor ihrem Gemälde „Yarrkalpa“ (Jagdgründe) in der Nähe des Martumili Art Shed, Parnngurr, 2013
Gabrielle Sullivan, Martumili Artists / VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2022

One Object, Many Questions: Yarrkalpa.

Paintings as Portals of Knowledge

29 June 2022, 6 pm

Margo Neale talks to curator Marc Wrasse about one of the most important exhibits in this exhibition and about contemporary paintings by Indigenous artists as portals of knowledge. English

17-20 June 2022, 4 pm

20 June 2022, 11 am

Aboriginal artists and curators of the exhibition offer personal insights into their work and different aspects of *Songlines*.

FILMS

Five films highlight the lives and work of Aboriginal Australians from very different perspectives. With welcome addresses by the filmmakers and subsequent audience discussions, including a talk with Maryanne Redpath, curator and expert on the Australian Aboriginal film scene.

BRAN NUE DAE

18 June 2022, 7 pm

Rachel Perkins

Australia 2008, 83 min.

English

FSK 6, Musical, Feature film

18.06.2022, 19.00 Uhr

A feature film adaptation of the 1990 stage musical *Bran Nue Dae* by Jimmy Chi, the film tells the story of the coming of age of an Aboriginal Australian teenager on a road trip in the late 1960s.



Filmstill aus dem Spielfilm „10 Kanus, 150 Speere und 3 Frauen“
(Originaltitel: Ten Canoes) von Rolf de Heer © Alamode Film

TEN CANOES

19 June 2022, 7 pm

Rolf De Heer

Australia 2006, 90 min.,

English / Ganalbingu

FSK 12, Feature / Experimental film

19.06.2022, 19.00 Uhr

It is a thousand years ago, tribal times in the north of Australia. Minyngululu learns that young Dayindi, on his first goose egg hunting expedition, has taken a fancy to Minyngululu's third and youngest wife. Tribal law is in danger of being broken: Minyngululu decides to deal with the situation by telling Dayindi an ancestral story, a story that will take a very long time to tell, all through the next days of canoe making and swamp travelling and goose egg gathering.



Filmstill aus dem Dokumentarfilm „We Don't Need a Map“ von Warwick Thornton © Barefoot Communications 2017

WE DON'T NEED A MAP

22 June 2022, 7 pm

Warwick Thornton

Australia 2017, 85 min.

English

FSK 6, Documentary

22.06.2022, 19.00 Uhr

The Southern Cross is the most famous constellation in the southern hemisphere. Ever since colonisation it's been claimed, appropriated and hotly-contested for ownership by a radical range of Australian groups. But for Aboriginal people the meaning of this heavenly body is deeply spiritual. One of Australia's leading film-makers, Warwick Thornton, tackles this fiery subject head on in a bold and poetic essayfilm.



Filmstill aus dem Spielfilm „Charlie's Country“ von Rolf de Heer
(Australien 2014), John Brumpton (l.), David Gulpiitl (m.) und Luke Ford (r.)
© 2014 Vertigo Productions, Screen Australia, South Australian Film Corporation and Adelaide Film Festival

Charlie's Country

23 June 2022, 7 pm

Rolf De Heer

Australia 2013, 108 min.

English, Yolngu

Feature Film

Living in a remote Aboriginal community in the northern part of Australia, Charlie is a warrior past his prime. As the government increases its stranglehold over the community's traditional way of life, Charlie becomes lost between two cultures.

DAS FILM-, VERANSTALTUNGS- UND VERMITTLUNGSPROGRAMM



Filmstills aus dem Doku-Drama „In My Blood it Runs“ von Maya Newell
© Closer Productions 2019

IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS

24 June 2022, 7 pm

Maya Newell

Australia 2019, 84 min.

English, Aboriginal English, Arrernte

FSK 12, Documentary

24.06.2022, 19.00 Uhr

Ten-year-old Djujan is a child-healer, a good hunter and speaks three languages. Yet Djujan is 'failing' in school and facing increasing scrutiny from welfare and the police. We walk with him as he grapples with these pressures, shares his truths and somewhere in-between finds space to dream, imagine and hope for his future self.



GUIDED TOURS

Guided tours through the exhibition curated by the National Museum of Australia will give the visitors a chance to follow in the footsteps of the Seven Sisters and visualize Indigenous knowledge and social experiences to an international audience by means of different media, such as painting, performance, film and multimedia installations. For the educational programme, the National Museum of Australia will also provide objects and stories that refer to the daily life and surroundings of the communities represented.

Songlines – an Overview

SA + SO, 11 am, DE

MO, SA + SO, 15 pm, EN

Five times a week the tour will present different themes of the exhibition.

Songlines – the Tandem Tour

25 June + 23 July 2022, 4 pm, EN

20 August 2022, 4 pm, DE

Two experts will comment on the exhibition from their different perspectives.

SCHOOL GROUPS

Workshops and guided tours for students inspire insights in the arts and landscape of Central Australia. For all offers for schools and educators, see humboldtforum.org/songlines.

Fortbildung

08.09.2022, 15–18 Uhr

Die Fortbildung für Pädagog*innen Songlines – Wege durch Australien stellt Methoden des außerschulischen Lernens vor.

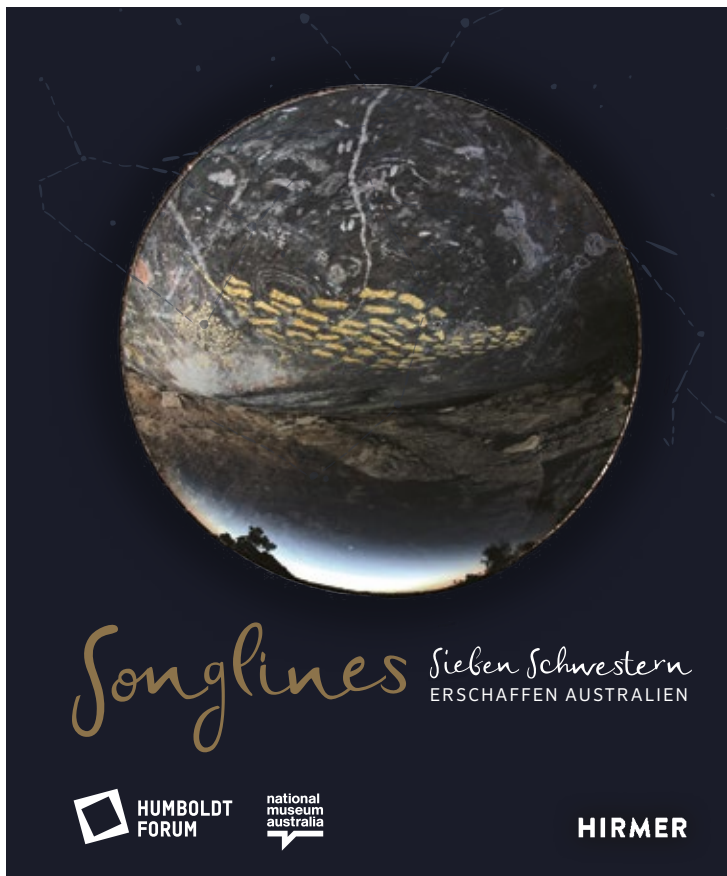
HOLIDAY PROGRAMME

Songlines – Pathways through Berlin

21 July 2022, 2 pm, DE

04 August 2022, 2 pm, DE

Public workshops for young people from 12 years on



Fotomontagen von Sarah Kenderdine, Peter Morse und Paul Bourke; Sieben-Schwester-Felskunst abgebildet mit freundlicher Genehmigung der Walinynga (Cave Hill) Traditional Owners.

PUBLICATION

The book accompanying the exhibition is a profound and impressive source of the wide-ranging spiritual, economic, ecological and cultural Aboriginal knowledge inscribed in the Australian continent. The book tracks the paths of the Seven Sisters through rich illustrations and scholarly contributions, but above all the authentic narratives of Aboriginal artists.

Songlines: Sieben Schwestern erschaffen Australien,
Hirmer Verlag, 272 Seiten
Ca. 300 Abb., 34,90 €.

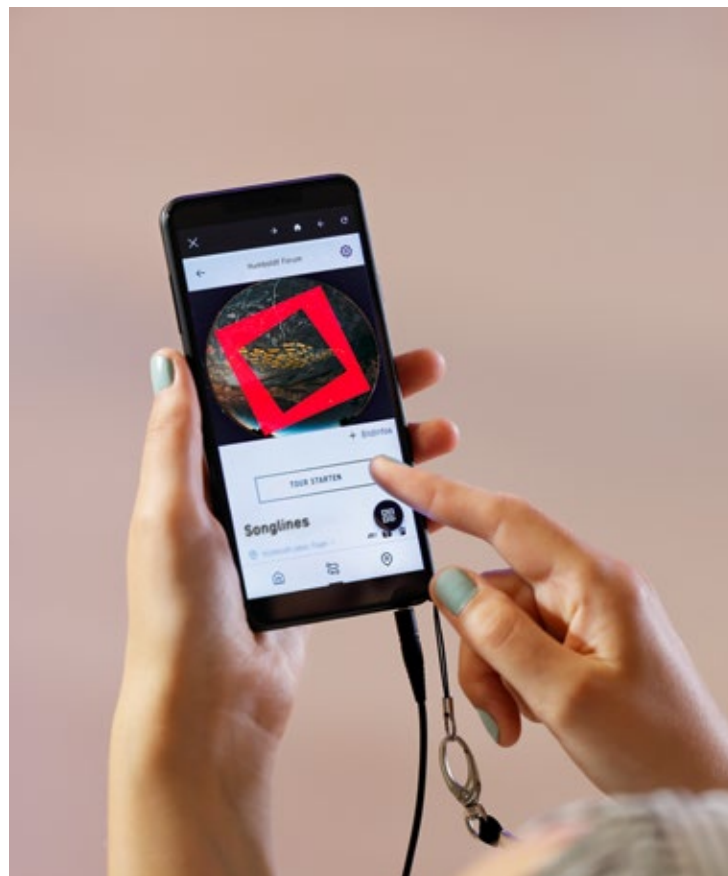


Image: montage photographs by Sarah Kenderdine, Peter Morse and Paul Bourke. Seven Sisters rock art reproduced with the permission of Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara and the Walinynga (Cave Hill) traditional owners / Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, Foto: Andreas König / Stiftung Humboldt Forum im Berliner Schloss, Foto: Andreas König

MEDIA GUIDE

The free media guide to the exhibition invites visitors on an audio journey with the Seven Sisters. Sound effects and spoken roles provide an immersive audio experience in German, English and with German audio descriptions. Storytelling is a central theme of the exhibition. The media guide takes up this form of storytelling and enables visitors to explore the exhibition on their own.

The media guide can also be used on the visitor's own smartphone. The Humboldt Forum App is a web application, no download is necessary:

www.guide.humboldtforum.org.

“WE ARE MORE INTERESTED IN THE FUTURE THAN THE PAST”

A conversation with Margo Neale (Senior Indigenous Curator, National Museum of Australia) and Andy Greenslade (Curator, National Museum of Australia)

Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters follows the journey of seven Ancestral women, who are relentlessly pursued by a shapeshifter named Yurla or Wati Nyiru. In this Aboriginal creation story, the land plays a starring role. Why?

MARGO NEALE: Land in the Aboriginal world view is more than land as it is viewed in the Western world, where it is equivalent to geography or a physical surface. Country in the Aboriginal world view is a multi-dimensional concept that includes all things. There is no distinction between animate and inanimate. Everything is living, everything has a place: people, animals, plants, earth, water and air. Country was created by Ancestral creator beings, who are embodied in features of the land.

It is through stories like the Seven Sisters songlines that the creation of the earth is explained and cultural values are transmitted. Songlines also tell us how we should care for each other and for Country. Each Aboriginal person is born to a tract of land – their identity is tied to a place with a story. But we do not own this land in the Western sense. We have custodianship and a responsibility to keep Country alive and healthy – both physically and spiritually. We worry about Country, sing to Country, talk to Country and miss Country when we are absent.

The paintings in the exhibition are described as ‘portals to place’. What does that mean?

MN: A songline such as the Seven Sisters songline (there are many more) is a route that the particular Ancestors took, linking sites or natural features across Country. Paintings are visual representations of these creation stories. Our exhibition replicates the journey of the Seven Sisters. As viewers follow this path, the paintings become the places that are linked by the songlines. These sites are often referred to as ‘story places’ and viewers learn something of the knowledge held at each place.

At several points in the exhibition, visitors are greeted by life-size digital videos of members of the Songlines Curatorium — the ‘Virtual Elders’. What is the role of elders in Aboriginal society and why did the curatorial team choose to represent them in this unique visual form?

MN: Traditionally, elders could be described as ceremonial leaders, but their role differs depending on the community they live in. There are many different Aboriginal communities in Australia, from the urban environment where I live to small communities in the remote desert. An elder is a highly respected person, who can act as a spokesperson for their community. The status usually comes with age, but age is not the most important thing. Elders are respected because they are the most knowledgeable members of their community and hold a lot of cultural knowledge.

Coming up with the idea for the ‘Virtual Elders’ was a process: when I thought about the exhibition, this led me to include the Traditional Owners and custodians of the

sites and the stories in the curatorial team. The elders selected the spokespersons for each desert area and I came up with the term ‘Community Curatorium’. They are the knowledge holders for the ‘content’ in museum terms, and we held the knowledge of how to capture, preserve and present these stories. They could not do this without us and we could not do the exhibition without them, so the Community Curatorium was a logical outcome.

But unlike me, the Curatorium could not be physically present in Canberra for the six months of the exhibition. So the next step was also a logical outcome: they can be there digitally. Just like the elders felt they needed to meet the younger generation in the digital domain, I used this digital space so that the Curatorium could meet the audience and be included throughout the exhibition.

It is a well-practised protocol in Australia to start all events with either a Welcome to Country – offered by a member of the community whose Country you are on – or an Acknowledgement of Country by the event organisers. The ‘Virtual Elders’ at the entrance to the show are welcoming visitors to their Country. Their Country is effectively mapped across the exhibition space, which visitors walk through and learn from.

In her painting Seven Sisters Songline artist Josephine Mick represents the geographic reach of the Seven Sisters’ journeys in the creation of the Australian continent. The Seven Sisters songline traverses three deserts, crossing the Country of multiple communities and language groups. Beyond

the exhibition, Mick's work acknowledges the presence and importance of the Seven Sisters story in other people's Country with large black circles surrounded by small white dots. Why is it important to acknowledge this cultural and linguistic diversity?

MN: The continent of Australia, like Europe, is divided into many different Countries, each with its own distinct language, history, laws and cultural practices. At the time of British colonisation, there were some 250 major languages spoken in Australia, with hundreds more dialects. Different language groups each occupied their own Country. These 'clan estates', as some people refer to them, are intimately known by each relevant individual. People belong to certain tracts of Country and they would never think of taking over someone else's land. There are strict protocols for entering another person's Country. All Aboriginal people today engage in Western institutions and lifestyles to a greater or lesser extent, but there is a great diversity in terms of their historical experience. There are people who still speak their languages and live on their Country. Their experience is different from Aboriginal people like me, who live in cities and speak English.

ANDY GREENSLADE: There is one aspect that is common across all Aboriginal communities and that is a connection to Country.

MN: Yes, Country is critical. As Andy said, you are maintaining your connection to Country whether you are living on it or not. Even if you live in a city, you still have an attachment. Many people who have been separated from their traditional land because of colonisation are reclaiming that attachment today.

Songlines is the result of a ten-year research project involving Aboriginal communities and museum and university researchers at the Australian National University and the National Museum of Australia (NMA). The exhibition is a direct response to a request by representatives of the Anangu community to help preserve and communicate their knowledge. Why did you choose the particular songline of the Seven Sisters for the exhibition?

MN: We did not choose this particular songline. The traditional custodians from the Anangu people came to us to ask if we would help them save the Seven Sisters songline. At one of our early meetings with the custodians, Anangu elder David Miller leant over the table and said in hushed but weighty tones, 'Our songlines are all broken up ... We want you to help us put them back together again.'

Obviously, their decision was the outcome of long discussions, which we can't fully know. But the Seven Sisters songline is one of the five major routes, or epic songlines, that cover the entire continent. Most other songlines are regional or local and offer a more local 'guidebook' to those particular areas. The Seven Sisters songline is universal, and not just with respect to Australia – it also connects to other stories about the Pleiades star cluster and the constellation of Orion. The elders point this out themselves on the 'Welcome blade', where one of them says that this is for the whole world – this story goes around the whole world.

Aboriginal creation stories were originally performed by custodians on Country. These performances expressed the actions and journeys of the Ancestors onsite, in the place where they originally happened. In the exhibition, we learn that new ways of passing on knowledge became necessary because many of these places are difficult to access now and knowledge is held by fewer and older people. What are the difficulties that Aboriginal custodians are facing today?

MN: Unlike in the past, people now live in Western-style communities with houses, cars, supermarkets and access to technology. The Western lifestyle has added another strand to their lives and in fact has given them more time and capacity to travel, along with other advantages. Aboriginal desert communities or townships are located on Country that belongs to most of the people who live there. However, these settlements are located at only one site and don't encompass the many different places people are responsible for. People are not connecting with their Country in the same way they did traditionally, when they walked Country and had intimate daily contact, hunting and gathering food. But they still

speaking Aboriginal languages today, have ceremonies and visit Country either physically or in their heads. They are practising culture differently today.

The young people were too distracted with the many technological wonders of the Western lifestyle to be interested in going to Country with the elders to learn the stories of the Seven Sisters. They inhabited the digital domain. The elders' response was both strategic and proactive. They figured that they too must put their knowledge in the digital domain if they were to make a connection with the next generation. In our research project we travelled the songlines across the desert under the direction of their custodians. At various sites they recalled the stories and cultural practices that contain and transmit the knowledge. They did this through song, dance, art and film.

The impact of colonisation includes pastoralism and mining on their lands and not just a lack of interest from the next generation. But it was the young people who concerned them most. They believed that when the young people matured and were ready to know their stories, they themselves would be gone and the knowledge with them. They recorded and preserved the Seven Sisters songlines so that the knowledge would be accessible digitally. Knowledge about the songlines is now archived in an Aboriginal-managed archive called Ara Irititja, and the Songlines project has already generated a lot of interest among the younger generation.

One of the young participants in the research project is a cultural educator. He started teaching the Seven Sisters stories in school and now has a bit of a celebrity status. In addition, some of the ladies who came to Canberra for the opening were training girls at a high school in their community. We brought the girls down to Canberra, so they could perform at the opening. This is how the Seven Sisters became part of the school curriculum.

Another young participant is the filmmaker Curtis Taylor, whose film is shown in the exhibition. This is how the project reached other young people interested in making films, who are working or training in that industry. They learned that if they

wanted to use songlines stories, they had to go back to Country and talk to the right people to get permission. So they are motivated and lured in by their interest, which is making films.

One aspect that makes the Songlines project unique is that the research and exhibition were not initiated by the museum but by representatives of the Anangu community. Relationships between Aboriginal communities and museums are fraught with colonial baggage. Until at least the late 1970s, museums collected and displayed objects and the Ancestral remains of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in ways that fundamentally disrespected their rights, values and perspectives. How are projects such as Songlines redefining the ways that Aboriginal communities and museums work together?

MN: In Australian museums, Aboriginal people are involved in any research or exhibition project related to Aboriginal Australia. 'Nothing about Us without Us' is how many Aboriginal activists have long expressed this demand. Even though Aboriginal engagement varies in form and extent, it has become a reality in the Australian museum sector. Policies for the repatriation of Ancestral remains and the return of secret/sacred objects to their Aboriginal communities have existed for 30 years and also cover measures to increase Aboriginal employment and community engagement. Policies set important standards for all Australian museums, and they are continuously being updated. However, at the NMA, we are already well along that road and ahead of the curve.

AG: Community engagement is an ongoing and living connection in Australia. When Aboriginal communities visit the NMA collection, these visits can sometimes be an incredibly emotional experience. Often those objects are no longer objects but become relatives. So we make sure to show appropriate respect when people come to visit. I see that some institutions in Europe or the UK have websites dedicated to 'decolonising the museum'. I think the situation is different in Australia because the people from whom the collections were taken are here.

MN: What does 'decolonisation' actually look like and how sustainable is it? It is impossible to go back to pre-contact times. The term itself is not very precise and it is rarely used in a way that tells you how it is going to be put into action. I think that 'Aboriginal agency', 'voice' and 'co-authorship' are more useful terms. They have certainly informed my own work since the 1990s, and there have been a number of exhibitions we have shown or developed at the NMA that are collaborations or joint initiatives with communities. But I would maintain that Songlines is groundbreaking and the most innovative model of exhibition-making to date because it defines how communities work with museums and not the other way around.

In Europe, ethnographic museums are increasingly expected to address the colonial legacies of their collections, and how the ways they interpreted, displayed and cared for cultural objects have made them complicit in the colonial project. All Aboriginal Australians had to contend with the often violent dispossession of their land and the colonisers' disrespect for their beliefs, languages and cultural practices. Songlines does not tell stories of colonisation. What are the reasons for this?

MN: Because this project and exhibition is an Aboriginal initiative and Aboriginal-led, it cannot be complicit in the colonial project. Rather, it is a decolonizing project. It is a response to the particular request by Aboriginal custodians to help preserve and repair the Seven Sisters songlines. Until you asked this question, the idea of including the history of colonisation never occurred to anyone as being relevant to our purpose. The Aboriginal Curatorium of Songlines and we at the NMA are more interested in the future than the past. Songlines is a heritage preservation project and an opportunity to share culture. The aim is to be inclusive, transformative and positive.

This exhibition, like many exhibitions and other areas of the arts in Australia, celebrates Aboriginal Australian beliefs, languages and cultural practices. The NMA has produced exhibitions where it was relevant to include stories of colonisation. For example, when we exhibited the Aboriginal Aust-

ralian collection of the British Museum, which had never been seen in Australia before, the colonial project was relevant. It was also relevant in our recent major exhibition undertaken to mark Captain James Cook's voyages to claim Australia for the British Crown. This exhibition prioritised the Aboriginal view of the voyage and colonisation, which we referred to as a 'view from the shore', to counter the mainstream narrative of the 'view from the ship'.

I don't see any sociopolitical issues for us of the kind that may exist for venues such as the Humboldt Forum, which have a critical constituency that is concerned about colonial history, past collecting and exhibition practices. This exhibition should redress these issues to some extent. It is an Aboriginal-led and Aboriginal-owned exhibition and we, the Aboriginal people, have asked you to exhibit this work for us. Songlines has Aboriginal voice and agency.

The interview was conducted by Anna Weinreich and Dorothea Deterts.

BIOGRAPHIES



Margo Ngawa Neale

Margo Neale, of Aboriginal descent, is Head of the Centre for Indigenous Knowledges, Senior Indigenous Curator & Advisor at the National Museum of Australia. She is also an Adjunct Professor at the Australian National University.

Margo has curated major pioneering exhibitions including the multi-award winning *Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters*, currently at the Humbolt Forum, along with other international touring exhibitions of Indigenous art and culture.

Margo is the series editor for Thames and Hudson's 10 volume book series *First Knowledges*. The first volume the , *Songlines: The Power and Promise* co-authored with Lynne Kelly went rapidly to the best seller list. Margo has won a number of awards and her expertise is sought by successive Australian Governments.



Brenda Douglas

born 1986, Alice Springs
Pitjantjatjara language group

Amata, Walinynga communities Tjala Arts

Brenda is the daughter of Ronnie Douglas, a custodian of Walinynga and Seven Sisters Tjukurpa. She married Winima Ken, the son of artist Sandra Ken, and together they have two sons. Brenda is an emerging artist at Tjala Arts, specialising in photography. She won the 2014 Desert Art Worker Photography Prize for a photograph of her father holding a honey ant (see p. 97). She worked with the National Museum of Australia on the *Songlines* exhibition, to edit Walinynga multimedia material for DomeLab.

Tapaya Edwards

APY

Tapaya has exceptional skill and knowledge of inma. He has represented the APY Lands in national conferences and regularly performs with CARCLEW cultural organisation. He also works as a teacher at Amata primary school.



Anawari Inpiti Mitchell

born 1959, Kampurarrpapirti
Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara language groups
Warburton, Papulankutja communities
Papulankutja Artists, Tjanpi Desert Weavers,
Maruku Arts

Anawari grew up at Warburton mission. She was manager of Blackstone Women's Centre, where women made tie-dyed T-shirts, batik, lino- and screen-prints, spinifex paper and jewellery. She was part of the first tjanpi workshop at Papulankutja in 1995. Anawari exclusively paints Kungkarrangkalpa. In her earlier works she applied paint with her fingers and now she uses sticks to achieve a unique dotting style.



Curtis Taylor

born 1989, Broome
Manyjilyjarra language group
Parnngurr community

Filmmaker, screen artist and young Martu leader, Curtis grew up in remote Martu desert communities and urban centres. He has worked extensively with Martu Media (a division of Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa), where he contributed to the National Museum's major exhibition, *Yiwarra Kujū: The Canning Stock Route*, as a filmmaker and youth ambassador. Curtis won the 2011 Western Australian Youth Arts Award and Wesfarmers Youth Scholarship. His work has been screened internationally, and he is currently studying film and media at Murdoch University.



Jennifer Nginyaka Mitchell

born 1955, Kala Tjuti
Pitjantjatjara language group
Papulankutja community

**Papulankutja Artists, Tjanpi Desert Weavers,
Maruku Arts**

Jennifer became a senior custodian of the Kuru Ala Seven Sisters site after her mother, Eileen Tjayanka Woods, died. As a small child she was near Maralinga during the British nuclear tests. Her grandfather became ill from the radioactive fallout and later died. Jennifer is known for her well-crafted baskets and distinctively colourful paintings. She works closely with the Tjanpi Desert Weavers administration and helps organise the annual NPY Women's Council Law and Culture camp.

GLOSSARY

Cross-cultural terms such 'songlines' and 'the Dreaming' are an attempt to translate bori-ginal concepts that have their own, distinct expressions in the many Aboriginal languages spoken across the Australian continent. As a result, these English terms will always harbour something generalising, contradictory and elusive. However, as Margo Neale points out in her contribution to the Songlines exhibition catalogue, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People have adopted these words with alacrity, and they are firmly anchored in the Australian vocabulary. The exhibition team at the Humboldt Forum has produced this glossary in order to offer additional guidance for international visitors. In addition to important cross-cultural terms and concepts, it includes expressions that are related to Australian colonial history and Aboriginal movements for land and civil rights. Glossary terms are underlined in the exhibition texts.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE: re the first inhabitants of Australia and arrived on the continent at least 60,000 years ago. In 2016, approximately 798,400 people, or 3.3 percent of the total Australian population, identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. An Aboriginal person, according to the definition accepted by the Australian Federal Government, is a person of Aboriginal descent who identifies as Aboriginal and is accepted as such by the community in which they live or have lived. At the time of British colonisation, an estimated 250 languages were spoken across Australia. Although the word 'Aboriginal' does not reflect this linguistic and cultural diversity, it has been adopted as a collective term of self-identification in the context of shared struggles for land and civil rights. Aboriginal people usually employ more specific terms of self-identification, which can refer to the greater region, language group or traditional Country they are connected to.

BUSH: is often used to distinguish land that is located beyond the urban, rural or remote settlements established after the colonisation of Australia in 1788. For Aboriginal people, the bush encompasses culturally significant places and is associated with native animas and plants that are the source of traditional 'bush foods' or 'bush medicine'. When used in combinations like pujiman (bushman) era, the term also has a temporal meaning. In the regions covered in this exhibition, pujiman era refers to the time before colonial contact, when Aboriginal people were living a traditional life in the desert.

COOLAMON: Used mostly by women, a coolamon is a container made from a piece of carved, hollowed wood. It is used for collecting and carrying food or water, for scraping ashes and as a vessel for winnowing grain. It can also be used for carrying a baby.

COUNTRY: Often spelled with a capital C, Country is one of the most important concepts in Aboriginal Australia. Country refers to the area of land with which an Aboriginal person and their community have a spiritual and personal connection.

USTODIAN / TRADITIONAL OWNER: A person with rights and responsibilities in relation to a specific area of land (Country). Custodians hold the knowledge associated with this land and have a responsibility to pass on this knowledge. The status of custodian is dependent on a person's kinship status, gender and their relationship to the land in question. Knowledge about Country has many layers with different levels of access. The most secret and sacred layers are only accessible to the most knowledgeable persons, the elders.

DREAMING / TJUKUR(R)PA / JUKURPA: The Dreaming refers to Aboriginal Australian understandings of the world and its creation. Knowledge of the Dreaming is passed on through stories, or songlines, that map the activities of the ancestral beings, whose travels created the Australian continent. Their creative energy is not confined to the past. It continues to be active in the land and in cultural practices such as painting or song.

ELDER: a person with cultural authority within an Aboriginal community. While this status is often held by older community members and depends on knowledge that is acquired over time, an elder may not necessarily be chronologically old.

HOMELANDS / OUTSTATIONS: are 'small decentralised communities of close kin established by the movement of Aboriginal people to land of social, cultural and economic significance to them' (A. Blanchard, 1987). The homelands movement started in the Northern Territory in the early 1970s, when small groups of Aboriginal people left the larger settlements that were established on Christianmissions or government reserves to return to their traditional land.

JUKURPA: see Dreaming

LAND RIGHTS: Aboriginal people have always resisted the dispossession of their lands and waters. The Aboriginal land rights movement started in the 1960s and Aboriginal rights to land were first recognised by the Northern Territory government in 1976. In 1993, following a land claim by a group of Meriam plaintiffs from

GLOSSARY

the Torres Strait Islands, the High Court of Australia recognised the existence of Aboriginal rights in land (Native Title) across Australia. Aboriginal claimants are required to prove their customary relationship to land, which is often an expensive, time-consuming process. Native Title and land rights legislation is complex and only grants freehold title over unalienated Crown land.

LAND COUNCILS: Made up of elected Aboriginal members, land councils represent Aboriginal interests at the state or territory level and aim to further the aspirations of Aboriginal communities. Land councils support Aboriginal communities in land claims and matters such as land management or the protection of sacred sites.

LANGUAGE GROUP: Even though described as 'tribes' in earlier times, Aboriginal groups are today mostly identified on the basis of the languages they speak.

LAW WOMAN / LAWMAN: As the Dreaming establishes foundational rules and norms of social life, Aboriginal people often refer to it as 'the law'. Law women and lawmen are learned in the culture of their community. Usually elders, they can speak with authority both within their community and in representing their community to others.

MISSIONS: Beginning in the 1860s, a system of Christian missions, government reserves and stations was set up in each state and territory of Australia. The policies of these institutions varied depending on time and place. While they offered protection from the often violent dispossession of Aboriginal land, missions and reserves gave church and government representatives extraordinary levels of control over the lives of Aboriginal people. As these institutions were designed to assimilate the Aboriginal population into colonial society, speaking Aboriginal languages and the exercise of cultural practices was often prohibited. In the regions covered in this exhibition, migration or displacement to Western settlements would substantially change the cultural landscape of the desert. Aboriginal people, however, persisted in holding on to their autonomy, values

and traditions. Mission land was handed back to Aboriginal communities beginning in the 1970s, when the Australian government started supporting Aboriginal self-determination.

NGAANYATJARRA PITJANTJATJARA YANKUNYTJATJARA (NPY) WOMEN'S COUNCIL: a non-governmental, not-for-profit organisation led by Anangu women and their law to deliver health, social and cultural services for Anangu people.

OUTSTATION: see Homelands

PUJIMAN (BUSHMAN) TIME: see Bush

STOCK ROUTE: A designated way through the land, legislated as a route for the movement of cattle or sheep. The Canning Stock Route is the world's longest at 1,850 kilometres. It was named after Alfred Canning, who surveyed the route in 1906–07 and relied on local Aboriginal 'guides' to find water sources for the construction of wells. Canning was known for his inhumane treatment of Aboriginal people.

TJUKUR(R)IPA: see Dreaming

TRADITIONAL OWNER: see Custodian

WALKING COUNTRY: an Aboriginal concept that expresses the importance of walking one's traditional land as a way to maintain a physical and spiritual connection.

SONGLINES: *TRACKING THE SEVEN SISTERS* Details and facts

Place	ground floor, temporary exhibition space 1 + 2
Dates	16 June – 30 October 2022
Opening times	Mon, Wed, Thu, Sun 10 am to 8 pm Fri to Sat 10 am to 10 pm Tue closed
Admission	€ 12 / reduced € 6. Book tickets at www.humboldtforum.org/songlines
Information	Humboldt Forum Schlossplatz Tel: +49 30 99 211 89 89 www.humboldtforum.org
Media Guide	Available free of charge with exhibition ticket or with own mobile www.guide.humboldtforum.org .
Publication	Songlines: Tracking the Seven Sisters National Museum of Australia Press, 256 Pages approx. 300 images, € 34,90
Press images	Downloadable press images: www.humboldtforum.org/presse
Press Contact	Michael Mathis, press spokesperson +49 30 265 950-525, michael.mathis@humboldtforum.org Kathrin Luz, Kathrin Luz Communication +49 171 3102472, kl@luz-communication.de Andrea Brandis, press officer +49 30 265 950-237, andrea.brandis@humboldtforum.org

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