



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Berndt Museum *news*

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Introduction

Welcome to the 2014 Issue of the *Berndt Museum News*. It includes an overview of 2013 Museum activities, and information about this year, including a few insights into forthcoming exhibitions, what's happening at the Museum with regard to digitisation, and a little about various staff changes. One of these is that John Stanton retired in October last year, and I came on board as Associate Director in November.

As some readers will know, I've been associated with the Berndt Museum for many years, for example, as a member of both the Berndt Museum and Berndt Foundation Advisories, and as Coordinator of the 2012 *Jimmy Pike's Artlines* exhibition, which is now touring regional Australia. I am also a Co-Trustee of the Catherine and Ronald Berndt Estate. On behalf of past and present Museum staff, I would like to thank John Stanton for his long-term work at the Museum, and wish him well for the future. I would also like to thank Sharyn Egan, whose contract expired in December 2013, for her dedicated work on the Photographic Collection, and for engaging so effectively with us on an external mural that will feature one of her paintings and Noongar words of welcome. Special thanks, too, to Hamida Novakovich who was a Curatorial Assistant with the Museum for almost 12 months and who is now working toward an MA and an accompanying and forthcoming exhibition focused on Gen-Y Muslim artists.

One of the key messages of this Issue is to confirm that the Museum will be closed for six months from July.

Some readers will already know about the closure from emails, Facebook, the Museum website, signage, and interactions with staff. **The Museum will re-open on 6 January 2015.**

The closure relates to external requests only; inside the Museum we will be working exceptionally hard on getting the three collection domains (Archives, Objects and Paintings, Audio-Visual and Photographic materials) in order, undertaking a stocktake, revising policies and access conditions, and improving the Museum database. All of these tasks are to ensure that Museum staff are in a position to do the best job possible to protect and organise the collections, and to ensure accessibility to communities, researchers, and others. It is also because we are working toward the development of a new Aboriginal Cultures Museum that we hope will be built by the University in about five years. We have been working with a range of communities, advisories, and UWA staff on the ACM campaign, as Ted Snell's article in this Issue explains.

In this Issue, too, Eve Chaloupka writes about the wondrous *Little Paintings, Big Stories* exhibition that she and Kelly Rowe co-curated and that featured at the Janet Holmes á Court Gallery at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery in June-December 2013. Via a focus on *Transcending Borders*, Kelly Rowe takes an insightful look into curatorial work on the exhibition where the creative concentration was primarily on items deposited at the Museum a number of years ago by Peter Bridge. Other notable items in this Issue include Sarah Ridhuan's conversation about some of the background research relating to the current *Ukiyo-e: Japanese Prints of the Floating World* exhibition, and Barbara Bynder's evocative description of an exciting new exhibition she is curating which will open at the Lawrence

Wilson Gallery in July. Titled *Wildflower Dreaming: Shirley Corunna and the Coolbaroo League*, the exhibition will use a creative visual mix – photos, material items, newspaper accounts, music – to showcase Noongar life in 1950s and 1960s Perth. Another short piece by Sarah Ridhuan that shows the necessity and the potentiality of digitisation in preserving and protecting archival records and images is included in the pages that unfold, followed by a piece authored by Mun Yee Ho, a Practicum Placement Faculty of UWA Arts student, who tells readers about her experience at the Museum in Semester 1 this year, and her aspirations for future studies.

While the six months' closure will restrict visitor and researcher opportunities during that time, we are usually very keen to have visitors to the Museum, and will be so again in January. Most of our materials remain in temporary storage, but we continue to work with colleagues at the University and elsewhere on a campaign toward raising funds for a new Museum that will not only provide expanded exhibition space, but also better working conditions for staff, emerging curators and visitors and, importantly, the best conditions possible for storing and conserving Aboriginal cultural material. In the meantime, we've tried to make our current home as welcoming as possible, and will be in a better situation to respond to most requests early next year.

Please keep in mind that the **Museum will be closed until 6 January 2015** to enable us to ensure the best professional management of the Collection via qualitatively enhanced access protocols, and acquisition processes. We send you, your loved ones, and your co-workers, good wishes for the rest of the year, and look forward to a continuing association that respects, treasures and cares for Australian Indigenous cultural materials, and the people who created them.

Professor Sandy Toussaint
Associate Director, Berndt Museum

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SOLOMON IMERAGAINYAN AND STANLEY GAMERAIDJ VIEWING PHOTOS AT THE JAMALAK FESTIVAL EXHIBITION SITE, WARRUWI, AUGUST 2013. (PHOTOGRAPH EVE CHALOUKKA)

Recent, current and future exhibitions

Little Paintings, Big Stories: Gossip Songs of Western Arnhem Land

June – December 2013

The Berndt Museum's exhibition *Little Paintings, Big Stories: Gossip Songs of Western Arnhem Land* was installed at the Lawrence Wilson Gallery in the latter part of 2013. This memorable body of work, presented as an audio-visual, sensory experience to the public for the first time, would not have been possible without the support of the Northern Territory Waruwi community, let alone the generous spirit, willingness to share knowledge and foresight of their forebears – the Mawng and Kunwinjku storytellers, composers, performers and artists of South Goulburn Island, or Waruwi, who worked with Ronald and Catherine Berndt during their visits to the Methodist Overseas Mission community between 1947 and 1964.

The legacy of this connection enabled Kelly Rowe and I, as curators and exhibition coordinators, to reconnect with the community in 2012 to talk about Berndt Museum collection material from the area, and to seek approval for and determine what might be suitable to include in an exhibition. The exhibition planning stage, assisted by historical photographs taken back to the community, evoked memories of Catherine and Ronald Berndt, particularly their close collaboration and enduring

friendships with the Reverend Lazarus Lamilami and his sister Mondalmi, two eminent figures in the community at the time of their visits.

Guided by Waruwi Senior Traditional Owner Johnny Namayiwa and Namunidjbuk Estate Traditional Owner Ronald Lamilami, we designed an exhibition and associated public programs schedule to appeal to as wide an audience possible, drawing on the array of material in the Berndt

Museum Collection – bark paintings, carvings, string-bound bark sculptures, sound recordings, photographs, musical instruments, Berndt archives and publications relating to Western Arnhem Land.

Throughout the Berndts' early fieldwork in the area – recording and photographing – they amassed a unique and highly animated collection of small bark paintings; rare visual narratives supporting the stories and songs of Western Arnhem Land. The exhibition's focal point was on one of these song stories in the open song-dance genre, a sound recording of the Marrwakara, or Goanna, story, composed and performed by John Gwadbu, including the tiny bark on which he painted the sequence of dramatic events taking

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KELLY ROWE, JONAH WALAMAKA KUWARTPU, JOHNNY NAMAYIWA, BILLY NAWALOINBA AND EVE CHALOUPKA AT *LITTLE PAINTINGS, BIG STORIES* EXHIBITION OPENING, 28 JUNE 2013, UWA, PERTH. (PHOTOGRAPH HAMIDA NOVAKOVICH)

place in the song. An animation based on the original bark painting's depiction of events was created for the exhibition, synchronised with the entrancing, melodic sound recording, enlarged and projected on to one of the gallery walls.

The song was based on events that took place in a dream conveyed to the Songman by his 'two spirit-familars' and concerned people who lived on the Goulburn Islands and adjacent mainland of Western Arnhem Land. Featuring animal creatures with human characteristics, this particular story about infidelity, deceit and subsequent punishment, inferred to an indiscretion occurring within the community whilst protecting the identities of the central characters through this disguise. According to the explanations given to Berndt, these 'gossip songs' despite having an intellectual component, were performed mainly as entertainment whilst demonstrating that tragedy could result from the breaking of cultural mores or the failure to fulfill expectations.

Other bark paintings depicting stories in which animals with human characteristics feature were also displayed, along

with the exquisitely executed ancestral husband and wife figures – Wurakak and Warramurungundji – a range of historical photographs, string-bound, bark sculptures and a didgeridu that was made and played by Lazarus Lamilami in the early 1960s.

In June 2013, Warruwi Senior Traditional Owners Johnny Namayiwa and Billy Nawaloinba came to Perth to attend the opening of *Little Paintings, Big Stories*. Jonah Walamaka Kuwartpu, son of Gwadbu the composer, performer and artist, also flew from Warruwi via Darwin to Perth to attend the opening on behalf of his family. It was a deeply moving experience and honour to be in the presence of the three men when they had a private viewing of the exhibition prior to it opening. The exhibition would not have been a success without their support.

The depth and significance of Berndt Museum collection material such as this is immense and enduring. It provides the foundation for Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers working in the area, including anthropologists, musicologists and linguists currently

working with communities throughout Western Arnhem Land to continue documentation of the rich classical song traditions of the region.

We would like to share with the community and *Berndt Museum News* readers some feedback we received from exhibition visitors:

- Very moving collection enriched by stories and songs – visually beautiful people, art work unique depiction of life. Thank you.
- Very good. Bark paintings amazing. Liked the animation; what a good idea. Presentation of work is wonderful – heightens the appreciation of the paintings.
- Such talent for story telling in these pictures. Creates an interest to learn more from this Australian history.
- A very rich exhibition. Beautifully presented. I like the different media and the animation.
- This exhibition has truly opened my eyes and heart to the beauty and intricacy of the Indigenous Australian culture especially from Goulburn Island. The music is hypnotic and follows me around the room as I look upon the unique and beautiful

bark paintings. As I am originally from Singapore, this exhibition has imparted a lot of wisdom and knowledge about another culture to me. I really appreciate how different and yet very similar all cultures are. Thank you for a magical experience!

- I was nine years of age when I arrived with my family at South Goulburn Island. We went to sleep every night to the sound of didgeridoos, clapsticks and song. I went to school with Ronald Lamilami. This exhibition took me back to this rare and influential time of my life. How I miss it!

In August 2013, following the successful opening of *Little Paintings, Big Stories*, Kelly and I travelled to Warruwi at the invitation of the community to participate in their annual Jamalak Festival. The purpose of the visit was to create a replica exhibition with copies of the unique and inspired works displayed in the Berndt Museum's semester length exhibition, to show at the Jamalak Festival, then again at the conclusion of the festival, to be installed where it is now housed, at the community's art centre and cultural hub – Mardbalk Arts and Crafts.

Considering the age and fragility of the original bark paintings, touring them to exhibit in a hot and dusty outdoor setting where kite flying, football matches, basketball competitions, children's activities and dancing was going to take place over several days, was not an option. Each piece was reproduced as an exact shape and to-scale copy of the original on durable PVC plastic, to enable the replica exhibition to be displayed in a temporary outdoor-shade structure constructed at the sandy festival site. The replicas were so convincingly realistic that several people commented to the curators that they thought they were actually the real bark paintings; and it wasn't a problem when some of the younger children decided to kick mini footballs from their show bags behind the shade cloth structure, a game to see who could aim successfully to knock the Little Paintings down.

People came from all over Western Arnhem Land – Minjilang (Croker Island), Gunbalanya, or Oenpelli, Maningrida and as far as Jabiru in Kakadu National Park to compete in sporting matches and to attend the festival. There was a lot of interest in the exhibition, particularly

the photos of the old people – the ones on display and others contained in albums brought back to leave with the community. For many of the artists' descendants, this was an opportunity to see the paintings of their forefathers for the first time and to meet with the curators to find out more about the Berndt Museum and its collections.

The festival was a joyous community experience, perhaps enjoyed most by hundreds of Warruwi children. On the final night of the festival, following a hilarious game of creeping up on unsuspecting participants (including the exhibition curators), to be pasted with a mixture of ochre and water, there was a delicious feast, followed by celebratory dancing and singing into the early hours of the next morning with Senior Traditional Owner Johnny Namayiwa leading the song.

The exhibitions – in Perth and at Warruwi – have been a resounding success, resonating beyond all expectations throughout the community and beyond. A reconnection was made between the Berndt Museum and the community and the works that their elders created

have re-emerged to endure over time. Mardbalk Arts and Crafts Centre managers, Brenda and Steve Wesley commented recently in the West Arnhem WIRE, fortnightly news from the region, that having copies of the bark paintings and historical photographs on display has helped provide inspiration for the current group of artists from the islands and adjacent mainland; particularly working with the older people – the holders of the stories and knowledge. *Little Paintings, Big Stories* has breathed new life into the Museum's collection and created a renewed interest and focus on the stories and paintings, evoking intergenerational memories and continuities for the community.

To obtain a free copy of the *Little Paintings, Big Stories: Gossip Songs of Western Arnhem Land* catalogue, please contact Rita Bennett at the Berndt Museum (see details on the last page) with your name, a contact phone number and postal address.

Eve Chaloupka
Little Paintings, Big Stories Co-Curator
and Museum Archivist



LAQUISHA KENTISH STANDING BETWEEN BARK PAINTINGS OF ANCESTRAL FIGURES WURAKAK AND WARRAMURUNGUNDJI AT JAMALAK FESTIVAL EXHIBITION SITE, WARRUWI, 2013. (PHOTOGRAPH EVE CHALOUPKA)



RICKSHAW CART, WOODBLOCK PRINT

(Pop) Culture Shock Reflections Ukiyo-e: Japanese woodblock prints and the floating world

February – June 2014

It all began with a simple request to scan the slides of woodblock prints in preparation for the upcoming Japanese Ukiyo-e exhibition. Looking through the scanned images, I admired them in an aesthetic sense and made the assumption that they were objects of 'fine art'. However, a casual Google search about the prints changed everything and ultimately resulted in a thought provoking (and at times obsessive) delve into the world of Ukiyo-e.

Visually, woodblock prints from Edo Japan generate commentary about their whimsical beauty and use of delicate, subtle, soft colours that are not (in the eyes of many outsiders) vulgar or garish. I have to admit that this initial impression did not particularly excite me. The prints were very beautiful but I could not really make much of a connection with them. Imagine my surprise when I discovered that they were basically mass-produced

ephemera of popular culture: Edo period posters of Kabuki actors, famous courtesans, iconic landscapes and depictions of well-known folk stories.

Ukiyo as a Buddhist concept referred to the notion of the 'sorrowful world' that highlighted the impermanent nature of material existence. The idea of a fleeting reality underpinned Ukiyo-e as an art form that represented and reflected the

'floating world'. Ukiyo, as a concept of transience, was reworked within the context of Tokugawa Edo and visually articulated through Ukiyo-e. Instead of a transient, sorrowful world, the woodblock prints catered to an evanescent reality that justified the decadent and excessive indulgence of an immediate present that would inevitably come to pass.

In hindsight, the excitement and delight I experienced while exploring the 'floating world' was not so much the result of learning about the prints in their historical, social and cultural context. Understanding this aspect of the works is undoubtedly important and valuable. However, what really captivated me was the idea that these prints were not obsolete cultural objects from the past, irrelevant to the contemporary world. I could not help comparing the band posters I owned during my teenage years with those of the Kabuki actors. I was entertained by the idea that the courtesans depicted in Ukiyo-e may have been quite similar to the pin-up girl posters and calendars currently hanging on many bedroom walls.

Learning about another culture from the past or present is an enriching experience. At the same time, the question arises: What do these displayed objects actually mean to an audience as well as to individuals like me? To abandon an artefact or artwork in its cultural or historical context can result in the knowledge gained about it being somewhat detached. The feeling of being able to relate to the Ukiyo-e prints and to look past them as simply being museum objects, for me, added another dimension to the experience. The element of 'exoticism' is removed and we are able to view them in a reflexive manner while still recognising their valuable particularities.

That said, the idea that people in contemporary settings could relate to Edo period prints might not be groundbreaking. Whilst the interest in Ukiyo-e prints used to be confined to Japanese art enthusiasts and cultural institutions, there is definitely a revival amongst the younger generations. Conceptualisations of Japanese woodblock prints are being grappled away from the domain of 'high art', reclaiming their original function as representations and reflections of popular culture. This creative emphasis is highlighted by projects such as Ukiyo-e

Heroes, the brainchild of Jed Henry and Dave Bull. Traditional woodblock printing techniques are used to create prints depicting iconic video game characters with a distinctive Ukiyo-e style. Despite slight stylistic variations, anyone exposed to pop culture classics such as Pokémon, Streetfighter and Super Mario would be able to recognise the characters; similar to a person living in Edo Japan recognising famous stories and people depicted in Ukiyo-e prints.

To me, the point of exhibiting objects or works of art from particular societies is not (and should not) be to claim some stance of authoritative, objective knowledge about a culture. Asserting a complete understanding and knowledge of the complexities and intricacies of another culture are now considered offensive and insensitive, not to mention impossible. The importance of respecting the uniqueness of a culture can be supplemented by encouraging gallery/museum visitors to explore connections that allow them to relate to aspects of that culture/society. Interests are piqued and the so-called binary objective positioning does not mar the knowledge gained. A reflexive understanding is cultivated and one is left feeling good about such extraordinary work, and one's place in visual cultural life and the value of learning.

Sarah Ridhuan
Museum Curatorial Assistant



'I CHOOSE YOU', WOODBLOCK PRINT

Berndt Research Foundation

Established via a sum of money bequeathed to UWA by Catherine and Ronald Berndt, the Foundation's activities include awards to undergraduate Indigenous students, a small research grants scheme for postgraduate students working with Australian Aboriginal groups, and the hosting of a Biennial Lecture. Past speakers include Kim Akerman, Marcia Langton and Martin Nakata.

We are delighted to announce that Noel Pearson will give the 2014 Berndt Foundation Lecture on 16 October.

Reminder

The Berndt Museum will be closed to all external requests for access to the Collection (Archives, Objects and Paintings, Photos and Audio-Visual) between 1 July 2014 and 6 January 2015.

Museum staff are instituting protocols to enhance access to the Collection as part of ongoing preparations toward the opening of a new Aboriginal Cultures Museum.

We sincerely apologise to community groups, researchers and the general public. We will attend to access requests as soon as we can after the six-month closure.



KOREAN CERAMICS IN TRANSCENDING BORDERS, LAWRENCE WILSON ART GALLERY, 2014 (PHOTOGRAPH ILLKA KADALA)

Transcending Borders

May – July 2014

Recently I had the opportunity to curate an exhibition titled *Transcending Borders* that used items from the permanent collection of the Berndt Museum in a new way. Objects from Korea, donated to the Museum by Peter Bridge in 1982, were juxtaposed against contemporary artworks focusing on the theme of transcendence across time, tradition, religion and space.

One of the most exciting things about the exhibition for me was thinking about new ways to display 3D objects. Thirty-four ceramic vessels were included in

the exhibition and the challenge was displaying them to enable visitors to get as much visual information from them as possible. The base of a ceramic vessel

holds a lot of clues about how it was made which could lead us to where it was made, by whom and with what.

I considered displaying the vessels on a plinth or shelf and placing some of them upside down or on their side but thought that this might look messy and unfinished. Thinking of the theme of transcendence, the metaphysical world and to a point, magic, I decided that I wanted the vessels to float. Working with Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery's Exhibition Officer, Anthony Kelly, we discussed materials and designs and came up with a custom designed Perspex shelving system. The vessels float on a clear shelf that is suspended about 30mm above a mirrored shelf enabling the viewer to see the reflection of the base. With gallery lighting the vessels glow and throw intriguing shadows onto the wall standing out in space amongst the other objects and artworks. *Transcending Borders* will be open until the 12 July. The exhibition was completed in partnership with UWA's Korean Studies.

Kelly Rowe
Transcending Borders Curator and
Museum Associate Registrar

New Exhibition opening on 15 July

Wildflower Dreaming – Shirley Corunna and the Coolbaroo League 1952-1962¹

July – December 2014

The *Wildflower Dreaming* exhibition is about a young girl's journey of discovery and independence. It is also a snapshot of the social life of Aboriginal people in the city of Perth, Western Australia, during the 1950s and early 1960s.

Wildflower Dreaming tells the story of Shirley Corunna (nee Bynder), a young Yamitji woman who, at the age of 17, moved from her home in the country to Perth. Shirley's early years were spent living in camp conditions on the fringe of the town, Three Springs, where wildflowers bloomed each year. Her relocation was influenced by the offer of employment and a change of lifestyle. Being in the city provided her with the opportunity to socialise with other young Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who were also living and working in

Perth. Some of them were members of the Coolbaroo League.

The Coolbaroo League was an organisation that initially advocated reconciliation and social equality for all Aboriginal people through the process of activism, in part inspired by the civil rights movement in the United States of America. The foundation members of the Coolbaroo League were Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Their vision was to work towards reconciliation. During the early 1950s, in Perth, Western Australia, Aborigines were barred from clubs and pubs and prohibited from entering the city area after 6pm.

Among other things, racist policies and legislation caused young Aboriginal



people living in Perth to find or create their own entertainment. The Coolbaroo League resolved this issue by hosting a regular Friday night dance for Aborigines; non-Aboriginal people were allowed to

¹ The images included here are part of Shirley Corunna's Personal Collection. The photograph of Shirley appeared in a 1957-58 edition of the *Westralian Aborigine* newspaper. We are grateful to Shirley and the Corunna family for permission to reproduce both this image and those shown in this article.

Aboriginal Cultures Museum

A permanent home for the Berndt Museum has been discussed for many years. To make this a reality The University of Western Australia has consulted with Aboriginal communities through the State and in 2008 invited senior members of those communities onto campus to assist in the selection of a site and determine the parameters of the project. That group determined that the Noongar people would host the new museum because it was sited on their land and as a result the University invited Richard Walley to be our consultant and liaison with the Noongar community.

The museum will be a central component in the creation of a dynamic Cultural Precinct on campus, a hub that will enhance student life, promote interdisciplinary discovery, and add to the cosmopolitan community of the city and the State. The selected site for this iconic structure will be the corner

of Fairway and Stirling Highway on the Crawley campus. Kerry Hill Architects won the commission and have designed a wonderful three-storey structure that will meet the needs of Aboriginal communities, visitors, scholars, students and various other audiences.

This will be a destination building that celebrates the living cultures of Aboriginal women, men and children, especially in Western Australia, and allow fuller engagement with the vibrancy and qualities of Australian Aboriginal art, history and culture. A fundamental principle in the development of the project is the advancement of global knowledge, understanding of and respect for Aboriginal culture. We intend to create a unique venue for cultural and artistic expression, and for personal and community interaction.

The new building will also house the Centre for Rock Art Research and Management, so as well as the great

riches of the collections housed in the new museum visitors will be able to engage with the rock art dating back tens of thousands of years through the use of cutting edge, three-dimensional computer imaging technology.

When it opens the new museum will enable visitors to explore the rich cultural heritage of Aboriginal Australia through the extensive collection of material the Berndt Collection and other galleries and museums at UWA hold. We look forward to an exciting future that will be accompanied by a dynamic public program and community engagement.

Winthrop Professor Ted Snell AM CitWA
Director, UWA's Cultural Precinct



participate in the dances by invitation only. The Coolbaroo dances were a huge success. Such events as the annual ball, bathing beauty contests and hosting country-dances in York and Narrogin,

(small towns east of Perth), made the League immensely popular with Aboriginal people.

Shirley enjoyed helping out at the Coolbaroo dances and briefly held a temporary position of Assistant General Secretary in 1957, the same year she won Belle of the Ball. Shirley competed in two of the bathing beauty contests and won second place in 1958.

Shirley's story and involvement with the Coolbaroo League dances is encapsulated in *Wildflower Dreaming*, especially in the photographs but also in memorabilia and newspapers from her private collection.

The exhibition will display 24 front-page copies of the *Westralian Aborigine*, the first Aboriginal owned newspaper in Western Australia, which was published by the Coolbaroo League. *Wildflower Dreaming*, a prelude to Shirley's biography being written by her daughter, Mandy Corunna, is the first community exhibition not based on an aspect of the Museum's collection.



Barbara Bynder
Wildflower Dreaming Curator and
Museum Deputy Curatorial Director

Being a Practicum Placement student at the Berndt Museum

My name is Mun Yee Ho and I have been working once and sometimes twice a week at the Berndt Museum as part of my Bachelor of Arts Practicum Program for Semester 1, 2014. I applied to the Berndt Museum as my host organisation because I developed an interest in museum work during my University studies. My majors in Ancient History and Medieval and Early Modern Studies, and some other units I took in the Archaeology, Anthropology, Asian Studies and Art History departments helped me develop an appreciation of the past and of various cultures. Through my studies I also learned the importance of preserving historical and cultural materials for our understanding of the world, both past and present.

Having only visited museums as a visitor or as a volunteer doing customer service work, I did not know about the background work that goes into exhibitions which are educational for historical and cultural knowledge and I wanted to be a part of that background work after learning about its significance. More importantly, I wanted to work at the Berndt Museum because it specialises in Australian Aboriginal art and cultural materials, of which I have not much knowledge as a foreign student and would like to learn more about.

My supervisors, especially Kelly Rowe, helped me to frame an individual project that turned out to be Ronald Berndt's coin collection. I also helped out with stocktaking, moving objects and a bit of object documentation. These experiences helped me to understand the processes of object documentation and object handling – the 'background' work of museums that I had wanted to learn about through the practicum placement.

While I was nervous about handling the artefacts for fear of accidentally causing them damage, getting to look at the various artefacts and artworks while stock-taking and moving the objects was the best part of it and hearing my supervisor's and fellow colleagues' explanations and other information relating to them was interesting and helped me to better understand the culture and stories behind them. Some of the discussions with my supervisors and colleagues were also enlightening, especially on topics about the functions of artworks and artefacts and the implications of taking them out of their

intended contexts by placing them in museums and galleries. As for my work on the coin collection, it gave me a sense of accomplishment as I felt that I was contributing something meaningful to the museum, and researching about the coins also uncovered an exciting wealth of historical facts that I had not previously known. In addition, working with only six other colleagues in the office also gave my working environment a more 'cosy' feel where we got to interact more closely with each other. My supervisors and colleagues were always ready to offer their help without my asking.

My time at the museum exposed me to museum practices that I had not considered before, such as proper techniques in object handling and the dangers of not doing thorough research regarding the acquisition of the objects and their socio-cultural meanings/implications.

Apart from museum practices, the other most important thing I gained was a greater understanding and appreciation of Australian Aboriginal art, history and culture. Australian Aboriginal history and culture are very important to my understanding of Australia, and I am thankful to the museum for expanding my knowledge in this area. Now that my placement at the museum is concluding, I would like to take note of and remember all that I have learnt from the museum and carry the experience with me as I find new opportunities in museum work in the future.

Mun Yee Ho
Practicum Placement student
Faculty of Arts, UWA

Digitisation at the Museum and hope for future generations

The digitisation process underway at the Berndt Museum ensures that data and images that have been painstakingly collected over the years are preserved and recorded in an accurate and consistent manner. The objects and photographic images and archives in the Museum's collection are key to our work. By digitising as much material as we can, we are also enabling photos and archival information to be accessible to the public that, in turn, will hopefully allow for the continuation of cultural pride and knowledge in the future. The Berndt Museum puts great emphasis on community consultation and digitisation allows for such communities to access information, photographs and object images – data that would otherwise be lost.

My main task in digitisation at the Museum is to ensure that data on our hardcopy catalogue cards has been entered onto the online database accurately and consistently. I also make digitised versions of object images with the aim of publicly available material eventually being placed on the website for public access. I feel that my role is to empower and protect past and present cultural life through technological means, which in turn can be used to enrich and educate the public. My job allows me to truly appreciate the importance of preserving information and gives me the opportunity to explore our vast collection. There have been many times when information I have been digitising for a particular object piques my interest and leads me to doing further research and learn more about the object. In fact, working with digitisation at the Berndt has inspired me to pursue an Honours degree in Anthropology this year. It is my great hope that the work I am involved in will allow more people to develop such an interest and encourage knowledge to flourish and be passed on to future generations.

Sarah Ridhuan
Museum Curatorial Assistant

Visitors to the Museum, recent acquisitions, and looking toward 2015



WURNA JILJINGURNU KAYILI MARTUWARRKAR BY AMY NGURTA NUGGETT

We have been privileged to meet with a number of visitors during the last six months, especially members of the Murujuga group from the Pilbara who, together with Winthrop Professor Jill Milroy and Associate Professor Grant Revell from UWA's School of Indigenous Studies, are working on a project that relates to Pilbara materials at the University. A fruitful visit also took place with Gija artist, Mabel Juli from the Kimberley's Warmun Community, who was accompanied by her granddaughter, Nathalie, and Warmun Art Centre Coordinator, Adam Boyd.

The Berndt Museum is fortunate to be supported by an annual acquisition fund from UWA that has helped to expand the Collection. We have recently purchased, for instance, a significant painting by Walmajarri artist, Amy Ngurta Nuggett, from the *Ngurmtakura Wangki* exhibition (Perth's Gallery Central, February 2014) pictured above, and a wonderful textile work titled *Wogga: Noongar Six Seasons* created by eight members of the Perth-based Kookaburra Club. Late last year, we also co-purchased seven watercolours associated with Joseph Bradshaw, more about which will be in the next issue of the Berndt Museum News.

In August this year the Museum will be hosting a visit from Walmajarri artist and emerging curator, Terry Murungurr Murray. A full-time Cultural Heritage Officer with the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre, Terry's visit will occur with funding support from UWA's Institute of Advanced Studies and the WA Department of Culture and the Arts. During his time at the Berndt Museum,

Terry will do some recording work on the Kimberley Collection, and meet with art students at UWA's School of Indigenous Studies. Murungurr and Sandy Toussaint will also participate in a 19 August Public Programs Event at the Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery in a conversation about working collaboratively together on the *Jimmy Pike Artlines* exhibition.

A number of deposits have also added to the Berndt Collection and we are very grateful to contributors for the quality of these. Examples include a series of brown paper, colour pencil drawn cultural maps prepared by 1960s Warburton Aboriginal groups in conjunction with archaeologist, Richard Gould, and an old photograph of 'King Wally' from the Kimberley's Oombulgurri Community that was donated by Bernadette Kennedy.

Deposited a number of years ago through the Cultural Gifts Program, we are also grateful to Helen and Ben Korman for the donation of 12 paintings with the proviso that the works be hung throughout UWA in public spaces and

places. With help from Lawrence Wilson Gallery staff, especially Anthony Kelly, we are now in the process of adding to the creativity of UWA more broadly.

Catalogues from former exhibitions have been carefully removed from storage and then distributed through a number of relevant networks by the Museum's Administrative Officer, Rita Bennett, to people and places near and far. Catalogues relating to a Papua New Guinea exhibition, for instance, have now found their way back to PNG as well as to Germany, North America, and the UK, whereas others focused on Aboriginal Australia have been circulated to Indigenous and community organisations from Perth to Fitzroy Crossing.

If readers wish to help expand the Museum's collections via contributions of relevant paintings, artefacts, photos or archival material, please let us know, preferably after January 2015. Please also keep in mind that the work must fall within Collection emphases (primarily, Aboriginal Australia, although we also have a small collection of material from India, Japan, Korea, and Papua New Guinea), and that we will require provenance information when the material is deposited.

We are already looking forward to 2015 and, in particular, installation of the *Yirrkala Drawings* exhibition as a creative means of paying homage to the wonderful brown paper drawings first produced by Yolgnu artists in their Northern Territory Yirrkala homeland in the 1940s. An established part of material collected by Catherine and Ronald Berndt, we will celebrate the original artists and their families in a contemporary setting. While a selection of the work was first shown at UWA's Lawrence Wilson Art Gallery in 1995 in an exhibition curated by Gillian Hutcherson, and a larger selection has recently been exhibited at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and is now on tour, we hope you will join with us when the *Yirrkala Drawings* exhibition unfolds at the Lawrence Wilson in February next year.

Professor Sandy Toussaint
Associate Director



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Aboriginal Cultures Museum campaign

If you would like to learn more about the
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to the funding campaign, please contact
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