

Catalogue Essay:

For over 60,000 years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have existed, living with a rich and deeply rooted culture. One element of this culture is Painting which has been practiced for thousands of years, which began through Cultural Modification of Landscape throughout the Country including body paint, markings on trees and Cave painting. All these expressions throughout time have proven that First Nations peoples have used these mediums to tell stories, to educate and to maintain Culture in the public space. These artistic expressions have been crucial in shaping the development and identities of young First Nations people that followed in their footsteps and continue to do so, Aboriginal artists have expressed artistically using many different materials and methods over the years, all stemming from different Nations. The varied practices from across the country is what makes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art so special and constantly contemporary.

Aboriginal artists *Shane Mankitya Kooka (Wulli Wulli/Koa)*, *Elizabeth Yanyi Close (Pitjantjara/Yankunytjatjara)* and *Thomas Readett (Ngarrindjeri/Arrernte)* have been working as a collective team for almost three years, collaborating on numerous large scale public art projects across South Australia. All three artists have excelled within their own solo practices as artists over the last ten years, seeing the successes of solo exhibitions, commissions, national and international projects. Recently they have developed strong connections over their shared love of working in the public space and delivering large scale murals to educate, create space for curiosity and giving back to their communities.

For Cook, Close and Readett the act of making art is compulsory for themselves but also their culture. The art they create is an extension of a 60,000 year old painting practice that has been constantly evolving and reshaping over time.

In this project we will see the artists transform the interior of the Hahndorf Academy, cladding the walls in a dynamic spread of large scale collaborative murals blending Shanes illustrative and fluid street art styled mark making with Elizabeth's bold and graphic designs linking with and throughout Thomas' abstracted realism. Cook, Close and Readett will use this opportunity to extend the paintings 'outside of the frame' by painting directly onto the walls to challenge and create curiosity within their audiences.

Bios:

Shane Mankitya Kooka is a Guwa and Wulli Wulli man with family connections to Cherbourg, Queensland. Born on Kurna Country, he is recognised nationally and internationally as an aerosol artist, combining graffiti-like styles with traditional mark making, and a tattoo artist. He found his connection to his Aboriginality by drawing with his Mother as he recovered from third degree burns. Shane went on to establish himself as a graffiti artist. He was given the name 3rd because of his burns, and gifted the name "Mankitya" by the local Kurna community which translates to "the scarred one".

Elizabeth Yanyi Close is an Anangu woman from the Pitjantjara and Yankunytjatjara language

groups in Central Australia, and an established Contemporary Aboriginal Visual Artist based in Adelaide. She has spent the past 14 years crafting a dynamic multi-disciplinary visual arts practice that speaks to both her own, personal Connection to Country, and the concept of connection to place and space more broadly. She works in the mediums of 2D visual arts, large scale muralist installations and digital media.

Thomas Readett is a Ngarrindjeri man and established artist born and raised on Kurna Country. Thomas' graphic aesthetic of realism painting is powerfully rendered in black and white, with careful attention to detail. He melds street art style with classical training (BVA) to produce work that is both technical and conceptual. Recently Readett has pushed his practice into 3D sculptural space, playing with the pictorial plane and interrupting our usual modes of artistic interpretation. Thomas graduated his Associates Degree and Bachelor of Visual Arts in 2015 from Adelaide Central School of Art mastering in Oil painting.