

**Aboriginal Contemporary Dance Practice: Embodying Our Ways of Being,
Knowing and Doing through Dance Storying**

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Abstract

The Master of Fine Arts project embodies a practice of journeying to identify the connection between my Lama Lama Ayapathu Gugu Yalanji identity and dance practice. This is realised in a rematriating learning paradigm that enables a distinct dance lexicon and pedagogy specific to my Aboriginality, while emphasising heterogeneity with Aboriginal Contemporary dance and Aboriginal peoples.

The project employs a transdisciplinary method encompassing Aboriginal worldviews, protocols and values specific to my Lama Lama Ayapathu Gugu Yalanji identity to safely navigate and negotiate Pama|Bama ways of being, knowing and doing within the academic space. This is inclusive of practice-led learning, dance cycle, storying, life writings and old ways for new ceremonies. In the cycle I learn of the social structures and socio-cultural disruption of my cultural identity to establish a social, cultural and political standpoint in the project, together with the *herstory* of Indigenous contemporary dance in a chronological order, including its social and political foundation, to situate myself within the Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) contemporary dance genealogy. With the knowledge I place my embodiment as an Aboriginal woman, mother and dancer central to the learning. In the project, I engage narrative, autoethnography and embodied writing techniques to create an immersive mapping of my embodiment of Country to contextualise Aboriginal contemporary dance within its artistic and cultural entirety. This is practiced through a body of creative work: four exhibits embodying my sense of belonging, and a written thesis in autoethnographic representation within a colonial ethos and practice.

In this project, I learn my cultural knowledge comprises of both fluid and fixed consciousness, and Aboriginal contemporary dance is a means of expression for cultural revitalisation, healing and education. Therefore, in this practice Aboriginal contemporary dance performs as a

medium for knowledge transmission within contemporary society. The connection between my Lama Lama Ayapathu Gugu Yalanji identity and Aboriginal contemporary dance is a manifestation of self-knowledge, elevating social, cultural and political perspectives of my Aboriginality.

Declaration

This is to certify that:

- (i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the Master of Fine Arts, except where indicated;
- (ii) due acknowledgment has been made in the text to all our material used;
- (iii) the thesis is 19758 words in length, exclusive of abstract, acknowledgments, preface, tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.



Rheannan Port

Preface

I am grateful for the Fay Marles Scholarship I received for two years (2017–2018). In these two years, the Fay Marles Scholarship financed my learning, including returning home to my Lama Lama, Ayapathu and Gugu Yalanji Country, Cape York Peninsula and production expenses for the creative work.

I am grateful for the support of the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development throughout my candidature. The financial assistance I received supported my attendance at Homeground: Dance Rites, Sydney, New South Wales (2017) and participation at the National Dance Forum, Darwin, Northern Territory (2019). I am grateful for the support of Murrup Barak. The Student Success Grant assisted with my participation at the National Dance Forum, Darwin, Northern Territory (2019) and the 31st Annual International Conference and Festival of Blacks in Dance, Dayton, Ohio, United States of America (2019), ITAS, and academic support. I am truly thankful to *John-Wayne Parsons* and *Matthew Starr* who went beyond their duties to offer their support, patient advice and guidance throughout the learning journey. To the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music dance staff and students for their unwavering support. To *Helen Herbertson*—thank you for your advocacy and wisdom that gave me the courage to dance my dance in the rain. Thank you to Dr Sally Treylon for your generosity in loaning me numerous books from your private collection. To *Monica Stevens*, *Jacinta Dwyer* and *Mimmalisa Trifilo* thank you for mentoring me through this process. To my children *Kyochre* and *Khayle*, thank you for being my inspiration for completing the MFA.

This Master of Fine Arts project (by research) is an individual and independent learning journey that did not require ethical clearance. In the project, I make reference to my DNA signature. Prior to my commencement of this degree at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, I participated in The Genographic Project providing me with knowledge of my DNA signature.

The details of my DNA signature are withheld in this thesis; therefore, no formal referencing is required. This includes also the creative collaborations that took place in developing the creative work. Throughout the process I was mindful of engaging creatives into my dance creating space. Contributions by experts from various disciplines brought to fruition the documentation of the work and production. This encompassed the work of stage/production management (including lighting design), photographers, a graphic designer, cinematographer, sound engineer and ushers. All creative collaborators were provided with information concerning their involvement in the project. Individually, the creatives took the time to understand the intention of the work; in turn, the collaborators enhanced the project in their unique ways.

My dance genealogy originates from Indigenous contemporary dance practice; however, in this project, I identify my dance practice specifically as Aboriginal contemporary dance practice. By identifying in this way, I show that there are two Indigenous cultures in Australia; Aboriginal culture comprising of more than 250 autonomous language groups and the Torres Strait Islander culture that is indigenous to the Torres Strait Islands. I acknowledge that Indigenous contemporary dance is inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. This work speaks directly to my cultural identity; accordingly, I reference Aboriginal contemporary dance practice. In the thesis, I collectively write my three sovereign language groups using only spaces (no punctuation) between to articulate my embodiment as of Lama Lama Ayapathu Gugu Yalanji identity. Throughout the thesis there are deliberate grammatical decisions that I have adjusted to express my relationality with the English word and in context with Pama|Bama ways of being, knowing and doing. This includes engaging a proper noun for Country, Stories, Dreaming. The “|” symbol shows two place-based law systems which I follow respectively.

Acknowledgments: Thank you for dancing with me in the rain

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	II
DECLARATION	IV
PREFACE	V
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS: THANK YOU FOR DANCING WITH ME IN THE RAIN	VIII
TABLE OF CONTENTS	X
LIST OF FIGURES	XIII
WARNING	XVII
INTRODUCTION	1
PRACTICE-LED LEARNING ENQUIRY	2
TRANSDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH METHOD	3
DANCE CYCLE	6
Integrating Being, Knowing and Doing	8
PRACTICE-LED LEARNING	9
STORYING METHOD	11
LIFE WRITINGS	13
Narrative Writing Method	14
Autoethnography Writing Method	14

Embodied Writing Method	15
OLD WAYS FOR NEW CEREMONIES	17
Writing Old Ways for New Ceremonies	18
Learning by Unlearning and Unlearning by Learning	20
Our Stories	22
CULTURAL IDENTITY	24
Way of Life	26
Traditions and Customs	33
Carole Johnson	36
National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA)	43
Cultural Residency Program	44
Barramundi Dreaming	45
2000 – Sydney Olympic Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies	46
2001 – NAISDA 25th Anniversary (Silver Jubilee)	47
2001–2002 – Remote Area Teaching Tour (RATT) and Croc Eisteddfod	47
2002 – Graduate National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association	48
Bangarra Dance Theatre	48
Bangarra Dance Theatre – Professional Dancer	49
Indigenous Contemporary Dance Practice – Independent Dance Professionals	50
Aboriginal Contemporary Dance Practice	56
DNA-CE: STRANDS OF IDENTITY	59
Introduction	59

Old People	62
Socio-Cultural Disruption	63
First Contact	63
European Invasion	64
Affect	66
DNA-CE: Stands of Identity: Creating Dance Stories	72
Country	72
Production	73
Creative Collaboration	76
Artistic Statement	77
 #80N35	 79
 #8L00D	 86
 #83713F	 93
 #81R7H	 101
 CONCLUSION	 108
 PROJECT DOCUMENTATION	 109
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 110
 APPENDIX A: <i>PRACTICE-LED LEARNING ENQUIRY HERSTORY</i>	 118
 APPENDIX B: <i>DIRECTORY FOR PROJECT DOCUMENTATION</i>	 131

List of Figures

Figure 1 Carole Johnson. Image from: Michael Leslie, 2016, “2.5: A Journey towards Adolescence and an Aboriginal Dance Method.” Master of Fine Arts thesis, University of New South Wales: Art and Design	36
Figure 2 Carole Johnson and the Black Theatre, 1972–1975. Redfern Oral History, Community Stories from Redfern and Surrounds: Dance. www.redfernoralhistory.org/peopleandplace	38
Figure 3 Carole Johnson recalls role in dance (Australian). Redfern Oral History, Community Stories from Redfern and Surrounds: Dance. www.redfernoralhistory.org/peopleandplace	39
Figure 4 Carole Johnson and the Black Theatre, 1972–1975. Redfern Oral History, Community Stories from Redfern and Surrounds: Dance. www.redfernoralhistory.org/peopleandplace	41
Figure 5 Carole Johnson and the Black Theatre, 1972–1975. Redfern Oral History, Community Stories from Redfern and Surrounds: Dance. www.redfernoralhistory.org/peopleandplace	43
Figure 6 DNA-CE: Strands of Identity, cover page for program, 2017. Image courtesy of the artist	58
Figure 7 DNA-CE: Strands of Identity, 2017, floor plan. Image courtesy of the artist.	71
Figure 8 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist	79
Figure 9 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist	80
Figure 10 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist	81

Figure 11 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	82
Figure 12 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	82
Figure 13 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	83
Figure 14 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	83
Figure 15 BLOOD (#8L00D) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	86
Figure 16 BLOOD (#8L00D) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	87
Figure 17 BLOOD (#8L00D) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	88
Figure 18 BLOOD (#8L00D) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	89
Figure 19 BLOOD (#8L00D) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	90

Figure 20 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	93
Figure 21 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	93
Figure 22 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	94
Figure 23 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	94
Figure 24 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	95
Figure 25 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	95
Figure 26 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	96
Figure 27 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	96
Figure 28 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	97

Figure 29 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	97
Figure 30 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	98
Figure 31 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist _____	98
Figure 32 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist. _	101
Figure 33 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist. _	102
Figure 34 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist. _	102
Figure 35 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist. _	103
Figure 36 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist. _	103
Figure 37 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist. _	104
Figure 38 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist. _	104
Figure 39 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist. _	105

Warning

I would like to advise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that this thesis includes names of deceased persons. The thesis also contains culturally sensitive information that may cause distress for some readers.

For my first teachers, Barry and Yvonne Port

Introduction

Over the past two decades, I have developed my professional dance capacity as a dancer, choreographer, mentor, rehearsal director, educator and arts administrator. As a dancer, I have performed in Australia (in remote, regional and metropolitan destinations), Indonesia, Japan, China, Singapore, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and the United States of America, including Oahu, Maui and Big Island Hawaii. My skills and knowledge, which were developed in my dance practice, have led to opportunities with many and varied parties, including individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, corporations, educational institutions, academics, artists and industry stakeholders. My practice builds upon my cultural knowledge and experience (cultural identity), training at the National Aboriginal Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA), company experience at Bangarra Dance Theatre (four years), working life as a casual employee in the arts and culture community and my embodiment as an Aboriginal woman, mother and dancer.

Practice-led Learning Enquiry

As part of my professional development a few years ago, I participated in a master dance class presented by dance and arts specialist Bernadette Walong-Sene. Through Walong-Sene's dance methodology, I was introduced to a hypothesis connecting ancestral knowledge with the transformation that occurs in dance. This moment of transformation in dance inspired me to embark on a practice-led enquiry to learn of the connection between my cultural identity and dance practice and, furthermore, to unpack the complexities of my cultural identity and situate my dance practice within the Indigenous contemporary dance genealogy to reveal a distinct dance lexicon specific to my Aboriginal contemporary dance practice.

Transdisciplinary Research Method

As protocol, I belong to the Lama Lama Ayapathu Gugu Yalanji¹ people of Cape York Peninsula (further discussed in Cultural Identity). Based on my kinship systems and structures, the words “our” and “we” are used as an extension of my communal responsibilities within my family, community and Aboriginal society. This thesis is written in a dance cycle, with the intention of the paper being read in its entirety, enabling a full understanding and comprehension of Pama|Bama ways of being, knowing and doing.² In an opening annotation, Professor Irene Margaret Watson of the Tangane-kald, Meintangk Boandik First Nations people shares:

In writing this thesis I have engaged in a personal struggle to decolonise myself, so it is written in a style which is part of that ongoing process of decolonisation, it is a writing of a song that still sings within. A song circles, so does the written form it does not always follow the rules of grammar or “normal” academic structure, although I would argue the ideas and arguments are there, they are just positioned differently.³

In this thesis, my embodiment is curated into stories and interwoven through time and place within a continuum. The stories are of my sense of belonging and are grounded in the practices

¹In the thesis, I collectively write my three sovereign language groups using only spaces (no punctuation) between to articulate my embodiment as of Lama Lama Ayapathu Gugu Yalanji identity. Throughout the thesis there are deliberate grammatical decisions that I have adjusted to express my relationality with the English word and in context with Pama|Bama ways of being, knowing and doing. This includes engaging a proper noun for Country, Stories, Dreaming. The “|” symbol shows two place-based law systems which I follow.

²Roxanne Bainbridge, Mary Whiteside, and Janya McCalman, “Being, Knowing and Doing: A Phronetic Approach to Constructing Grounded Theory with Aboriginal Australian Partners,” *Qualitative Health Research* 23, 2 (2013): 285.

³Irene Watson, “Raw Law: The Coming of the Muldarbi and the Path to Its Demise / Irene Margaret Watson,” January 1999.

of both Aboriginal traditional dance and Indigenous contemporary dance. The writing I've composed into a dance memoir; an anthology of stories on learning, growing and knowing of the world I live in. For me, dance feels just like home. It is where I learnt to roll, crawl, walk and fall all over again. It is a place of feeling that has allowed me to become.

I was seven years old when I knew I wanted to dance. The first dances I learnt were from the Old People⁴ in Coen, Cape York Peninsula. The dances were of the Old Peoples' stories,⁵ and were sung in cycles, with an accent marking the end of each dance story. I remember the singing was accompanied with the clapping of two boomerangs, other times drum echoes made from long sheets of paper bark wrapped tightly, keeping tempo with each hit to the ground. In tracing the beginnings of my dance story, I found myself being reunited with a seven-year-old girl, who patiently waited with anticipation for the next dance to begin.

Inspired by the traditions of passing down knowledge through Aboriginal traditional dance, in my chosen discipline, Aboriginal contemporary dance practice, my approach is an adaptation of Rak Mak Mak Marranunggu woman and Associate Professor Payi Linda Ford's cultural praxis as a way to revitalise and maintain my cultural heritage by knowledge transmission. My transdisciplinary method aligns with a quotation by scholar Dr Linda Tuhiwai Smith (Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou, Māori):

Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values, and behaviours as an integral part of methodology.⁶

⁴ The word "old" in the context of "Old People" relates to our ancestors past and present and "old ways" relates to traditional practices based on Pama|Bama Law (further discussed in Cultural Identity).

⁵ The continuation of our Stories/Dreaming (further discussed in Our Stories—Practice-led Learning Methods).

⁶ The continuation of our Stories/Dreaming (further discussed in Our Stories—Practice-led Learning Methods).

Within a transdisciplinary method, my approach across all of my artistic endeavours, including writing this thesis, are informed by the protocols of the “old ways,” to elevate social, cultural and political perspectives of my Aboriginality. This lends itself to the learning Aboriginal contemporary dance practice is a continuation of our Stories,⁷ as Tuhiwai Smith confirms:

Indigenous methodologies are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices.⁸

⁷ Further discussed in *Our Stories—Practice-led Learning Methods*.

⁸ Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 2012), 143.

Dance Cycle

By writing within a dance cycle, the methods and writing techniques imbedded are like guiding ropes to enable an understanding of the connection between my cultural identity and dance practice. In the seminar “Colouring in the White Spaces: Reclaiming Cultural Identity in Whitestream Schools,” educator and researcher Dr Ann Milne’s presentation amplifies the importance of developing an appropriate method to communicate the complexities of my cultural identity and dance practice in context with Lama Lama, Ayapathu and Gugu Yalanji worldviews, protocols and values:

How many of our teaching and learning practices, systems and spaces that we think of as “normal” or “traditional” are actually still colonial spaces that by our very acceptance of them, we are complicit in perpetuating?⁹

In the dance cycle I develop a rematriating pedagogy to articulate the depth and breadth of my cultural identity and Aboriginal contemporary dance practice. Through an adaptation of “Rematriating Curriculum Studies” by Unangaŋ woman and scholar Dr Eve Tuck, I thread my sense of belonging, and assert our ways of being, knowing and doing through dance, into the creative work and thesis:

A rematriation of curriculum studies is concerned with the redistribution of power, knowledge, and place, and the dismantling of settler colonialism.¹⁰

⁹ Ann Milne, “Colouring in the White Spaces: Reclaiming Cultural Identity in Whitestream Schools” by Dr Ann Milne,” YouTube video, online seminar, 52:56, October 17, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cTvi5qxqp4>.

¹⁰ Eve Tuck, “Rematriating Curriculum Studies,” *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy* 8, 1 (2011): 37.

In the table below, part of “Being, Knowing and Doing: A Phronetic Approach to Constructing Grounded Theory With Aboriginal Australian Partners” by Roxanne Bainbridge, Mary Whiteside and Janya McCalman,¹¹ is imbedded to support my approach: weaving together my Lama Lama, Ayapathu and Gugu Yalanji ways of being, knowing and doing within academia as a mix of existing methodological approaches working for me.

¹¹ Bainbridge, Whiteside, and McCalman, “Being, Knowing and Doing,” 285.

Integrating Being, Knowing and Doing

Table 1: Roxanne, Bainbridge, Mary Whiteside, and Janya McCalman. “Being, Knowing and Doing: A Phronetic Approach to Constructing Grounded Theory with Aboriginal Australian Partners.” *Qualitative Health Research*. 2013; 23 (2): 275–288.

Ways of Being, Knowing and Doing	Aboriginal Research Methodologies
Being	Inseparable nature of ways of knowing and being
Knowing	<p>Strongly asserts the validity of Aboriginal people’s diverse and unique ontologies and epistemologies in the construction of knowledge</p> <p>Centres the concerns of Aboriginal people</p> <p>Strongly asserts the validity of Aboriginal people’s diverse and unique ontologies and epistemologies in the construction of knowledge</p> <p>Attends carefully to Aboriginal voices, promoting them as experts in their own lives</p>
Doing	<p>Context-dependent based on Aboriginal people’s resolves in life</p> <p>Promotes Aboriginal ownership and empowerment in the process and benefits to the research population</p> <p>Aims for mutual trust and respect in the research relationship; ethics of practice and the practice of ethics everyday action</p> <p>Positions researcher and researched as partners with analysis and interpretations of findings conducted through collaboration and negotiation of meaning</p> <p>Invest in phenomena already working. Promotes sustainability.</p>

Practice-Led Learning

As a Master of Fine Arts (by research) candidate at the Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, University of Melbourne, a considered academic method aligning with Aboriginal worldviews, protocols and values was developed to carefully navigate through the cultural sensitivities of an appropriated pasts¹² ethos. An example of unethical research practices can be seen in the documentary *Aakurru Yintjingga—Indigenous Repatriation*¹³ (2017). These practices feed into my inner struggles and conflict entering into a methodological system that has caused enduring pain and disempowerment:

For our people, learning about our ancestor in Germany has been a time of mixed emotions. Bringing her home, touches on our shared pain and untold histories.¹⁴

In this thesis, I reference my identity by my Lama Lama Ayapathu Gugu Yalanji identity, followed by “Aboriginal” and “Aboriginality.” In the book *The Politics of Identity* by Aboriginal woman Professor Bronwyn Carlson, a clarification of “Aboriginal” is explained in the section “The Early Historical Context: Colonial Constructions of Aboriginality”:

Despite the existence of hundreds of self-identifying and named autonomous groups across the continent, the original inhabitants of Australia have always been understood and named by Europeans as a singular group – the Aborigines (Bourke et al. 2006). This identifier is a European word and concept, not an Aboriginal one.¹⁵

¹² Ian J. McNiven and Lynette Russell, *Appropriated Pasts: Indigenous Peoples and the Colonial Culture of Archaeology* (Lanham: ALTAMIRA Press, 2005).

¹³ Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Dev & Comms, “Aakurru Yintjingga—Indigenous Repatriation,” YouTube video, 6:29, October 26, 2017, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yNG8Sytxlcw>.

¹⁴ Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Dev & Comms, “Aakurru Yintjingga - Indigenous Repatriation.”

¹⁵ Bronwyn Carlson, *The Politics of Identity: Who Counts as Aboriginal Today?* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2016), 19.

In my dance practice, “Indigenous” is contextualised by its relations to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures of Australia and its collective alliance in founding the dance genre—Indigenous contemporary dance practice. The Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies’ (AIATSIS) explanation confirms:

Today, the term “Indigenous Australian” is used to encompass both Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people. However many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not like to be referred to as “Indigenous” as the term is considered too generic.¹⁶

In learning of the connection between my cultural identity and dance practice, “Indigenous” extends to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The origins of the word “Indigenous” are defined by Tuhiwai Smith in “Decolonizing Methodologies Research and Indigenous Peoples”:

It is a term that internationalizes the experiences, the issues and the struggles of some of the worlds colonised peoples [...] The final “s” in “indigenous peoples” has been argued for quite vigorously by indigenous activists because of the right of peoples to self-determination.¹⁷

¹⁶ AIATSIS, 2020a, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, website, <https://aiatsis.gov.au>.

¹⁷ Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 7.

Storying Method

In my learning the paper “Research Through, With and As Storying” by Associate Professor Louise Gwenneth Phillips and Ngugi/Wakka Wakka woman Professor Tracey Bunda was performed to thread my embodiment of Country and sense of belonging in the learning:

We define storying as the act of making and remaking meaning through stories. The anthimeria (verbification) of story is purposeful to reflect that it is living and active rather than fixed, archived products. Stories are in constant unfolding. As Native America scholar Thomas King (2003) declares, “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are” (p.2).¹⁸

By adopting the practice of “storying,” the thesis is written without chapters. The stories shared are connected by headings, subheadings and titles outlining each section, sub section and paragraph to orate a sense of flow and continuum respective of a more holistic approach and storying method. The storying approach adopted in the research enables my embodiment to move beyond feeling “fixed” and/or an “archived product”¹⁹ in the written form to “living and active.”

Storying, as I’ve learned, is a practice of inclusiveness and humanness; accordingly, I reference (where possible within the guidelines and rules of academia), scholars and artists with their full name, title and cultural identity where appropriate followed, therein, by their last name, respectfully. In my dance storying methodology, I maintain the belief Aboriginal culture

¹⁸ Louise Gwenneth Phillips and Tracey Bunda, *Research through, with and as Storying* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018).

¹⁹ McNiven and Russell, *Appropriated Pasts*, 50.

is not viewed in isolation but central to our epistemology, methodology, axiology, pedagogy and ontology practices. My Aboriginal contemporary dance practice aligns with an Aboriginal worldview, encompassing both our orality and collectivist tradition.²⁰ Through my storying approach, my embodiment is positioned central to the narrative with deliberate references to the socio-cultural disruption experienced by my people as part of my cultural identity.

The storying approach is applied to my Aboriginal contemporary dance practice as a continuation of our Stories²¹ (further discussed in Our Stories). The connection between my cultural identity and dance practice is revealed, acquired and expressed²² in my dance storying: Louise and Tracey convey:

Stories breathe their own breaths, they are organic in nature, and dynamic in process. They are as primal to us as the organs in our body, and evolve as we do. We can control them to the extent that we choose the stories and the times we tell them. But even when we punctuate, reframe, retell or edit, we cannot but let them escape. As human beings, we are “storying” beings.²³

²⁰ Margaret Kovach, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” *First Peoples Child & Family Review* 14, 1 (2019): 42.

²¹ Bruce Rigsby, and Athol Chase, “The Sandbeach People and Dugong Hunters of Eastern Cape York Peninsula: Property in Land and Sea Country,” in Peterson, Nicolas, and Bruce Rigsby, *Customary Marine Tenure in Australia*, (Sydney: Oceania Monographs: Oceania Publications, University of Sydney, 1998), 321.

²² Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

²³ Phillips and Bunda, *Research through, with and as Storying*.

Life Writings

As explained previously (Transdisciplinary Research Methods), based on my kinship system and structures, my communal and cultural responsibilities sit within our ways of being, knowing and doing. In articulating Aboriginal worldviews, protocols and values within a colonial ethos and practice,²⁴ my cultural responsibilities and obligations weighed heavily on my physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing. In the candidature, I navigate the academic space by placing my embodiment central to the research to negotiate through cultural sensitivities, intellectual property and cultural knowledges. In Life Writings, I unpack the complexities of my cultural identity, by acknowledging that, although my embodiment and cultural knowledge is inherent of my experiences and genealogy, through our cultural and storying practices, my memories, cultural knowledge and relationships in the stories and dance belong also to Aboriginal women, families and communities, whose presence unknowingly have informed this thesis. As clarified in the book *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism* by Goenpul woman of the Quandamooka people, activist and scholar, Professor Aileen Moreton-Robinson:

In these life writings experience is fundamentally social and relational, not something ascribed separately within the individual. Indigenous women's life writings are based on the collective memories or inter-generational relational relationships between predominantly Indigenous women, extended families and communities.²⁵

In Life Writings, I engage narrative, autoethnography and embodied writing methods to enunciate stories of my embodiment through time and place. Like a weft thread in a weave,

²⁴ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*, 20th anniversary edition (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2020), xxi.

²⁵ Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' up to the White Woman*, 23.

the writing methods are woven together to create a deeper meaning and understanding of my cultural identity and dance practice. In the thesis, both autoethnography and embodied writing methods are written in italics to differentiate between the distinct writing voice and tone used to enhance and elevate my embodiment.

Narrative Writing Method

I engage a narrative writing method, as an essential voice in the learning to communicate self-knowledge. In “Conversational method in Indigenous research” by Professor Margaret Kovach of Plains Cree and Saulteaux ancestry, a summary of Barrett and Stauffer’s (2009) definition of “narrative inquiry” reads:

Narrative is viewed as story and is seen as a “mode of knowing” that is involved in knowledge construction, and has been recently been accepted as a “method or inquiry.”²⁶

Autoethnography Writing Method

My viewpoint established through narrative writing, weaves my autoethnography voice and tone into the learning. The autoethnography writing method came easily and naturally to me, allowing me to tap into my thoughts, beliefs and feelings to contextualise the world around me culturally, emotionally, aesthetically and intellectually. In the paper “Autoethnography in Indigenous Research Contexts: The Value of Inner Knowing,” Roxanne Bainbridge explains:

Autoethnography may be defined, not by its relationship to a prescribed theory governed discourse, but by its epistemological flexibility, which begins in people’s

²⁶ Margaret Kovach, “Conversational Method in Indigenous Research,” *First Peoples Child & Family Review* 14, 1 (2019): 42.

experiences and understandings of the world rather than in theory; in this sense, autoethnography provides an unspecified space from which to conduct research (D. E. Smith, 2005) to distinguish from (L. T. Smith, 1999).²⁷

Embodied Writing Method

Whereas autoethnography writing provides more of an autobiographical storytelling, describing personal experiences to understand political, social and cultural meaning, embodied writing, provides a space to express my emotions openly. My emotions of loss, sadness and hope are interwoven to express a spiritual longing with my ancestors in the spirit world. In the paper “Embodied Writing and Reflections on Embodiment” by Professor Rosemarie Anderson, reveals:

When embodied writing is attuned to the physical senses, it becomes not only a skill appropriate to research, but a path of transformation that nourishes an enlivened sense of presence in and of the world.²⁸

²⁷ Roxanne Bainbridge, “Autoethnography in Indigenous research contexts: The value of inner knowing,” *Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues* 10 (2007): 6.

²⁸ Rosemarie Anderson, “Embodied Writing and Reflections on Embodiment,” *The Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* 33, 2 (2001): 83.

Old Ways for New Ceremonies

My dance practice follows the “Old Ways for New Ceremonies” cultural praxis. The “Old Ways” derives from our law—a complex system and structure governing our ways of knowing and being—and the “New Ceremonies” is the continuation of our Stories, practiced within a contemporary dance framework. The protocols that guide my dance approach are inherent of my cultural identity that adhere to our Law. In the journal article, “Dancing Chiaux, Dancing Sovereignty: Performing Protocol in Unceded Territories,” Assistant Professor Mique’l Dangeli of the Tsimshian Nation of Metlakatla Indian Community asserts:

sovereignty is embodied in Northwest Coast First Nations dance practices through complex negotiations and responsive assertions of protocols – bodies of law which form Indigenous legal systems – both in the creation of performances and performances themselves. I define dancing sovereignty as self-determination carried out through the creation of performances (oratory, songs and dances) that adhere to and expand upon protocols in ways that affirm hereditary privileges (ancestral histories and associated ownership of songs, dances, crests, masks, headdresses, etc.).²⁹

In searching for information on the complex negotiations within the Indigenous Contemporary Dance Practice, I noticed a significant void and absence in the literature by Indigenous contemporary dancers. The “blood-filled, richly embodiment”³⁰ of our stories is written and viewed within an ethnocentric gaze.³¹ Cultural knowledge, ancestral traits, characteristics and

²⁹ Miquel Dangeli, “Dancing Chiaux, Dancing Sovereignty: Performing Protocol in Unceded Territories,” *Dance Research Journal* 48, 1 (2016): 75–90.

³⁰ Kaja McGowan, “Dancing, Witnessing, Gifting, and Writing: A Potlach-Based Indigenous Research Methodology,” 2018, <https://www.cornell.edu/video/miquel-dangeli-potlach-based-indigenous-research-methodology>.

³¹ Tristan Schultz, “Colonialism and the Gaze: Encountering Aboriginal Dance,” Design Futures Faculty, Griffith University Queensland College of Art, 2013: 2.

behaviours are transcribed in the aesthetic parameters of “spectacle.”³² Literature written by non-Indigenous contemporary dancers do not have full comprehension of Indigenous worldviews through dance. This is simply because they are not of Indigenous descent, therefore lack authority to write on embodying complex negotiations and assertion of protocols practiced within Indigenous contemporary dance practice. Secondly, Indigenous contemporary dance history written by non-Indigenous contemporary dancers is transcribed to fit within a Western narrative and knowledge production creating conflicting autobiographical accounts on the Indigenous contemporary dance genealogy. My Aboriginality comes with communal and cultural responsibilities that I navigate on a daily basis and in this thesis where possible write Indigenous contemporary dance genealogy in context with its community-led foundation, to eliminate writing with amnesia to fit within an egocentric narrative. The complex negotiations and protocols not only make me accountable within my dance discipline, they make me accountable to my kin, Country and community. Working and living in the Aboriginal space is not a vocation for me—it is my life. The complex negotiations and protocols in my Aboriginal contemporary dance practice, guide my cultural and artistic concepts. In developing a distinct dance lexicon within the dance community, I engage cultural knowledge and experiences that affirm my hereditary privileges. In a dance exhibition titled *DNA-CE: Strands of Identity*, I learn of the colonial ethos and practice of the “white gaze” and objectification of my embodiment (Further discussed in *DNA-CE: Strands of Identity*).

Writing Old Ways for New Ceremonies

In the research, (re)tracing the beginnings of my story in the dance installation (*DNA-CE: Strands of Identity*) to write into the thesis presented many and varied challenges and difficulties. My dance evolves in the dance-creating epoch—a time where linear writing is inaccurate or lucid because the process of dance creating from beginning to end occurs

³² Schultz, “Colonialism and the Gaze: Encountering Aboriginal Dance,” 2.

innately, intuitively and instinctively; a method that is divorced from any form of time responsiveness. In researching DNA coding and noncoding sequences, American–Australian Nobel laureate and researcher Dr Elizabeth Blackburn discovers:

Tracing the beginnings of the interwoven stories of science can be arbitrary, as beginnings are so often lost in the mists of time.³³

In working towards maintaining and sustaining my cultural and artistic integrity in written form, other challenges and difficulties emerged in communicating my dance practice within its fluidity and living embodiment. The spiritual energy occurring simultaneous in Aboriginal culture and dance, sadly appears unrecognisable and irrelevant on paper. *In the journal article “Understanding African Dance in Context: Perspectives from Ghana ,”* master drummer, music, dance and theatre practitioner and scholar *Dr Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor affirms:*

The holistic nature of African dance as we have seen through the Anlo-Ewe example undoubtedly challenges efforts to document these movements as even Labanotation, the widest used movement notation tool can only pick a partial picture of the Agbadza movement description. Laban analysis could do well in capturing the body and its external arts but sadly may not be able to capture the internal feelings and the layer of spirituality that occur in the body during the process of executing Agbadza movement.³⁴

The process of transcribing something from an embodied experience revealed challenging and difficult too. Transposing Aboriginal worldview, protocols and values, and dancing from its

³³ Elizabeth H. Blackburn, “Telomeres and Telomerase: The Means to the End (Nobel Lecture),” *Angewandte Chemie* 49, 41 (2010): 257.

³⁴ Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor, “Understanding African Dance in Context: Perspectives from Ghana,” *Journal of Pan African Studies* 10, 4 (2017): 61.

true essence, creates a void and disconnect. In the writing, I embed a mapping of my embodiment of Country to create an immersive and sensory experience to bridge a more meaningful connection and holistic understanding. In “The We In Me: Exploring the Interconnection of Indigenous Identity and Spirituality,” Yaqui/Irish dancer, educator and cultural arts advocate Sara Moncada (Yaqui) explains:

Similar to the difficulty found in trying to put to words something that is experienced internally, there is a space created, a type of void that is brought into being as the shift occurs from one language to another, when dance and song are described rather than lived. In this project, we will attempt to experience these traditions through the more holistic scope of lived experience, as a means for considering a larger narrative of dance in Native life. We will explore the intrinsic role of dance as it relates to spiritual expression and cultural identity within Native peoples, and explore song and dance as a vehicle for cultural revitalization, public education and community healing.³⁵

Learning by Unlearning and Unlearning by Learning

Weaving cultural and dance knowledge together, shifting continuously between disciplines of dance and culture, practicing complex negotiations, following protocols to guide the research and writing within the academic structure and rules of grammar to convey “Old Ways for New Ceremonies,” at times left me feeling mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually fatigued. The ailment endured in the research derived from feeling frustrated with Western ideologies to validate the sophisticated systems and structure governing our ways of being, knowing and doing for the past 60,000 years. The pain experienced through my body is a response, rooted in both refusal and resistance to Western ways of research and knowledge production. In the

³⁵ Sara Moncada, “The We in Me: Exploring the Interconnection of Indigenous Dance, Identity and Spirituality,” *Senior Theses*, 2016: 2.

article “Embodied writing and the social production of pain,” Associate Professor Susan Ferguson states:

Writing is central to Western education, knowledge production, and social research methodologies. Writing is also a political activity. As Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999, 36) reminds us, academic writing and its role in the generation of theory is never “innocent” (see also Maracle 1990).³⁶

In writing this thesis, I understand I am embarking on a political activity (writing)³⁷ that is also central to the social engineering of my Aboriginality. Customarily, my cultural practices and orality traditions enabled the transmission of knowledge through transgenerational stories. The behavioural, cognitive, social and cultural effects of Western education, knowledge production and social research methodologies are visible to the systems and structures working towards race erasure (further discussed in DNA-CE: Strands of Identity). In “Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism” Aileen Moreton-Robinson asserts:

To recognise that whiteness has shaped knowledge production means academia would have to accept that the dominate regime of knowledge is culturally and racially biased, socially situated and partial. Such recognition would not only challenge the universal humanist claim to possess impartial knowledge of the Indigenous other, it would also facilitate recognition of the subjects of other humanisms to whom whiteness has never been invisible or unknown.³⁸

³⁶ Susan Ferguson, “Embodied writing and the social production of pain,” in Wong, Y.-L. R., and Batacharya, S., *Sharing Breath: Embodied Learning and Decolonization* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2018), 327.

³⁷ This academic skill (writing) derives from a patriarchal culture (human, man-made, mankind, history, person, female, woman, women, she, her), religion/Christianity (in the name of the God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit) and hierarchy constitution (egocentric) that uses a left-to-right mechanical and repetitive-like technique (literature) to transfer knowledge.

³⁸ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *Whitening Race: Essays in Social and Cultural Criticism* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004).

Our Stories

The foundation of my dance practice originates from Aboriginal traditional dance. My Aboriginal contemporary dance practice is a continuation of our Stories—the beginning of time for Pama³⁹ people (further discussed in Cultural Identity). In the thesis I learn that my cultural knowledge comprises of both fluid and fixed consciousness, and Aboriginal contemporary dance is a medium for cultural revitalisation, healing and education. In a quotation included by Phillips and Bunda shares a piece of writing by Cherokee scholar Dr Thomas King:

For story is not just written. Cherokee scholar Thomas King (2003) points out western assumptions that, to be complete, stories need to be written down, and that written literature has an inherent sophistication over oral stories, “that as we move from the cave to the condo we slough off the oral and leave it behind. Like an old skin” (p.100). We argue to keep and treasure that skin, to decorate that skin, to add other layers to that skin.⁴⁰

In Aboriginal traditional dance, stories are expressed in dance, song and ritual as a lifecycle for cultural preservation, resilience, learning and healing. In my experiences of Aboriginal traditional dance, identity is an integral aspect of this keeping. The wearing and carrying of identity is part of the customs and traditions within Aboriginal culture. In Aboriginal traditional dance, ochre or riverbed clay worn on the body identifies the family, clan, moiety and language group one belongs to. The distinct markings worn on the body is also a vital characteristic of the cultural occasion or happening. Ochre or clay held on the body in ceremonial rituals and traditional cultural practices carry healing and medicinal properties too. Accompanying the various ochre or clay pigmentation scribed on the body, natural fibres and materials are

³⁹ Rigsby and Chase, “The Sandbeach People and Dugong Hunters of Eastern Cape York Peninsula,” 320.

⁴⁰ Phillips and Bunda, *Research through, with and as Storying*.

sourced, prepared, woven, crafted, worn and carried to display identity, so too are cultural objects and material (sacred) that are carved and crafted into musical or hunting instruments that become an important attribute in cultural practices and ceremonies. Among identifying and locating one's position within the language group, this method of communication is also used to identify and distinguish roles and responsibilities that belong to either men's business, women's business or shared experiences within these customs and traditions. For Aboriginal people, identity is based on belonging and the wearing and carrying of identity as identification is to establish connection and relationships with Country. In the article by Emeritus Professor Bruce Rigsby and Associate Professor Athol Chase⁴¹ confirm:

in the beginning, the animals, birds and fish were like human beings, like Aboriginal people. These spirit people are what Pama call Stories (elsewhere, Dreamings). The Stories made the landscape with all its features.⁴²

⁴¹ Rigsby and Chase, "The Sandbeach People and Dugong Hunters of Eastern Cape York Peninsula," 321.

⁴² Rigsby and Chase, "The Sandbeach People and Dugong Hunters of Eastern Cape York Peninsula," 320.

Cultural Identity

I belong to the Lama Lama, Ayapathu and Gugu Yalanji kin and Country of Cape York Peninsula. The way of identifying in contemporary society is explained by Moreton-Robinson:

The protocol for introducing one's self to other Indigenous people is to provide information about one's cultural location, so that connections can be made on political, cultural and social grounds and relations established.⁴³

Through our law and customs, I follow my father and grandfather's lineage. In the article "Sandbeach People" by Emeritus Professor Bruce Rigsby and Associate Professor Athol Chase, the social structures of language groups of north eastern Cape York Peninsula are explained:

Children usually take their tribal membership and particular land interests from their fathers, they remain connected with their mother's tribe and they take land affiliations from their mother too. Where a child's father is non-Aboriginal, the child always takes its identity from its Pama mother.⁴⁴



⁴³ Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' up to the White Woman*, Introduction

⁴⁴ Rigsby and Chase, "The Sandbeach People and Dugong Hunters of Eastern Cape York Peninsula," 322.

⁴⁵ Bruce Rigsby, "Possum's Family Genealogy," unpublished genealogy, 1994.



Traditionally, the three individual language groups were governed and interconnected by distinctive place-based systems and structures. The law within a society, enabled Pama and/or Bama to establish their connection and relationship with people, place and practices.

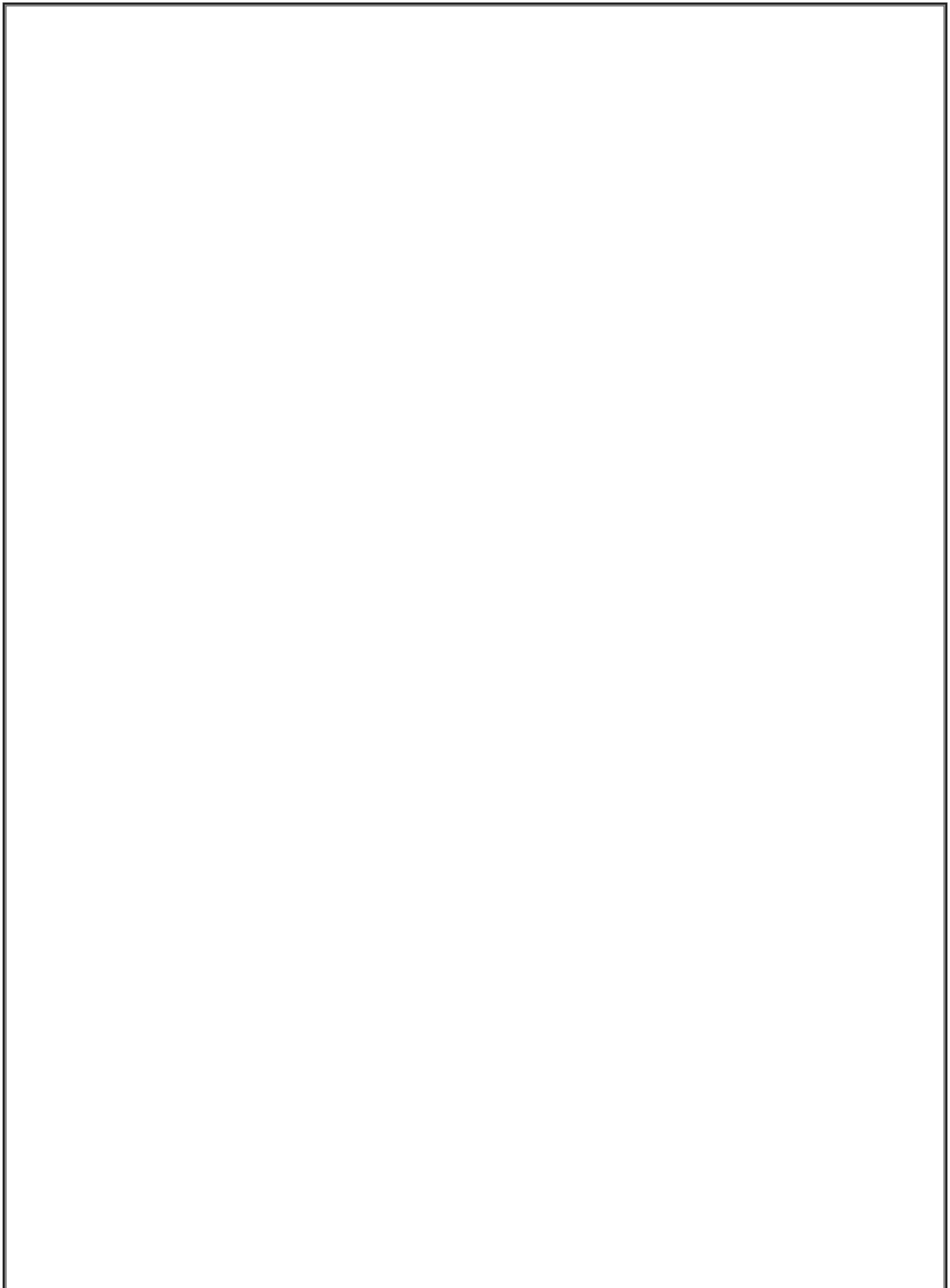
Growing up practicing the traditions and customs of my Lama Lama, Ayapathu and Gugu Yalanji kin and Country, I learned of the existing social structures. I also learned of the socio-cultural disruption of our culture and the associated cultural, social and political effects since colonisation. Through a collection of childhood stories written in autoethnography, I map my embodiment of Country.

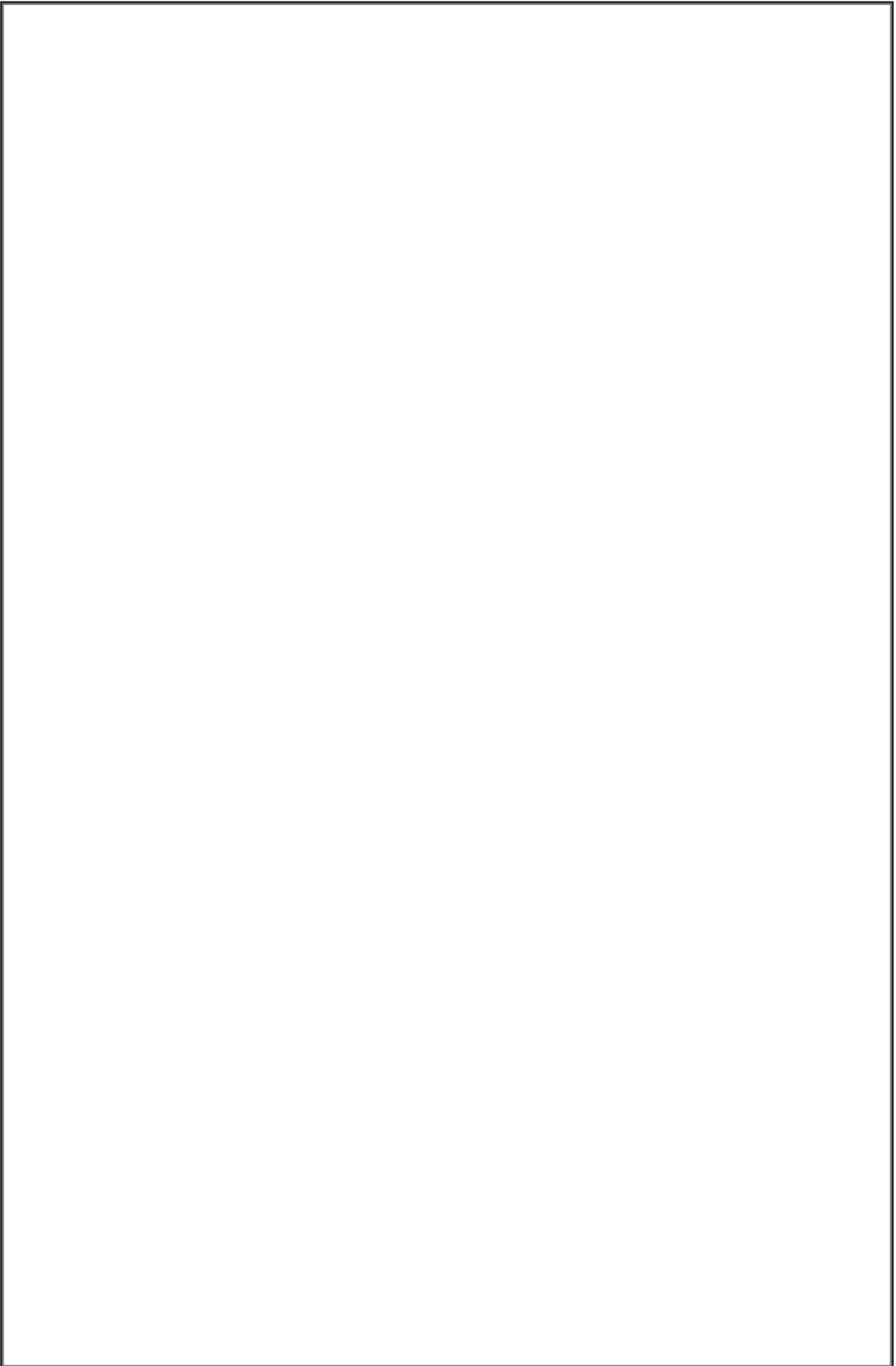
⁴⁶ Rigsby and Chase, "The Sandbeach People and Dugong Hunters of Eastern Cape York Peninsula," 320.

⁴⁷ Rigsby and Chase, "The Sandbeach People and Dugong Hunters of Eastern Cape York Peninsula," 322.

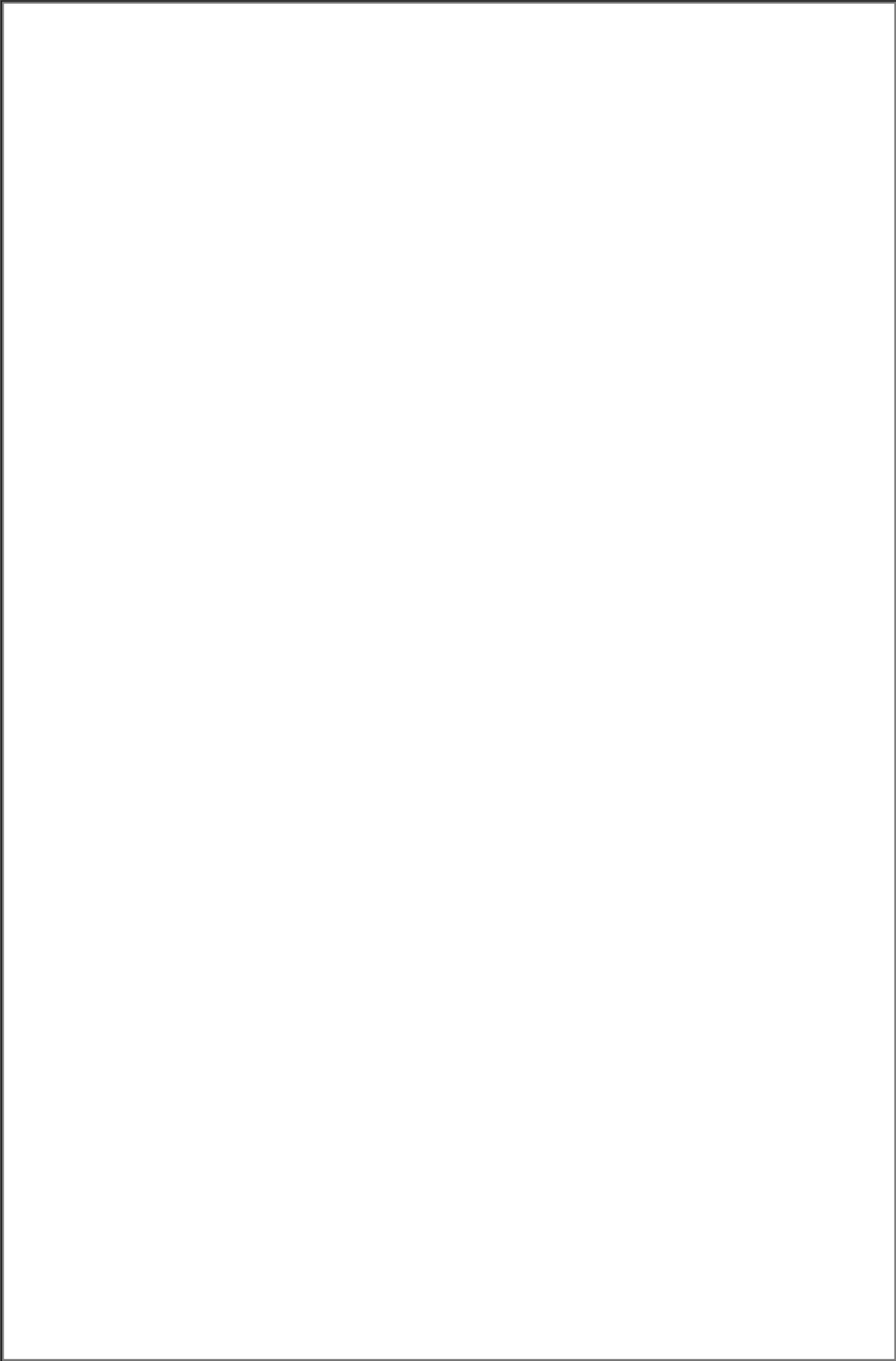
⁴⁸ Henry D. Hershberger, Ruth Hershberger, and Darwin (Australia), "Kuku-Yalanji Dictionary. Work Papers of SIL-AAB, Series B, Volume 7," (Australian Aborigines Branch. Summer Inst. of Linguistics: 1986), 90.

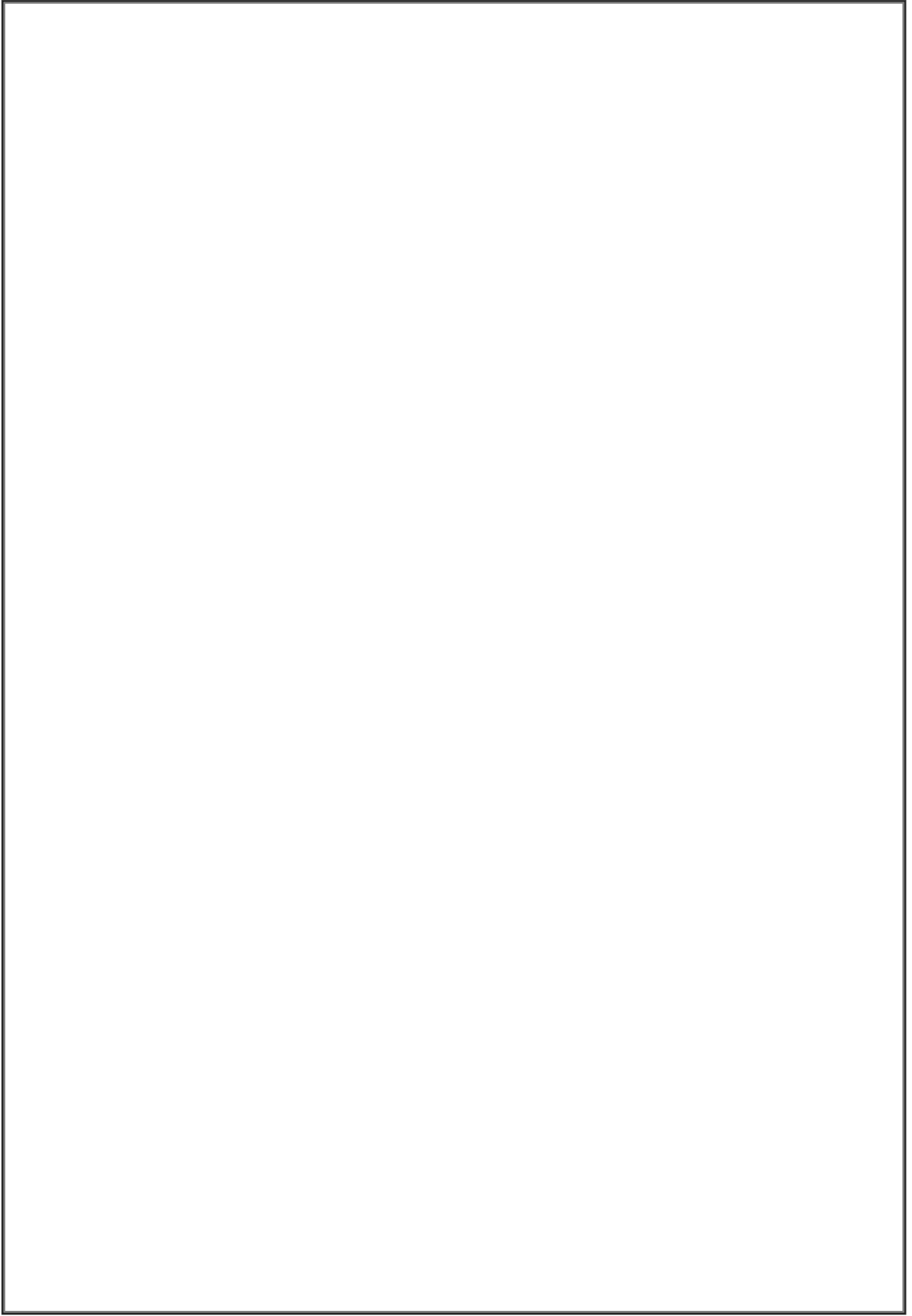
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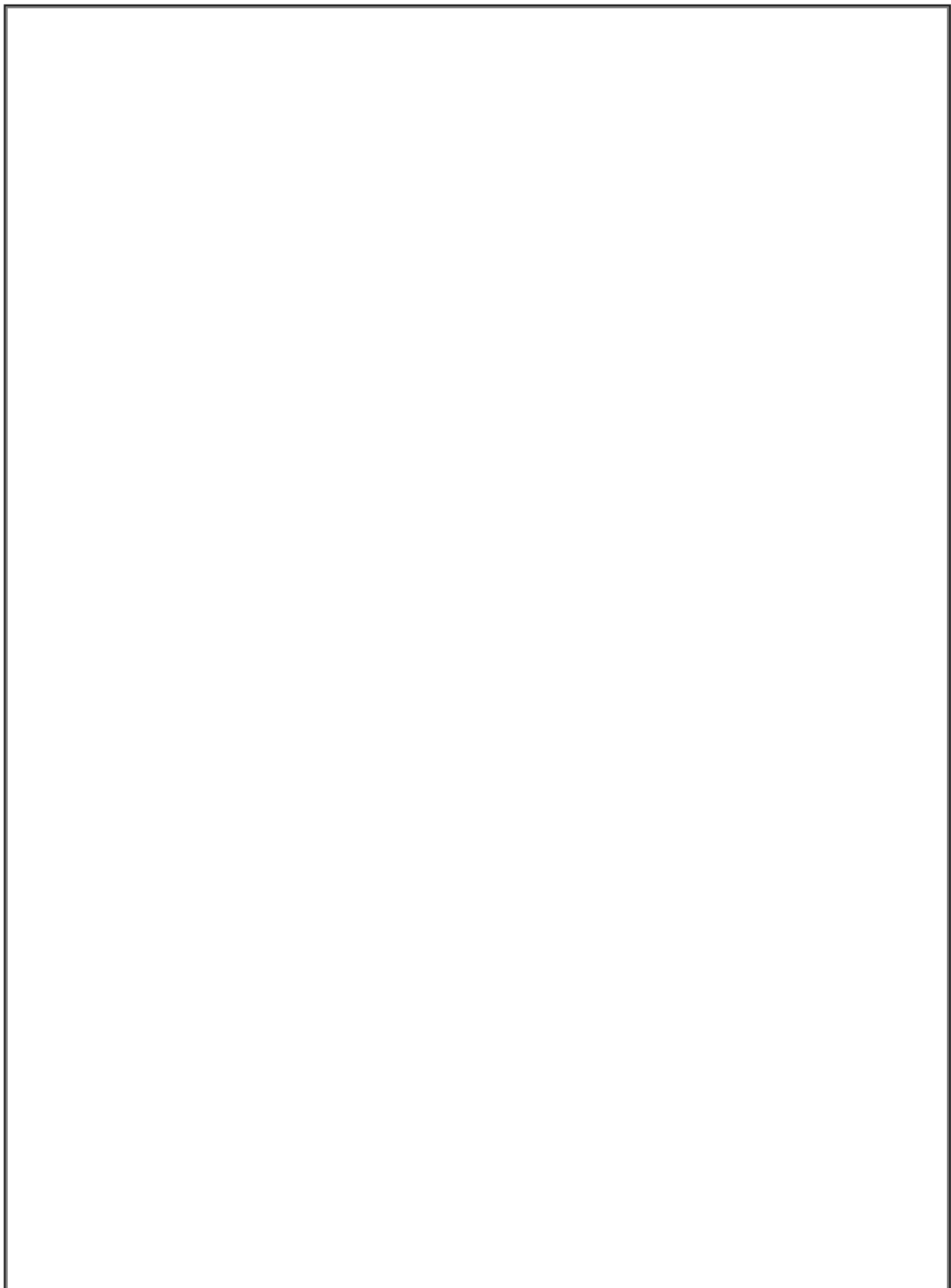
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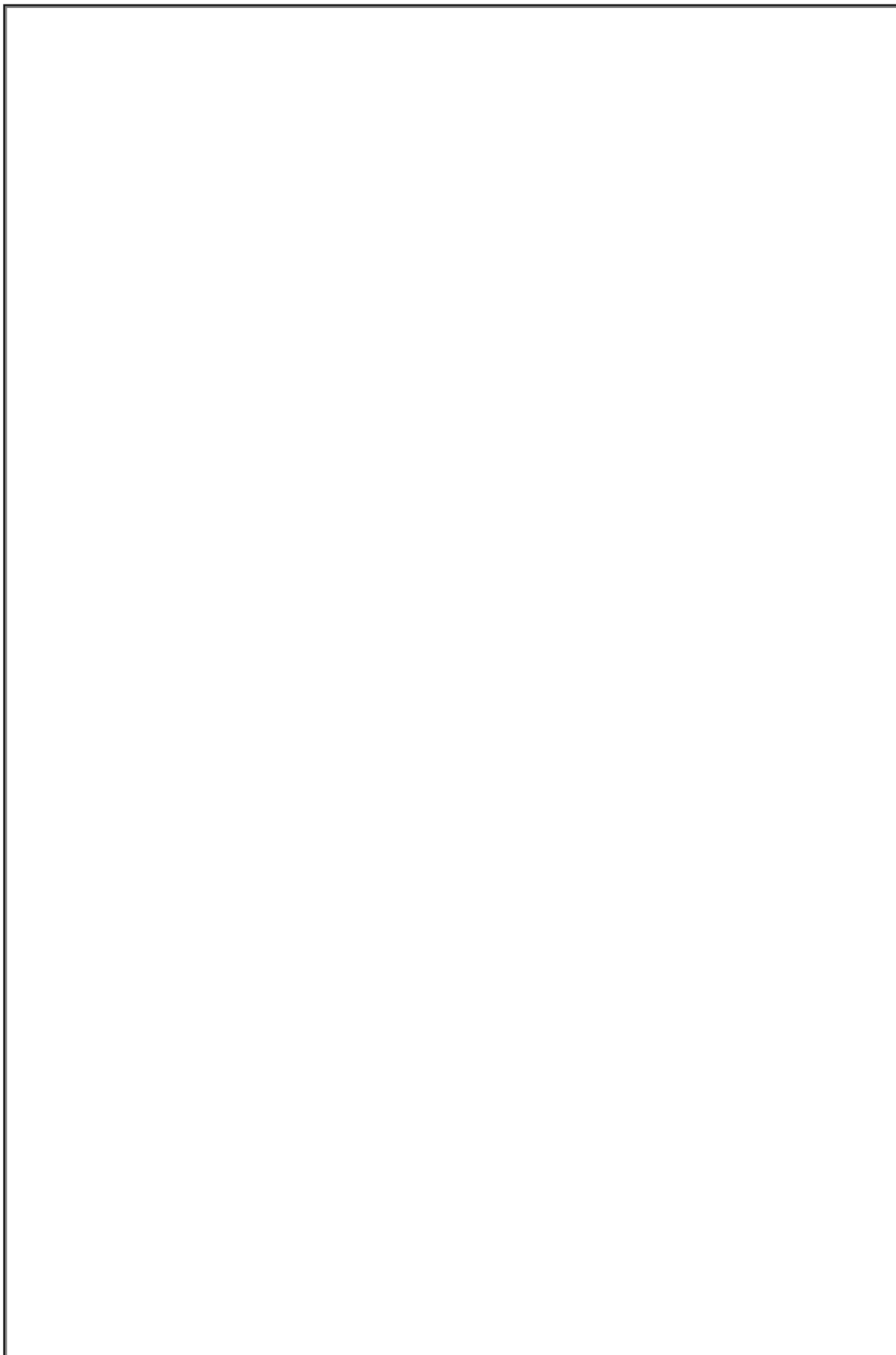


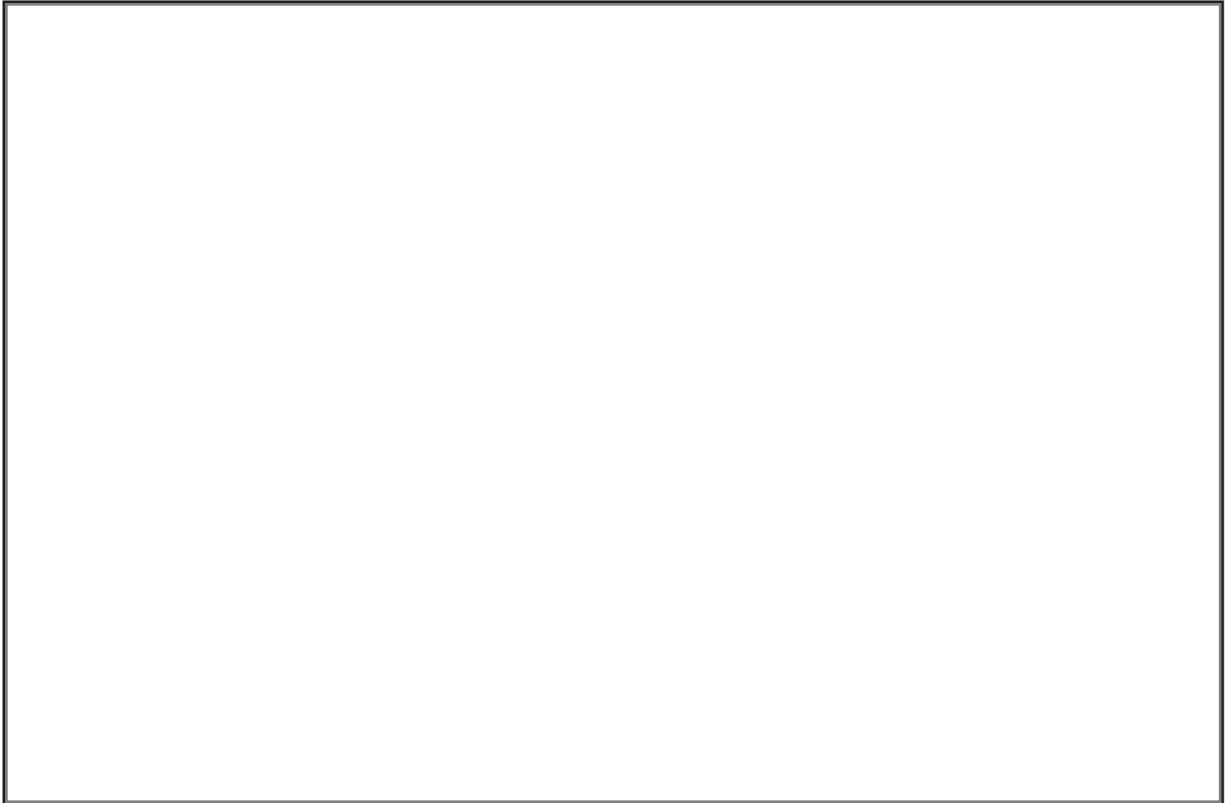






⁴⁹ Queensland Government, "European Contact History of Coen Introduction Coen Queensland Government," last modified July 19, 2017, <https://www.qld.gov.au/atsi/cultural-awareness-heritage-arts/community-histories/community-histories-c-d/community-histories-coen>.





Traditions and Customs

My sense of belonging is based on my connection with my Lama Lama, Ayapathu and Gugu Yalanji kin and Country. My family is based on our kinship systems. My knowledge of Country is based on our ways of being, knowing and doing and, inherent of my cultural identity.

In the book *Double Native: A Moving Memoir About Living Across Two Cultures* by choreographer, writer and freelance performer of the Mbaiwum/Trotj, Alngith/Lininigithi Wikway and Wik Apalich Nations of Western Cape York Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyang, I learn similarities between our experiences growing up in Cape York Peninsula and how the memories of our childhood and adult life on Country have enriched our cultural identities:

this land was where my feet ran wild as a child, everything about it contributed to me cultivating a sense of my own identity – the smell of it, the way the heat sits on my skin,

the way oolay waarth calls out in the middle of the day, the way the earth feels after rain has dance with it.⁵⁰

In both our writing approaches our way of storying compliments our orality traditions using thick description to interweave self-knowledge learned from our experiences of being immersed in our culture and training at the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association Inc. (NAISDA). Though an embodiment of Country, Fiona shares her experiences participating in a ceremony at Aurukun, western Cape York Peninsula:

The dancers move forward in a stamping action as the balls of their feet press into the sand, causing a mini dust-storm. Their heads move in a stoical manner from side to side as each dancer focuses straight ahead. The sound of the singing is both mystifying and intriguing. And ever though it's disturbing, I am drawn to this dance.⁵¹

The dances were part of a ceremony that consisted of many dances coming together as one ritual. At this particular cultural gathering, Wirrer-George Oochunyang writes of a cross-cultural shift in the presentation of traditional dance from Aurukun influenced by the removal of people from Aurukun to the Torres Strait Islands in World War II. On return to their Aboriginal homelands, the influences of the Torres Strait Islander culture were explored as part of their cultural practices. The stories of their cultural identity were consistent with their ceremonial practices; however, the dance aesthetics were informed by the traditions and customs of the Torres Strait Islander culture. In the writing, Wirrer-George Oochunyang acknowledges the social and cultural transformation through dance and ceremony, which is also seen in the 1980 documentary *The House-Opening* by American visual anthropologist Judith MacDougall

⁵⁰ Fiona Wirrer-George Oochunyang, *Double Native* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2010).

⁵¹ Oochunyang, *Double Native*.

where the dancing is from the Torres Strait Islands but the songs are composed in their Aboriginal traditional language.⁵²

In the thesis I learn the social and cultural transformation of my cultural identity through my dance practice originating from Indigenous Contemporary Dance Practice.

Indigenous Contemporary Dance Practice

The Indigenous contemporary dance practice is a dance genre informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture with Western dance techniques. As mentioned in the preface my dance genealogy originates from Indigenous contemporary dance practice; however, in this project, I identify my dance practice specifically as Aboriginal contemporary dance practice.⁵³

⁵² Judith MacDougall, HOUSE-OPENING, THE [from the AIATSIS Collection], Film, 1980, <https://www.roninfilms.com.au/feature/7835/house-opening-from-aiatsis-collection.html>.

⁵³ By identifying in this way, I show that there are two Indigenous cultures in Australia; Aboriginal culture comprising of more than 250 autonomous language groups and the Torres Strait Islander culture that is indigenous to the Torres Strait Islands. I acknowledge that Indigenous contemporary dance practice is inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. I assert that this work speaks directly to my cultural identity; accordingly, I reference Aboriginal contemporary dance practice encompassing my role as dancer, choreographer, mentor, rehearsal director, educator and arts administrator.

Carole Johnson



Figure 1 Carole Johnson. Image from: Michael Leslie, 2016, "2.5: A Journey towards Adolescence and an Aboriginal Dance Method." Master of Fine Arts thesis, University of New South Wales: Art and Design.

In my thesis, I acknowledge activist, arts administrator, choreographer and dancer Carole Johnson of African American Ancestry, highlighting her ground-breaking work that gifted an invaluable contribution to the Indigenous contemporary dance community and etched a legacy into Australian and American dance history. By including Carole's biography in this section, I argue that dance creating and storying is a manifestation of self-knowledge.

Born in Jersey City, and raised in Philadelphia, United State of America, Carole began dancing at an early age. Training first in ballet, Carole was introduced to modern dance technique, including the Graham technique, in her graduating years of high school at Adelphi College.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Trove, "Johnson, Carole (1940-)," n.d., <https://trove.nla.gov.au/people/1491391>.

A scholarship recipient, Carole was accepted into the Julliard School in New York. Graduating in 1963, Carole continued to study ballet and jazz, and learning to teach dance whilst dancing with several ballet companies. In the mid to late 1960s, Carole was approached to develop and design the Dancemobile Project through the Harlem Cultural Council in New York. In the book *Dancing in Blackness: A Memoir*, African-American dance scholar, activist and professional dancer Professor Halifu Osumare writes:

The origin of the Dancemobile was actually the result of the hard work of black dance Carole Y. Johnson, a soloist with the Eleo Pomare Dance Company. She started the Dancemobile in 1967 as the primary organiser. It is significant that a dancer learned the administrative duties of fund raising, publicity, finances, and negotiations with stakeholders from the city, the state, corporate sponsor Hoffman Beverages, and the neighbourhood representatives.⁵⁵

In my research candidature, I had the opportunity to participate at the International Association of Blacks in Dance at Dayton, Ohio, United States of America, where I attended a dance writing workshop “A Writing Workshop for Dancers to Tell Their Own Stories” by Osumare. At this conference I also attended a lecture by Dr Sylvanus Kwashie Kuwor (referenced in my research methodology) titled “Dance Aesthetics: An African Perspective from Ghana,” where, in 1971, Carole was awarded a Personal Arts Fellowship to study traditional dance in Ghana, which also included time spent studying in Senegal and Sierra Leone. In 1966, whilst organising the Dancemobile, Carole joined the Eleo Pomare Dance Company becoming a soloist between 1967 and 1972.

⁵⁵ Halifu Osumare, *Dancing in Blackness: A Memoir* (Florida: University Press of Florida, 2018).



Figure 2 Carole Johnson and the Black Theatre, 1972–1975. Redfern Oral History, Community Stories from Redfern and Surrounds: Dance. www.redfernoralhistory.org/peopleandplace

Between the years of 1972 and 1975, after the community political alliance that saw the 1967 Referendum in Australia, Carole Johnson, then principal dancer for Eleo Pomare Dance Company, performed at the Adelaide Festival. It is here at the festival Carole met South African national Buxhau Stone who, at the time, was working with the Pitjantjatjara people from the Central Desert. Stone introduced Carole to Jenny Isaacs, an Arts Officer from the Australian Council for the Arts.⁵⁶ From this engagement, Carole, with the support of Jenny Isaacs, secured funding to deliver dance classes in Redfern commencing in May 1972 at St Luke's Hall, 118 Regent Street, Redfern.⁵⁷ In the interview "Carole Johnson: Dance: A Legend's Journey," Carole reveals the business and teaching mentoring she received as part of her professional development in America. By applying business and finance assertiveness while understanding the connection between alignment, musicality and rhythm in teaching

⁵⁶ Trove, "Johnson, Carole (1940-)."

⁵⁷ Redfern Oral History, 1972-1975: Carole Johnson & the Black Theatre
<http://redfernoralhistory.org/Peopleandplaces/DANCE/tabid/321/Default.aspx>.

dance, Carole became self-sustainable at a time when dancers were unpaid, and arts funding was limited.

With business and dance skills gained over the years, back in Sydney Carole began teaching dance classes to community people wanting to learn dance through formal and informal methods⁵⁸ that included students Norma Ingram, Euphemia Bostock and her daughter Tracey, and sisters Elsie and Joanne Vesper.⁵⁹



Figure 3 Carole Johnson recalls role in dance (Australian). Redfern Oral History, Community Stories from Redfern and Surrounds: Dance. www.redfernoralhistory.org/peopleandplace

On the 30 July 1972, Carole Johnson and the Redfern student ensemble by invitation from the Tent Embassy organisers with Yidinji man Bob Maza (deceased) and Nyoongar Ghurradjong Murri Ghillar man Michael Anderson from Black Theatre performed *The*

⁵⁸ Tracie O’Keefe, “Carole Johnson: Dance: A Legend’s Journey,” YouTube video, 57:36, Dec 22, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhCU-Bm2-e0>.

⁵⁹ Trove, “Johnson, Carole (1940-).”

Challenge Embassy Dance at the re-erection of the Tent Embassy in Canberra. This performance was the first public outdoor presentation and expression of political activism through Indigenous contemporary dance practice. This dance demonstrated the resistance and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people against the entrenched social and political effects of colonisation as witnessed in the film *Ningla A-Na*⁶⁰, an insight into the political mobilisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people campaigning for equality, equity and human rights in Australia. In other areas of black dance in Australia, Michael Leslie, 2016, “2.5: A Journey towards Adolescence and an Aboriginal Dance Method,” reminds us of our Indigenous dancers (contemporary and ballet) who through adversity, were trailblazers in their own right:

Prior to 1975 there were only two female Aboriginal dancers in Australia. Ms Mary Miller WA, dancer with the WA Ballet 1960, and Ms Roslyn Watson, trained at the Australian Ballet School, Dance Theatre of Harlem NYC, Dance Company of NSW, Australian Dance Theatre and the QLD Ballet.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Alessandro Cavadini, *Ningla A-Na* (Smart Street Films: 1972), film.

⁶¹ Michael Leslie, “2.5: A Journey towards Adolescence and an Aboriginal Dance Method,” Master of Fine Arts diss., (University of New South Wales: Art and Design, 2016), 15.



Figure 4 Carole Johnson and the Black Theatre, 1972–1975. Redfern Oral History, Community Stories from Redfern and Surrounds: Dance. www.redfernoralhistory.org/peopleandplace

The dance *The Challenge Embassy Dance* was choreographed by Carole Johnson and the dance group. It was a dance about the associated effects of colonialism that included “confrontation, mourning, standing up – proud and victory.”⁶² The dance was then performed at the Tent Embassy where Carole directed performers Maza and Anderson to lift and carry her around in a circle; to then laying Carole’s lifeless body on the ground. Giving hope to the gathering, Carole rises from the earth to join the female dance ensemble in the mourning dance piece.

In the practice-led enquiry I learn the foundation of Indigenous contemporary dance practice emerged from a community-led consciousness, that cannot be written into a linear but

⁶² Tracie O’Keefe, “Carole Johnson: Dance: A Legend’s Journey,” YouTube video, 57:36, Dec 22, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yhCU-Bm2-e0>.

understood within a ripple effect created by people, place and of the times. Gamilaraay dancer, choreographer, educator, Leslie confirms the following dance milestones:

This led to a 6 week workshop of Dance, Acting, Voice, Cultural Dance from Mornington Island, Film Editing and Script Writing at Black Theatre. People would attend from all over Australia: Bob Maza, Mac Silva, Kath Walker, Jack Davis, Bobbi Sykes, Marcia Langton, Wayne Nicol, Freddie Reynolds, Maroochy Baramba, Cheryl Stone, Lillian Crombie, Dorothy Randall and many more. Lecturers were Carole Johnston, Brian Syron, Steve Costaine, Andy Reece, Daryl Williams and many more.⁶³

Leslie explains the founding members of the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA), with Carole Johnson, were:

The five founding students of NAISDA were Dorothea Randall, Cheryl Stone, Wayne Nicole (deceased), Daryl Williams and me. We were pioneering individuals who were the foundation and the building blocks of black modern dance in Australia, contemporary Aboriginal Dance. Protest dances included Brown Skin Baby, Mangy Old Dog, Nullabor Prayer, Tent Embassy. Our Repertoire was a reflection of the times.⁶⁴

⁶³ Leslie, "2.5: A Journey towards Adolescence and an Aboriginal Dance Method," 15.

⁶⁴ Leslie, "2.5: A Journey towards Adolescence and an Aboriginal Dance Method," 15.



Figure 5 Carole Johnson and the Black Theatre, 1972–1975. Redfern Oral History, Community Stories from Redfern and Surrounds: Dance. www.redfernoralhistory.org/peopleandplace

National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA)

The National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) was formed in 1976, from the progressive movement and the growth of teacher, graduate and student enrolments and attendance of the dance training workshops at Redfern. The Aboriginal and Islander Dance Theatre (AIDT) -Touring Company, was formed by and partnered with NAISDA's governing body, to provide students and graduates of the new Careers in Dance training program with employment opportunities.⁶⁵ A graduate of NAISDA attaining a Certificate IV and Diploma of Dance, I performed in the end-of-year shows, *Mura Kaimel: Unity*, *The Journey of Bia* by artistic director Matthew Doyle (1997), *Ranggarjeerna: Can You*

⁶⁵ Carole Johnson, "Dana Waranara Convergence Hosted by BlakDance," Judith Wright Centre for Contemporary Arts, Brisbane, December 7, 2015. Personal communication.

Hear The Echo by artistic director Monica Stevens (1998), *Buk Mug Yolgnu Ninni: We're Still Here* by artistic director Paul Saliba (2000), *Beyond Blue* (2001), *Which Wei* that included *Wild Flowers* (2002) that I co-choreographed. In addition, I participated in the International Residency in Indonesia, performing at the Jak Art Festival (2001–2002) and participated in the cultural exchange program with EKI Dance Company (2002). My dance experiences included performing for corporate, community and various cultural and arts presentations, such as the opening performance for the *Eddie Koiki' Mabo* movie premier (1997) in Sydney, and the Australian Dance Awards (2001, 2002) and the Deadly Vibe Awards (2002), which were both held at the Sydney Opera House. As part of the academic requirements, I completed all components of the course outline including the Cultural Residency Program to Iama (Yam) Island, Torres Strait Islands, Queensland, Ngukurr (Roper River), Northern Territory, Warmun Community and Wangkatjunga Community, Western Australia, and Badu Island, Torres Strait Islands, Queensland. Other communities I have had a cultural association with whilst at NAISDA include Yirrkala, Northern Territory, and Mer (Murray) Island, Torres Strait Islands Queensland.

Cultural Residency Program

The Cultural Residency Program provided me with the opportunity to learn the traditions and customs of the nominated remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through traditional dance practice. The program was delivered in two phases: first, the studio-based learning involved Elders from an Aboriginal community and a Torres Strait Islander community travelling to Sydney at the beginning of the semester for a two-week intensive, teaching their songs and dances. The cultural classes continued throughout the semester, and were practiced weekly and by repetition, in preparation for the mid-year performance that saw the return of the Elders. The second phase of the Cultural Residency Program was the on-Country and Island-based learning, where the students travelled to one of the remote communities for a two-week residency. A profound memory I have of the Cultural Residency Program (1998)

was travelling to Warmun Community, Western Australia, and learning the traditional songs, dances and customs from Aunty Peggy Patrick, Aunty Mona Ramsey and the Warmun community. It is with sincere gratitude and respect I share this embodiment.

Barramundi Dreaming

I look down at my feet on the ground, they are powdered with the colours of the earth. The old woman is singing in language and I am learning how to sing and dance her stories from the Dreaming. I'm dancing to the clapping of the two clapsticks, firmly secured in both her hands and the sound of her voice, that of a senior law woman. The surface is a combination of gravel and soft dirt. My feet remain firmly on the ground, a relaxed parallel and directly under my hips. My knees are slightly bent. The upper body remains relaxed and curved forward in posture. My gaze is directly to the ground and there's space between my chin and collarbone. With both my hands, I hold the stick tightly, right hand on top of the left hand. The stick is approximately fifty centimetres long with a circumference of a ten-cent coin. The elbows are displayed comfortably. On the accent of the last clap of the clapsticks, and with just the sound of voices, I begin to gently articulate a digging gesture with the stick positioned in front of the forehead. It all happens half count to the chant that softly fades. With each digging gesture, the knees softly open and close in with the rhythm, in with the digging and with the feet gently peeling from the arches of my feet. The white clay starts to flake off my skin. I hold no tribal membership to this country, to this language, the song, dance or story. There's a loud strike of the clapsticks and the singing stops abruptly; I'm thinking something's not right, and then the old woman throw out a big laugh! Relieved, I raise my gaze and I'm met with a change of mood. The laughter is short-lived. The old woman is back to business—women's business and this story must be done the right way. She becomes loud and starts pointing with the clapsticks with her left hand and giving the correct instructions to the dance. I can't help but be distracted by the diamond rings on her fingers.

The feeling is right here, at this place, at this time. I'm understanding the significance of ceremony, understanding the importance of ceremony. The dances, songs, stories from the senior law woman I will remember. For now, I know barramundi Dreaming.

2000 – Sydney Olympic Games Opening and Closing Ceremonies

Through my training at NAISDA, the protocols I learnt encompassed cultural diplomacy and ethical behaviours necessary in engaging with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture community (networking). An experience that saw these protocols practiced within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts and culture, was at the opening and closing ceremonies of the Sydney Olympic Games in 2000. The “Awakening” segment comprised of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations, coming together collectively to showcase Australia’s Indigenous Peoples. This was the first time a performance of this scale and significance adapted traditional dance practice within a contemporary dance narrative. As a dancer in the opening and closing ceremonies, this experience was a once in a lifetime opportunity, performing in the “Awakening” segment by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dance Ensemble and “Island Home” segment by Christine Anu with Bangarra Dance Theatre.

Post-Olympic ceremony, at Stanwell Tops, New South Wales, positioned on a mountain ridge with a picturesque backdrop that presented an idealist grounds for a cultural gathering, the participating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander performers celebrated the coming together of cultures with a display of traditional dance performances over two days. What was apparent at the Sydney Olympic Games and this cultural gathering at Stanwell Tops, was NAISDA’s long-standing relationships with the individual dancers and the collective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. Whilst at NAISDA, I was also part of cultural adoption practices with a Yolgnu family of north-east Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, establishing my connection and relationship within the Yolgnu nation.

2001 – NAISDA 25th Anniversary (Silver Jubilee)

This community-led engagement was again experienced at NAISDA's 25th Anniversary in Sydney, where individuals and communities from the associated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups were invited to partake in the silver jubilee celebrations. The program's content entailed presenting cultural events at landmarks across the city, contemporary dance and music performances by current and former NAISDA students, including a remount of a classic by Carole Johnson and a gala function to close the anniversary. A student at the time, I performed in the student ensemble dance pieces both in traditional and contemporary dance (evening shows) as well as delivering dance workshops (2 weeks) at La Perouse Primary School (at the time of the anniversary) as part of my practice-based learning in Dance Pedagogy—a subject within the diploma course outline.

2001–2002 – Remote Area Teaching Tour (RATT) and Croc Eisteddfod

In completing the Dance Pedagogy component of the course outline, I learned how to develop dance repertoire appropriate for all ages and experiences. At the time of my graduation at NAISDA, my practice-based teaching experiences included: two consecutive years teaching at La Perouse Primary School; the Remote Area Teaching Tour (RATT), an initiative by New South Wales Arts, involving a two-week teaching tour through outback New South Wales; the Croc Eisteddfod Festival touring Thursday Island (Queensland), Nhulunbuy (Northern Territory), Port Augusta (South Australia), Swan Hill (Victoria) and Moree (New South Wales); and traveling to capital cities facilitating dance classes at NAISDA's Audition Recruitment Program. At NAISDA, the Dance Pedagogy subject was co-ordinated by Dr Christine Mearing and the dance teaching tours were supervised by NAISDA's senior dance teachers.

2002 – Graduate National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association

The teaching staff at NAISDA were led by Academic Course Director and jazz teacher Ronne Arnold (deceased), along with Associate Director Monica Stevens (modern⁶⁶, jazz, improvisation and cultural tutor), Principal Dance Teacher Paul Saliba (Graham Technique) and NAISDA's early teachers Dr Eugene Casey (music; deceased) and Dorothy Hall (tap), whose teaching methods embedded an African American pedagogy. Residing at Chika Dixon Aboriginal Hostel, my first two years at NAISDA were from 1997–1998, where I began studying a Certificate IV in Dance. At this time, the dance studio had recently relocated from Glebe to Windmill Street, Millers Point, and into a warehouse building where we trained on tarket flooring taped onto old, wooden, splinted flooring. The building offered no ventilation and, in the warmer months, the studios sweltered. In the cooler months, the cold draft flowed through the studios like a thoroughfare tunnel, with no proper heating comforts, and the toilets were the demountable type, located in the building adjacent to the main dance studios. Upon returning in 2000 after taking a “gap year,” the college had relocated to Cumberland Road, The Rocks, where I completed a Diploma of Dance (2000–2002). My six-week secondment placement (work experience), which was part of the academic requirements of the course, was at Bangarra Dance Theatre.

Bangarra Dance Theatre

My introduction to Bangarra Dance Theatre was 1996, in my senior year at an all-girls Catholic boarding school watching a story on Christine Anu's journey into the Australian music industry. The story on Christine Anu⁶⁷ of Torres Strait Islander ancestry inspired me to pursue a career

⁶⁶ Based on Graham, Horton and Cunningham techniques.

⁶⁷ Alumni of NAISDA and former dancer at Bangarra Dance Theatre.

through dance. At around the same time I attended Bangarra Dance Theatre's production of *Ochres* by choreographers Stephen Page and Walong-Sene at Cairns Civic Centre (also where I performed in the school's Rock Eisteddfod competitions). This production was the first time I'd witnessed our stories being presented through Indigenous contemporary dance in a theatre auditorium space.

Over the past three decades, Bangarra Dance Theatre has been exploring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity through dance. This ambassadorship in the discipline of Indigenous contemporary dance practice has been noted both nationally and internationally within the arts and cultural landscapes. The company was established 1989, as an employment pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dancers into a professional dance company. Bangarra Dance Theatre was founded by dance pioneer Carole Johnson and professional dancers (graduates of NAISDA) Monica Stevens, Percy Jacksonia (deceased) and James Gagai (deceased), who were the first to walk through the doors of Lee Street studio, then accompanied by Australian dance veterans Sylvia Blanco and Richard Talonga and professional dancers (graduates of NAISDA) Pinau Ghee and Jasmine Gulash.⁶⁸

Bangarra Dance Theatre – Professional Dancer

In 2003, I began my secondment with Bangarra Dance Theatre, attending from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. every day of the regular working week. The placement provided six weeks of dance company experience that included learning Bangarra's repertoire, before I was offered a twelve-month contract as a full-time dancer with the company at the end of my work experience arrangement. Employment at Bangarra was hard work and fast paced—necessary to make the demands of the annual dance season, nationally and internationally. The industry experience I gained was understanding the creative collaborations between artistic director

⁶⁸ Personal communication with Monica Stevens, 2019.

and cultural knowledge keepers⁶⁹ Djakapurra Munyarrun, Aunty Kathy Marika, Grant Nundhirribala, Peggy Misi, Elma Kris and Sani Townson, choreographers, music composers, marketing, publicity, costume, lighting and set design professionals, the dancers and administration and management team and stakeholders—all essential in delivering a world premier dance production. During my four years (2003–2006) at Bangarra, I performed in: *Bush* (2003) by Stephen Page (Artistic Director) and Frances Rings (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane); *The Dreaming* (2003) (NSW, NT, QLD, ACT); *Clan* (2004), which was a double bill that included *Unaipon* by Frances Rings and *Reflections* by Stephen Page; *Bush* (2005) (Washington, Charlotte North Carolina, New York, Hawaii—Oahu, Maui and Big Island); *Boomerang* (2005) by Stephen Page (Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane); recipient of Inaugural Qantas Spirit of Youth Awards in the category of Dance, Mentor Stephen Page AO (2005); *Spirit* (2006) (QLD, VIC, TAS, NSW); *Bush* (2006) (Nagoya Japan, Auckland New Zealand); *Gathering* (2006) with The Australian Ballet (Melbourne, Sydney); *Clan* (2006) (NT, WA, QLD, NSW); *Bush* (2006) (London, Manchester, Aldeburgh); *Spirit* (2006) (Hobart).

Since 2007, I have continued nurturing my craft in the discipline of Aboriginal contemporary dance practice.

Indigenous Contemporary Dance Practice – Independent Dance Professionals

My Aboriginal contemporary dance practice sits within Indigenous contemporary dance genealogy: a dance genre exploring the social and cultural transformation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity through dance. Although there is a collective evolution within this dance genealogy, there is heterogony within this movement. For the purpose of my practice-led learning in this section, I bring together four independent (self-employed) dance

⁶⁹ Personal communication with Monica Stevens, 2019.

professionals, alumni of NAISDA and trailblazers who have completed postgraduate studies based on their dance practice, whilst emphasising the existence of hundreds of social and national autonomous language groups across Australia. By providing four individual working definitions, I reinforce the permanence of heterogeneity within Indigenous contemporary dance practice.

For Mariaa Randall, Michael Leslie and Monica Stevens, I include a thesis abstract followed by a quotation or summary of their recent works or achievements. For Vicki Van Hout, I include a definition of her achievements followed by a definition of Van Hout's to acknowledge that our practice and cultural knowledge are living, breathing stories through dance.

Gidabul, Gulibul and Yaegl dance maker Mariaa Randall—who I've known since 1997—completed a Master of Animatering (by research) titled *Half – Living between two worlds* in 2014. As a dancer in the creative work *seg.re.ga.tion*, I understand Randall's thesis engages personal and professional experiences to unpack the complexities of identity through dance, song and community:

Half – Living between two worlds is a practice-led inquiry into the term “half-caste”. Through an investigation of personal and intergenerational lived experiences the research aspires to interrogate the authorship of stereotypical perceptions of Aboriginality. Connecting to dance, song and community the research seeks to emphasise the diversity of Australia's Aboriginal peoples in the 21st century.⁷⁰

My professional relationship with Randall has presented opportunities as a mentor at Arts House (dance residency program) and rehearsal director for the production *Diversity* at the

⁷⁰ Mariaa Randall, “Half- Living between Two Worlds.” (Master of Animatering (Research) (by creative works and dissertation) diss., (Faculty of the Victorian College of the Arts and Melbourne Conservatorium of Music, The University of Melbourne, 2014).

Spirit Festival in Adelaide through DubaiKungkaMilyalk (DKM)—an all-female dance company and crew, founded and directed by Randall⁷¹:

Her practice focuses on the female indigenous perspective when [creating] works. To bring to the forefront that experience and inject it into the creative process. To inform, inspire and generate diversity through one's movement.⁷²

Michael Leslie—a Gamilaraay man,⁷³ accomplished dance professional and Churchill Fellowship recipient—completed a Master of Fine Arts at the University of New South Wales in 2016. The thesis titled *2.5: A Journey towards Adolescence and an Aboriginal Dance Method*, highlighted again the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contemporary dance professionals writing their stories. Through his thesis, I learned of Michael's contribution to the early life of the Indigenous contemporary dance lineage—information that was not documented in the archives. I also learned of Michael's personal and professional lived experiences that revealed a distinct dance lexicon within the Indigenous contemporary dance practice and wider dance community:

By combining personal history, lived experience of colonial history in the present, personal experience and detailed knowledge of dance, by combining western modern movement with Aboriginal movement, breathing and physical theatre this project has invented a new and unique dance technique. I call it ⁷⁴

A recipient also of the Australia Council for the Arts' Red Ochre Award 2010, Artistic director, dancer and teacher Michael Leslie contribution to dance is recognised:

⁷¹ Mariaa Randall, "Dubaikungamiyalk," n.d., http://www.dubaikungkamiyalk.com.au/?page_id=25.

⁷² Randall, "Dubaikungamiyalk."

⁷³ Seesaw, "Reclaiming Language through Dance," May 23, 2018, <https://www.seesawmag.com.au/2018/05/reclaiming-language-through-dance>.

⁷⁴ Leslie, "2.5: A Journey towards Adolescence and an Aboriginal Dance Method," 64

Michael's journey began the Aboriginal Dance Theatre in Redfern. He was a founding dancer at the National Aboriginal and Islander Dance Skills Association before training in New York at the Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre for seven years. He then returned to Australia and turned his skills to benefit Indigenous young people. In the past year, he has established the Michael Leslie Foundation for Indigenous youth. Michael currently runs the Michael Leslie Pilbara Performing Arts Program.⁷⁵

Vicki Van Hout, Indigenous independent choreographer with Wiradjuri, Dutch, Scottish, and Afghan heritage, became the recipient of the Australian Council Award for Dance in recognition of her outstanding accomplishments and contribution to dance over the past two decades:

Vicki Van Hout is an Indigenous independent artist with over 20 years' experience. A graduate of NAISDA Dance College and the Martha Graham School of Contemporary Dance in New York, she went on to perform with major Indigenous dance companies, Bangarra Dance Theatre and the Aboriginal Islander Dance Theatre, before joining forces with Marilyn Miller as a founding member of Fresh Dancers. With Marilyn, Vicki performed *Dear Carrie for One extra Dance* and *Quinkin* for the Adelaide Fringe Festival.⁷⁶

An admirer of Van Hout's dance practice, I can appreciate the efforts necessary in negotiating and navigating her cultural identity within an Indigenous contemporary

⁷⁵ Red Australia Council, "Thorpe Gives Red Ochre to Leading Dancer," May 27, 2010, <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/news/media-centre/media-releases/thorpe-gives-red-ochre-to-leading-dancer/>.

⁷⁶ Australia Council, "Vicki Van Hout – Australia Council Award for Dance," March 4, 2019, <https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/news/media-centre/biographies/vicki-van-hout-australia-council-award-for-dance/>.

dance technique through honest and open dialogues. The exhibition *In Response: Dialogues with RealTime* marked the closure of *RealTime* art magazine and the launch of its archive at the University of New South Wales Library. In this exhibition, Van Hout defines her dance practice:

Her work practice emanates from the belief that all cultural information is fluid in its relevance and that we both exchange in and adhere to patterns of cultural behaviour and its tacit meanings. In particular, Vicki's work aims to explore the commonality between traditional and urban cultural experience, and how indigenous cultural information can be drawn upon to make sense of both.⁷⁷

I first met Bama woman, choreographer, teacher and founding member of Bangarra Monica Stevens, at my audition in 1996. A teacher and associate director at NAISDA, Stevens was the primary coordinator and dance teacher (Certificate IV of Dance) in jazz, modern,⁷⁸ improvisation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture (Certificate IV and Diploma). A founding member of Bangarra Dance Theatre, Stevens' contribution as a dancer, educator, arts administrator and choreographer is also part of the building blocks of black modern dance in Australia. Stevens' choreography is documented in the video "Aboriginal Contemporary Dance – Workshop Performance – Culture Unlocks."⁷⁹ Stevens' distinct dance lexicon: Aboriginal contemporary dance can be viewed online, giving context to permanence of heterogeneity within Indigenous contemporary dance furthermore Aboriginal contemporary dance.

⁷⁷ The exhibition *In Response: Dialogues with RealTime* was an exhibition marking the closure of *RealTime* art magazine and the launch of its archivers' University of New South Wales Library. UNSW Library, "Vicki Van Hout In Response: Dialogues with RealTime," April 25, 2019, <http://exhibitions.library.unsw.edu.au/realtime/vicki-van-hout>

⁷⁸ My modern dance training at NAISDA was influenced by Graham, Horton, Dunham and Cunningham Techniques.

⁷⁹ Caroline Grandjean-Tomsen, "Aboriginal Contemporary Dance - Workshop Performance - Culture Unlock," YouTube video, 3:36, June 6, 2013, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mlzCgGnCdq0>.

Since graduating from NAISDA, my relationship with Stevens has continued as a friend, mentor and colleague. Our professional and personal relationship has supported me in finding the balance between the isolation felt in becoming a mother (primary carer) and the pressure of being “current” in the dance landscape. Stevens’ knowledge and experience in Australian dance has connected me with the relevant dance workshops, forums, conferences and performances, keeping me in the loop of the Australian dance industry.

A few years ago, Stevens and I attended a master dance class presented by Walong-Sene. From this engagement, I was interested in further developing my dance practice. As a dancer, I have been employed (secondary) by Stevens in a motion-capture technology project.⁸⁰ Developing her knowledge in dance and technology, Stevens attained a Master of Arts from the Nikeri Institute, Deakin University, in 2019, and, as part of her submission, wrote the thesis “Aboriginal Contemporary Dance: Transforming Choreography with Bama Culture and Technology”:

This research investigates how Aboriginal choreographers interweave cultural knowledge and Western dance techniques to produce Aboriginal contemporary dance. It considers technological innovations in contemporary dance practice generally, and argues that Aboriginal dance contributes and extends diversity, innovation and vibrancy to Australian dance.⁸¹

⁸⁰ “ Monica Stevens, “Monica Stevens—Motion Capture Technology Project Deakin University,” Deakin University Burwood Campus, project/documenting through choreography, 2012.

⁸¹ Stevens, “Aboriginal Contemporary Dance: Transforming Choreography with Bama Culture and Technology.”

Aboriginal Contemporary Dance Practice

Over the past two decades, I have developed my professional capacity as a dancer, choreographer, mentor, rehearsal director, educator, and arts administrator.

A graduate of the Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development, I hold a Graduate Certificate in Indigenous Arts Management established by Dr Michelle Evans and Lecturer and Course Coordinator Sam Cook. During this course in 2010, I completed subjects in: Indigenous arts and cultural identity with guest lecturers Dr Gary Foley, Bindi Cole, Kamahi Djordan King and Tiriki Onus; Indigenous arts industry and marketing with Sam Cook; legal and policy studies as relevant to Indigenous arts protocol with Robynne Quiggin; and arts and project management with Margie Mackay. My upskilling interests since becoming a mother of two sprouted from my desire to find balance between motherhood and my dance profession. Embarking on a Master of Fine Arts—Dance (by research) seemed viable in that I was developing upon my dance practice, contributing to the Indigenous contemporary dance practice and the wider dance community and, most importantly, involved the raising of my children at the same time. For me, an academic pathway presented the best of both worlds.

Through a practice-led learning paradigm, I learnt the connection between my cultural identity and dance practice based on my Lama Lama, Ayapathu and Gugu Yalanji identity and dance practice to reveal my dance lexicon. In the memoir *Dancing in the Blackness*, Osumare confirms:

My dance approach would have to interrogate personal and cultural identity and provide an inroad to self – knowledge.⁸²

⁸² Osumare, *Dancing in Blackness: A Memoir*, 21.

My dance approach follows the “Old Ways for New Ceremonies” cultural praxis. The “Old Ways” derives from our law—a complex system and structure governing our ways of knowing and being—and the “New Ceremonies” is the continuation of our Stories, practiced within a contemporary dance framework. The protocols that guide my dance approach are inherent of my cultural identity.

As an independent dance creator,⁸³ my dance methodology grows from the skills developed in my dance practice together with self-knowledge.

My dance practice elevates social, cultural and political perspectives of my Lama Lama Ayapathu Gugu Yalanji identity (Aboriginality) and lends itself to the continuation of our Stories.⁸⁴ In the dance exhibition *DNA-CE: Stands of Identity*, (part of the practice-led learning enquiry) my dance methodology is revealed, as Estelle Barrett and Barbara Bolt affirm in their book *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*:

They have also emphasised the dialogic relationship between the exegesis or research paper and studio practice in their respective arts disciplines – design, creative writing, dance, film and painting – demonstrating that practice as research not only produces knowledge that may be applied in multiple contexts, but also has the capacity to promote a more profound understanding of how knowledge is revealed, acquired and expressed.⁸⁵

⁸³ A position description encompassing dance skills, experiences and cultural knowledges required to create a body of work/performance (dance) independently.

⁸⁴ Rigsby and Chase, “The Sandbeach People and Dugong Hunters of Eastern Cape York Peninsula,” 321.

⁸⁵ Barrett and Bolt, *Practice as Research: Approaches to Creative Arts Enquiry*, Foreword.

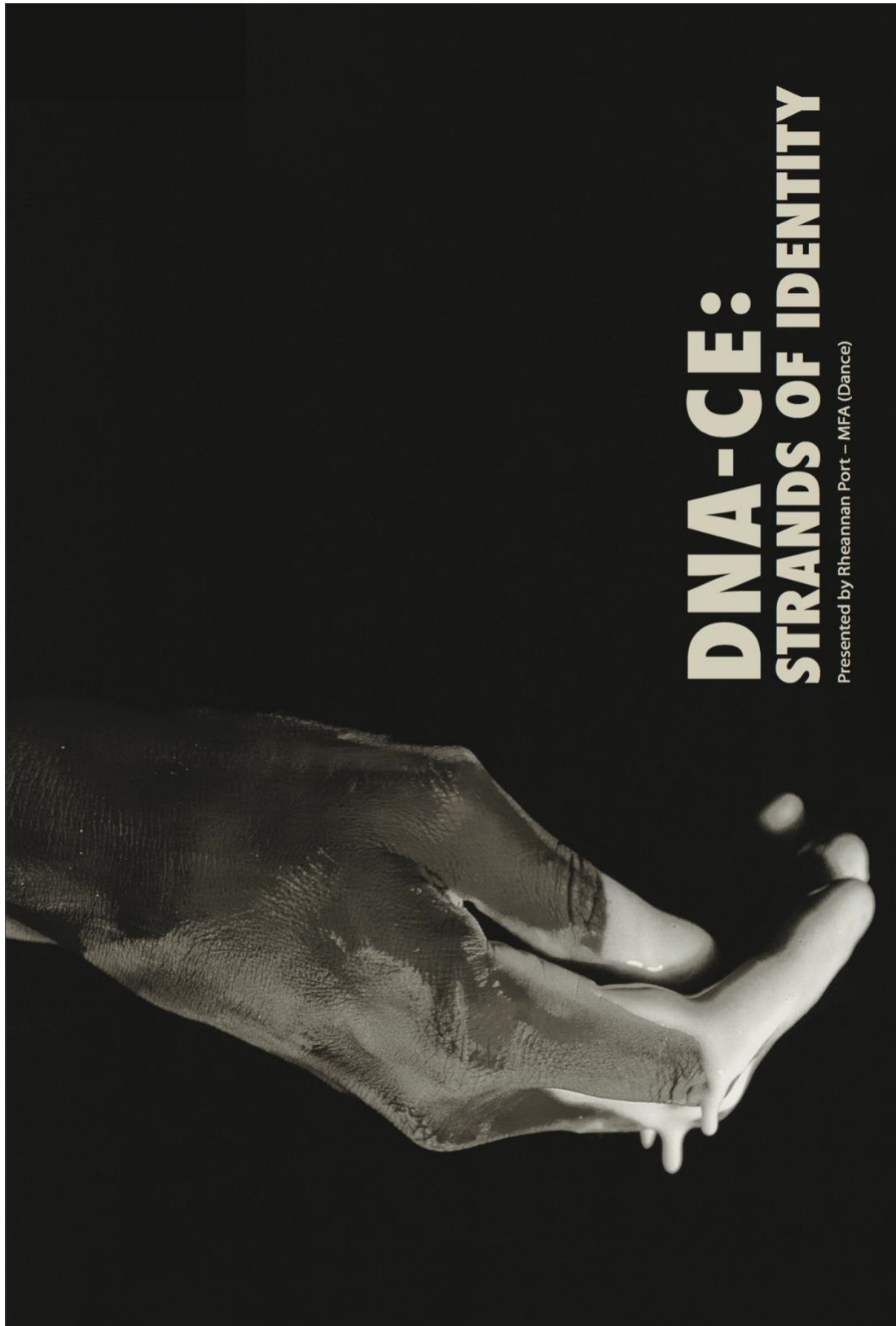


Figure 6 DNA-CE: Strands of Identity, cover page for program, 2017. Image courtesy of the artist.

DNA-CE: Strands of Identity

Disclaimer: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are advised that *DNA-CE: Strands of Identity* contains culturally sensitive information and materials that may cause distress for some readers.

Introduction

In a practice-led learning enquiry, my dance practice elevates, social, cultural and political perspectives of my Aboriginality. The dance work *DNA-CE: Strands of Identity* (creative work, part of the practice-led learning enquiry) originates from knowing the socio-cultural disruption and transgenerational effects of my Aboriginality since colonisation in 1788, leading to a greater understanding of the systems and structures established by the “White Australia Policy”. In the journal article “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” Patrick Wolfe states:

Settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure not an event.⁸⁶

From this statement, I cautiously begin tracing my genealogy to identify the correlation between my personal distress experienced in the candidature and the transgenerational trauma experienced from the implementation of the “White Australia Policy”. Learning how my cultural identity informs my dance practice, I immerse myself in practice-led learning, as I: attend and participate in lectures, seminars, conferences, workshops, dance classes, forums, exhibitions, galleries, residencies, festivals, arts and cultural events, performances, gatherings, orations and presentations⁸⁷; learn from artists and academics on how knowledge

⁸⁶ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8, 4 (Dec 2006): 388.

⁸⁷ See Appendix A—Practice-Led Learning Journey 2017-2020

is revealed, acquired and expressed; stay informed on the social, cultural and political landscapes of my Aboriginality and the Arts as a discipline.

In the lectures “Art and Indigenous Voice” and “Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation” for the art electives at the University of Melbourne (2017–2018), guest lecturers included: Dr Richard Frankland, Tiriki Onus, Monica Weightman, Tammy Anderson, Mick Harding, Maree Clarke, Mandy Nicholson, Professor Tony Birch, Brian McKinnon, Frederick Gesha, Ron Murray, Paola Balla, Steven Rhall, Vicki Couzens and Genevieve Greeves. I learned of the connection between their cultural identities and art practices, their individual Indigenous methodologies, and how their art practices enabled agency as voice for social, cultural and political change for Indigenous Australians.

Two guest lecturers in particular have informed my practice-led learning. Author, activist and academic Professor Tony Birch⁸⁸ revealed three working criteria to the assimilation policy. The implementation of the systems and structures intended to erase Aboriginal peoples in Australia. First, by all means and methods of eradication of Aboriginal people’s existence and genetic composition (DNA), including marital and reproduction control.⁸⁹ Second, the removal of spiritual beliefs and replacing these with Christianity. Third, the removal of Aboriginal languages and their replacement with the English language. In the report “A white Australia,” Professor Michael Dodson asserts:

Assimilation relied on the well-established and widely-accepted view that we were inferior to white Australians, that our way of life, our culture and our languages were

⁸⁸ Jack Latimore, “Meet Professor Tony Birch: Author, Activists, Academic,” University of Melbourne, 2017, <https://arts.unimelb.edu.au/articulation/editions/2017-editions/june-2017/meet-professor-tony-birch-author,-activist,-academic>.

⁸⁹ Tony Birch, “Indigenous Art and Voice Lecture Professor Tony Birch,” Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, Parkville Campus, University of Melbourne, May 9, 2017.

substandard.... Embedded with the policy of assimilation was a clear expectation of the cultural extinction of Indigenous peoples.⁹⁰

The other guest lecturer who has a profound influence on my learning is Yorta Yorta/Wamba Wamba/Mutti Mutti/Boonwurrung woman and multi-disciplinary artist Maree Clarke, whose practice encompasses:

Multimedia installations of photography, including lenticular prints, 3D photographs and photographic holograms as well as paintings, sculpture and video installation further explore the customary ceremonies, rituals and language of her ancestor.⁹¹

In the lectures, Maree spoke of her experiences working with Indigenous repatriation. Upon visiting various museums and institutions overseas, Maree observed how some of the sacred objects were stored. In an image provided in the lecture, Maree discusses the stock piling of the sacred objects: stacked in piles and hanging on racks. Maree also spoke of working with the museums and institutions to identify the identity of the sacred objects with their homelands in Australia by the distinct Aboriginal symbols etched on the sacred object and the attached tag of existing information. In 2017, the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications (Office for the Arts) reported:

For more than 150 years Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and secret sacred objects were removed from their communities for various reasons and placed in museums, universities and private collections in Australia and overseas.⁹²

⁹⁰ Michael Dodson, "Assimilation versus Self-Determination: No Contest," speech by Michael Dodson, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner at the H.C (Nugget) Coombs Northern Australia Inaugural Lecture, Darwin, 1996, <https://humanrights.gov.au/about/news/speeches/assimilation-versus-self-determination-no-contest-dodson-1996>.

⁹¹ Vivien Anderson Gallery, "Maree Clarke," n.d., <https://www.vivienandersongallery.com/artists/maree-clarke/bio>

⁹² Australian Government: Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, "Port Stewart Ancestor Returned Home the Formal Handover of a Port Stewart Ancestor Was Undertaken in

Old People

In learning about Maree Clarke's art practice and methodology, a vital element of Maree's process resonated with me. That is, the preparing process (part of the creating), where Maree mentally designs and solidifies all matters of the artwork before the actual physical art-making begins.

As an independent dance creator, I too share in the mental processes of creating my dance stories. The preparing part of my creating process happens in the mind, and involves problem solving, memory, sensation, conscious and subconscious thoughts, beliefs and feelings, attention, perception, learning, language, reasoning and intelligence in order to consolidate and synthesise my concept with time and space. In the book *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*, Julie Cameron elaborates on sensation by saying:

The artist brain is the sensory brain: sight and sound, smell and taste, touch. These are the elements of magic, and magic is the elemental stuff of art.⁹³

The "magic" for me is transformation of unseen but felt energy, like the force between a magnet and metal object; this instance, an spiritual phenomena. For that reason, I have subtitled this section "Old People," relating to our spirituality revealed in our stories through dance, as Walong-Sene eloquently affirms,⁹⁴ and my experiences being immersed in Maree Clarke's fine artistry and ways of being, knowing and doing through practice. This also relates to the stories shared of the experiences of Aboriginal peoples who have felt our ancestor's presence

Germany on 24 October 2017," 2017, <https://www.arts.gov.au/departamental-news/port-stewart-ancestor-returned-home>.

⁹³ Julia Cameron, *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity* (London: Pan Books, 1995), 73.

⁹⁴ See thesis Introduction.

in museums, institutions and private collections where sacred objects and materials are housed and of the repatriating journey of ancestral remains back to their homelands.⁹⁵

We are sad and angry that she was taken from her home, her land, her country, 110 years ago. But we are happy and proud she is coming home to Yintjingga. We are glad to have her back here, to her mother place.⁹⁶

Socio-Cultural Disruption

Our ancestor now rests at Yintjingga, alongside my father who, in 2020, was the first Lama Lama man to be taken back to our homelands for burial. Since the European invasion, Aboriginal peoples were removed from their homelands and laid to rest in townships. In mapping stories of my cultural identity, I made deliberate references to landmarks of the settlers and pastoralists and scars left by miners to establish my social, cultural and political standpoint. This process of learning the socio-cultural disruption and effects of my cultural identity allowed me to relate with the Aboriginal community on our shared history beginning with the first contact.

First Contact

The decision to include information on the first contact and European invasion was to develop a deeper understanding of the connection between my identity and practice. In the learning, it was necessary to interrogate colonialism to understand the socio-cultural disruption of my identity. In this section, the disruption of my cultural identity is experienced through my lens.

⁹⁵ This spiritual connection has been experienced by many Aboriginal people.

⁹⁶ Tony Barrass, "Slowly, Slowly, History Finds Its Place," National Indigenous Times, November 1, 2017, <https://nit.com.au/slowly-slowly-history-finds-place/>.

Contact between Aboriginal peoples of the coastal Cape York and Europeans reached back to 1606 when Dutch navigators sailed the western Peninsula coast. Some 250 years later, more established foreign contact was made when the seafaring East Coasters sailed with Japanese beche-de-mer pearling fleets. Soon after, the peoples of the inland territories were to encounter a number of overland explorers surveying the uncharted territories of the inland Peninsula.⁹⁷

European Invasion

The township of Coen was first settled following the exploration of Cape York by William Hann in 1872.⁹⁸ Once gold was discovered in the region, prospecting in Coen and the surrounding countryside saw an influx of miners upwards of 550 to the Coen field. This migration to Coen was met with resistance from the local Aboriginal people. In government sponsored exploration in 1879, a geologist encountered a large population of Aboriginal people and noted:

Most of them were frightened of the white men having, no doubt, learnt a few lessons at the muzzles of Snider rifles in the hands of the diggers travelling the Coen track.⁹⁹

It was documented that, since the early 1880s, settlers only took a tentative hold of Coen due to the resistance of the local people. At this time the “blacks” were labelled troublesome. The years between 1883–1887 saw the Overland Telegraph to Cape York built and during this time the European expansion and settlement grew rapidly. With the recruitment of the Native

⁹⁷ Queensland Government, “European Contact History of Coen Introduction Coen Queensland Government.”

⁹⁸ Queensland Government, “European Contact History of Coen Introduction Coen Queensland Government.”

⁹⁹ Queensland Government, “European Contact History of Coen Introduction Coen Queensland Government.”

Police and the establishment of a Native Police camp in Coen in 1888, the European settlement was making progress to own and control the Aboriginal people and lands:

The Aboriginal people in the Coen district adapted to European settlement by moving onto the newly established cattle stations where they became stockmen and domestic labour. Some worked in the mines and a few were employed in Coen. Several men were attached to the Coen police station as trackers.¹⁰⁰

The mining interest recommenced around 1890, after reef gold was found at Coen. The population retention of European miners and Chinese immigrants saw Coen become a central business district, with buildings comprising of a hotel, store, butcher's shop, blacksmith's shop and a row of six cottages for the miners and their families.¹⁰¹ Further down the Coen river was the police camp and the telegraph station, which were located along the Lankelly River. The only transportation service operated from Cooktown to the Port Stewart store, where it loaded the supplies onto bullock teams to Coen. In old measurements, the distance between Port Stewart and Coen was approximately forty miles. The occupation of European settlement was being seen in the district and felt in the implementation of policies to control Aboriginal people:

In 1897, the Queensland Parliament passed the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act 1897, which granted the "Home Secretary" the power "to cause every aboriginal within any District, not being an aboriginal exempted from the provisions of this section, to be removed to, and kept within the limits of, any reserve situated within such District, in such manner, and subject to such conditions, as may be prescribed."¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Queensland Government, "European Contact History of Coen Introduction Coen Queensland Government."

¹⁰¹ Queensland Government, "European Contact History of Coen Introduction Coen Queensland Government."

¹⁰² Queensland Government, "European Contact History of Coen Introduction Coen Queensland Government."

The Sale of Opium Act (1897) allowed the government officials on Cape York Peninsula to remove Aboriginal people including my Lama Lama and Ayapathu ancestors from their lands on numerous occasions so that European pastoralists could expand their operations on the lands in the late nineteenth century. In the late 1970s, the introduction of equal wages for Aboriginal pastoral workers saw the disappearance of station work for many Aboriginal people, and the permanent population of Coen grew to its present size. The Queensland Government funded the construction of houses at Coen during the 1970s.

Since the invasion of European occupancy the social structures that traditionally governed Aboriginal ways of being, knowing and doing were disrupted by the force removal of Aboriginal people onto Missions and reserves, dispossession of homelands and implementation of systems and structure of the White Australian Policy. This saw all six neighbouring language groups relocating from their traditional Kaanju, Ayapathu, Lama Lama, Wik Munkun, Olkalo and Umpila Country and placed together in the township of Coen.

Affect

As I was learning of the socio-cultural effects of my cultural identity, I recognised I was experiencing my own feelings of grief, sadness, depression, loneliness and periods of reflection. The feeling of disempowerment surfaced within my body. Returning to the body and listening to my emotional response along with the opportunity to reflect within my grieving process meant I needed to empower my position in the learning enquiry.

In a Research Seminar by Dr Huhana Smith titled “The Re-(E)mergence of Nature in Culture,” I learned in my candidature I needed to look backwards in order to look forward. This approach enabled a new perspective and understanding of my social, cultural and political location within our Australian history.

I began to learn of the direct and indirect connections and relationships between my personal distress experienced in the project and the transgenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal people. What became more apparent was the visible and invisible behavioural patterns of the systems and structures of the “White Australia Policy,” enabling imbalances of power and privilege, and the continuation of inequality and inequitable treatment of Aboriginal people originating from the Australian constitution permitting race discrimination as confirmed by Reconciliation Australia:

Currently, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are still not recognised or specifically mentioned in the Australian Constitution, however, the Constitution still contains references (in Sections 25 and 51) that all the Commonwealth or State governments to discriminate against people on the basis of race. This power has been used several times by governments to enact legislation to affect only Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.¹⁰³

The Australian constitution is the core foundation to our Australian democracy. It is also the core foundation to the disempowerment and destabilisation of Aboriginal people’s right to self-determination and autonomy. Originating from a colonial imperialist ruling, within our national governing body, Sections 25 and 51 involve a race-based discrimination composition that can be likened to collagen—the protein that enables bone to live and grow. The bone that upholds our Australian governing body enables repetitive and perpetual behavioural scaffolding through institutional and systemic racism and injustices. In the book *Power and the Passion: Our Ancestors Return Home*, Shannon Faulkhead and Jim Berg tell the story:

¹⁰³ Reconciliation Australia, “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and the Constitution,” n.d., <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Recognising-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-people-in-the-Australian-Constitution.pdf>.

Our Ancestors were removed from their land where they had been placed with care and ceremony to be housed in metal boxes and cabinets as specimens of research or as curios by individuals, families and institutions.¹⁰⁴

I learned of the social, spiritual and cultural affects caused by the theft of human remains, the collection and exploitation of sacred objects (artefacts) and the desecration of ancient burial sites, forced upon a society, revealing traits of inhumanity and arrogance that continued with the implementation of the “White Australia Policy.” I also learned more of the frontier wars,¹⁰⁵ massacres,¹⁰⁶ forced removal of children from families to Missions¹⁰⁷ and reserves,¹⁰⁸ slavery,¹⁰⁹ race- and gender-based violence, and the introduction of small pox disease.¹¹⁰ In the book *Politics of Identity*, Carlson provides information on the classification of Aboriginality and the systems and structures working towards the eradication of Aboriginal peoples:

In this schema, “full-blood” Aboriginal people of Australia were “seen as archaic survivors from the dawn of man’s existence” (Attwood & Markus 1997, p. 1). “Full-blood” Aboriginal people were assumed to be a “dying race” with “the wandering savage... doomed to extinction by the progress of that type of humanity with which it

¹⁰⁴ Shannon Faulkhead and James R. Berg, *Power and the Passion: Our Ancestors Return Home* (Melbourne: Koorie Heritage Trust Inc., 2010), 11.

¹⁰⁵ NGV Melbourne, “Colony: Frontier Wars NGV Curator | Curators’ Perspectives,” YouTube Video, 5:21, September 9, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ARxCOWt3Rg8>.

¹⁰⁶ University of Newcastle, “Colonial Frontier Massacres, Australia (Date Range: 1780 to 1930),” The Centre For 21st Century Humanities, The University of Newcastle Australia, n.d., <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>.

¹⁰⁷ Alec Morgan and Gerry Bostock, *Lousy Little Sixpence* (EnhanceTV [distributor]: 2008).

¹⁰⁸ Queensland Government, “European Contact History of Coen Introduction Coen Queensland Government.”

¹⁰⁹ Thalia Anthony and Stephen Gray, “Australian Politics Was There Slavery in Australia? Yes. It Shouldn’t Even Be up for Debate Prime Minister Scott Morrison Has Claimed Australia’s Past Is Free from Slavery, but There Is Plenty of Evidence Stating That Isn’t the Case,” SBS News, June 12, 2020, <https://www.sbs.com.au/news/was-there-slavery-in-australia-yes-it-shouldn-t-even-be-up-for-debate>.

¹¹⁰ National Museum Australia, “Defining Moments Smallpox Epidemic 1789: Smallpox Breaks out in Sydney,” last modified April 21, 2020, <https://www.nma.gov.au/defining-moments/resources/smallpox-epidemic>.

was impossible to assimilate him” (Turner 1904 quoted in Attwood & Markus 1997, p. 1). The position of “part-Aboriginal” people with an admixture of European blood was an increasing source for official concern, however, especially with the growth of this population in the “contact zones” where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people lived in proximity during and following frontier expansion, violence and dispossession (Bleakley 1961). The presence of European blood indicated a genetic inheritance that embodied the capacity to progress culturally.¹¹¹

The introduction of the English language and Christianity was embedded into Aboriginal peoples learning and lives. At the missions, any representation of Aboriginal language spoken, or cultural traditions practiced, was managed with punishment. At the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), the Mission and reserve records specify that:

Missions, reserves and stations were reserves of land to which Aboriginal people were forcibly relocated.

- Missions were in the control of churches and missionaries with little or no government involvement.
- Reserves and stations were generally run by the government, although churches, especially the United Aborigines Mission and the Aborigines Inland Mission, were sometimes active on government settlements although they didn’t always have an administrative role. Aboriginal reserves were overseen by government “protectors,” who controlled many aspects of the lives of Aboriginal people.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Carlson, *The Politics of Identity: Who Counts as Aboriginal Today?* 20

¹¹² AIATSIS, 2020b, “Mission and Reserve Records,” <https://aiatsis.gov.au/family-history/family-history-sources/official-records/mission-and-reserve-records>.

The control permitted the authorities to have children stolen from their mothers, families and communities,¹¹³ disrupting and impacting generations of kinship systems and structures and denying Aboriginal people of their inherent right to belonging. On the Missions, Aboriginal girls were trained and recruited as domestics: cooking, cleaning and nannying for white families.¹¹⁴ The adultification of Aboriginal girls at these residence/properties meant slave labour and enduring abuse and sexual violence. The objectification of Aboriginal women has sat within the spectrum of either primitive or exotic. In the book *Talkin' Up to the White Woman: Indigenous Women and Feminism*, Moreton-Robinson asserts:

White Australia has come to “know” the “Indigenous woman” from the gaze of many, including the diaries of explorers, the photographs of philanthropists, the testimony of white state officials, the sexual bravado of white men and the ethnographies of anthropologists.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ Australian Human Rights Commission, “Bringing Them Home Report (1997) Bringing Them Home Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families April 1997,” 1997, <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/bringing-them-home-report-1997>.

¹¹⁴ Morgan and Bostock, *Lousy Little Sixpence*.

¹¹⁵ Moreton-Robinson, *Talkin' up to the White Woman*, 1.

DNA-CE: Strands of Identity: Floor Plan

BONES (#80N35), BLOOD (#8700D), BELIEF (#83713F), BIRTH (#81R7H)

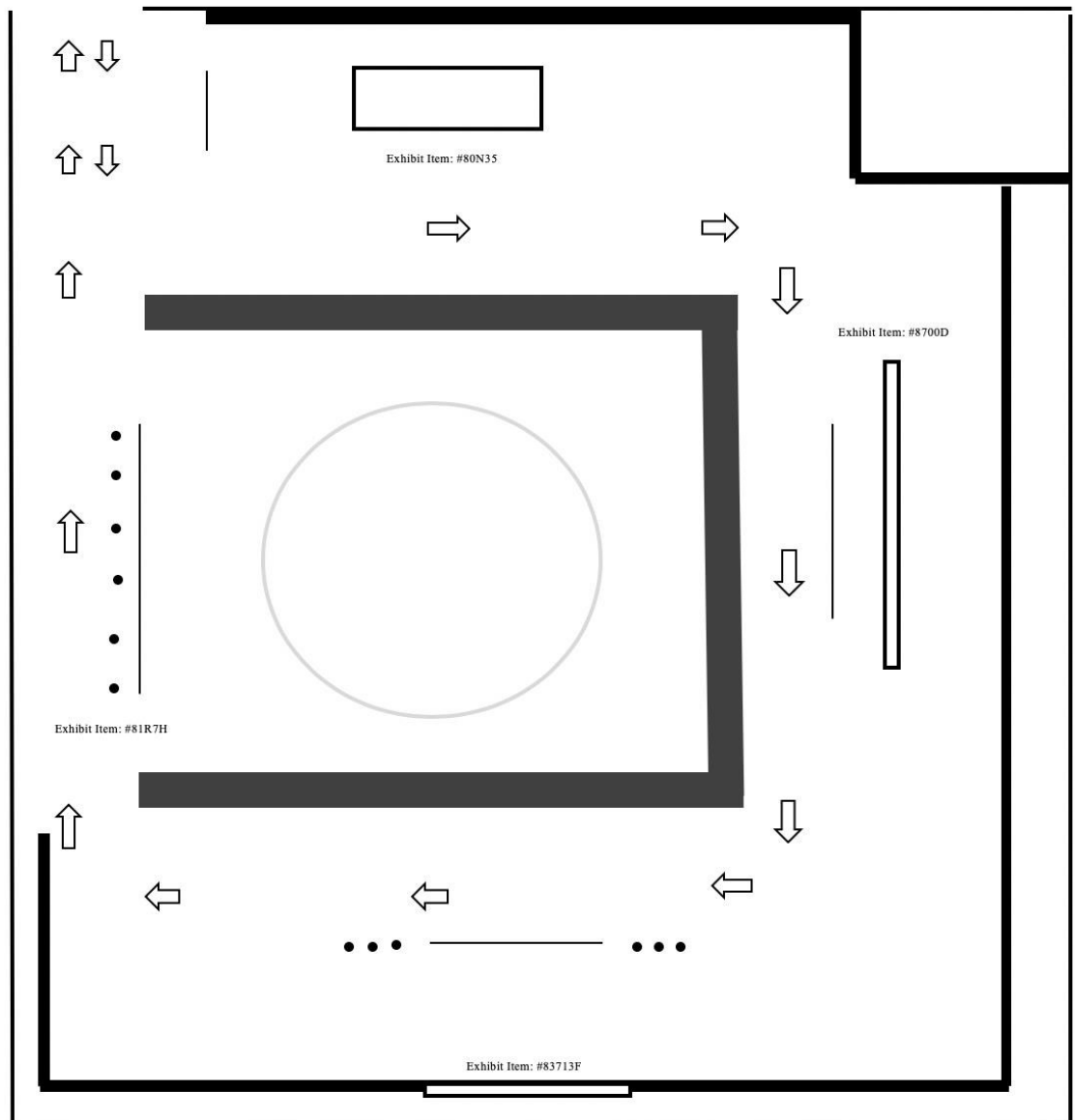


Figure 7 DNA-CE: Strands of Identity, 2017, floor plan. Image courtesy of the artist.

DNA-CE: Stands of Identity: Creating Dance Stories

There's no separation between human and Country.¹¹⁶

The concept for the creative work evolved from feeling disempowered by the effects of colonialism and the culture of Archaeology.¹¹⁷ Through a deeply considered approach, I balanced out the positioning of power, staging my embodiment as an Aboriginal woman, mother and dancer, in a performative mapping of my identity. Threading my sense of belonging as storying into the creative work, I assert my voice as the authority to speak to my Aboriginality, not in isolation but as a continuation of our Stories and worldview.

Country

Memory of Country and the presentation of Country is relayed in dance and the viewers' immersive experience of that.¹¹⁸

My approach in the creative work focussed on presenting the allocated space into an immersive experience, by layering and interweaving artistic elements and cultural knowledge instinctively to form an active living space that encompassed both my relationality with Country and the functionality of a classical stadia/amphitheatre with optimum visual potential for spectators.¹¹⁹ In a lecture by Wemba-Wemba and Gunditjmara artist, academic and curator

¹¹⁶ Brian Martin, "DDCA The Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts Professor Brian Martin - Immaterial Land: Refiguring Art and Materialism Through An Indigenous Australian Ideology," lecture at The Outstanding Field: Artistic Research Emerging from the Academy symposium, March 19–21, 2015, <https://www.ddca.edu.au/events/event-media/2016/6/9/professor-brian-martin-immaterial-land-refiguring-art-and-materialism-through-an-indigenous-australian-ideology>.

¹¹⁷ McNiven and Russell, *Appropriated Pasts*, 7.

¹¹⁸ Martin, "DDCA The Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts Professor Brian Martin - Immaterial Land: Refiguring Art and Materialism Through An Indigenous Australian Ideology."

¹¹⁹ Lev Zetlin, "Stadium Architecture," Britannica, n.d, <https://www.britannica.com/technology/stadium/Design-innovations>.

Paola Balla,¹²⁰ I was reminded that in our ways of being, knowing and doing there is gender equality and equity within our culture. As an extension of knowing practices within women's and men's business, in the creative work I included a female audience and casting of ushers (volunteer). The ushers were rehearsed in their role to enhance the experiences of the audience participants at each of the exhibits. Like this thesis, the dance installation was designed within a dance cycle, allowing the audience participants to walk in, around and through my memory of Country.

Production

In my dance practice, symbols were arranged in the creative work to contextualise and communicate my story. The title *DNA-CE: Strands of Identity* was developed from a typo where the letter "n" came before the "a" in dance. Seeing how the typo related to my learning enquiry, I combined the idea with a Western marketing narrative to advertise my creative work. The "DNA" (Deoxyribonucleic acid) spelling in uppercase linked also to the three-part working definition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' identifying:

In the 1980s a new definition was proposed in the Constitutional Section of the Department of Aboriginal Affairs' Report on a Review of the Administration of the Working Definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Canberra, 1981). The section offered the following definition:

¹²⁰ Paola Balla, "Indigenous Art and Voice," lecture, Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music, Parkville Campus, University of Melbourne, September 3, 2018.

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander is a person of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent who identifies as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and is accepted as such by the community in which he (she) lives.¹²¹

Working within the criteria, I engaged the word “DNA” with utmost respect and sensitivity knowing that we have been one of the most researched groups of people in the world.¹²² Thus, placing the abbreviation within the word “dance” presented a different meaning and embodiment. The word “Strands” embedded in the title represented that culture for me is both fixed and fluid, and that through time and space do we understand this.

In the work the four exhibits: *BONES* (#80N35), *BLOOD* (#8700D), *BELIEF* (#83713F), *BIRTH* (#81R7H), are entitled using numerals to spell out the word. This technique symbolises a perspective or lens that connects my relationality of the word with the socio-cultural disruption of my Aboriginality and is also a reference to appropriation through science.¹²³ The labelling concept was in reference to the repository systems of storing, archiving, recording and collecting information for further examination and discussions within the field of research, including the use of the hashtag (#), documenting current social media trends to highlight a theme or specific content of interest. On a deeper level of experience, the hashtag symbol originates from the cataloguing systems used as identification in housing human remains, sacred objects and stories. The use of bright colours in the *BLOOD* (#8700D) exhibit has two purposes, the first reference was to do with the study of Aboriginality through science, and the different colours represented having our blood placed under the microscope to define our identity based on a blood quantum formula. The second reference was my connectedness

¹²¹ John Gardiner-Garden, “Defining Aboriginality in Australia Information and Research Services The 1980s and the Rise of the Three-Part Definition,” Brief No. 10 2002-03, February 3, 2003, <https://www.aph.gov.au/binaries/library/pubs/cib/2002-03/03cib10.pdf>.

¹²² Karen Martin and Booran Miraboopa, “Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing: A Theoretical Framework and Methods for Indigenous and Indigenist Re-Search,” *Journal of Australian Studies* 27, 76 (2003): 203–14.

¹²³ McNiven and Russell, *Appropriated Pasts*, 181.

with Country, illuminating the natural life of the Great Barrier Reef, as well as the iridescence, translucent and bioluminescent colours of the natural world through phenomena. In the creative work *BELIEF* (#837I3F), as an embodiment of my dance practice, I have engaged ontological and epistemological practices as explained by Marcia Langton:

Bodies of water are constituted by Aboriginal people as being more than just a physical domain. They are construed spiritually, socially and jurally, according to the same fundamental principles as affiliations to terrestrial places in the land; the dialogic relationship in Indigenous thought between ancestral past and its effect on human existence derives from the Aboriginal understanding of the transformative powers of the spiritual beings that inhabit those places, whether a landscape, waterscape or skyscape. For Aboriginal people, the distinctions between land and water are not absolute; rather they are constituted as a cultural space that includes both land and water bodies that may be viewed as a unitary cultural phenomenon, such as a traditional estate in a littoral riparian or marine areas, or a water body believed to be the resting place of an ancestral being and deemed to be a sacred site.¹²⁴

The *BELIEF* (#837I3F) exhibit is of our spirituality, originating from the beginning of time through our creation stories.¹²⁵ The long, red fibres (craft strand paper rope) woven around my hips in *BIRTH* (#81R7H) is both a costume and prop, weaving stories and sweeping the ground to activate the space, expressing my embodiment: Aboriginal. Woman. Mother. Dancer.

¹²⁴ Marcia Langton, *Earth, Wind, Fire, Water: The Social and Spiritual Construction of Water in Aboriginal Societies* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006).

¹²⁵ Rigsby and Chase, "The Sandbeach People and Dugong Hunters of Eastern Cape York Peninsula," 321.

Creative Collaboration

The crystallising of the dance installation came together through creative collaboration (technical support). Production and stage manager Siobhain Geaney sourced and installed long black curtains to hang from the ceiling grid to the floor, partitioning the studio space into a museum layout. The lightscape for the installation was designed by Siobhain Geaney to represent the Aborigines Protection Board records using sepia-toned lighting. The hiring of an ultralight light for the *BLOOD (#8700D)* photoshoot and speakers for audio was also arranged by Siobhain Geaney. The soundscape was developed in consultation with Jaadwa sound designer James Howard, with the brief to create an atmosphere or a place for the natural and industrial world to meet, which offered an ambient feel through four original tracks positioned in the corners of the room (two fixed on the ceiling grid and two at floor level) These tracks played individually and simultaneously so that the four exhibits would present a different soundscape experience.

The *BONES (#80N35)* exhibit was staged with a display case borrowed from the theatre department. The short video by cinematographer Simon Green appeared through a short-throw projector, projecting into the Perspex pane, covered with a self-adhesive holographic window film to canvas my embodiment into the display case. Following on in the performative mapping was the *BLOOD (#8700D)* exhibit: a ritual photographed, printed onto A3-sized gloss paper, framed and hung onto black plinths. The framing of my identity with invisible ink and glow-in-the-dark painted on my body and seen under the ultraviolet light was digitally captured by Wiradjuri woman Jacinta Keefe. The third exhibit *BELIEF (#837I3F)* was storying in motion, a short film shot from multiple angles, projected onto a screen framed by the curtains, which was filmed and edited by cinematographer Simon Green with technical support by Siobhan Geaney. In the final exhibit *BIRTH (#8IR7H)*, the draping curtain walls presented an intimate space for the solo dance work (live), placing my identity in context with my Country.

In the learning, although I wasn't completely content with the finer details of the production's aesthetics, the decision to install retractable barrier posts (at each exhibit) combined with the time and energy spent considering the "conceptual gap," I effectively replicated the observer and observed, knower and known, subject and object¹²⁶ viewpoints.

The exhibits are of my embodiment, placed central to the learning enquiry to navigate through the cultural sensitivities of an appropriated past. In the exhibits I engage an autoethnographic voice and tone that may appear abstract (lost in translation). In *BONES (#80N35)*, a process of disassociating helps me manage my self-care in order to humanise my experience, as remedy for the emotional ailment (feelings of grief, sadness, depression, loneliness and reflection) carried in the body, and to embed our ways of being, knowing and doing to assert self- knowledge in that there is no separation between Pama|Bama (Aboriginal people) and Country. A comprehensive documentation of the creative work is supported by video documentation and still images from video (*BONES (#80N35)* and *BELIEF (#837I3F)*). *BLOOD (#80N35)* consists of four photographs only and one still image from video and *BIRTH (#8IR7H)* will be part video documentation and still images from video.¹²⁷ The soundscape and additional creative material are also provided. (See Appendix B for directory of documentation files and access to Dropbox).

Artistic Statement

Presented as a dance installation, the creative work is part of a practice-led enquiry, learning the connection between my cultural identity and Indigenous contemporary dance practice. In the installation, I curate my knowledge of my Deoxyribonucleic acid genome

¹²⁶ Martin, "DDCA The Australian Council of Deans and Directors of Creative Arts Professor Brian Martin - Immaterial Land: Refiguring Art and Materialism Through An Indigenous Australian Ideology."

¹²⁷ Public version available only.

sequencing/genetic composition,¹²⁸ our epistemology, methodology, axiology, pedagogy and ontology practices, and my sense of belonging through dance.

In the creative work, I house a collection of my identity: four exhibits that interdependently and collectively embody our ways of being, knowing and doing; inherently of my Lama Lama, Ayapathu and Gugu Yalanji Country. Through *BONES* (#80N35), *BLOOD* (#80N35), *BELIEF* (#837I3F) and *BIRTH* (#8IR7H), the dance installation returns identity from the archives and museums to the body.

A journey of self as an Aboriginal woman, mother and dancer, this creative work unpacks the complexities of my identity.

¹²⁸ Nano Nagle, Mannis van Oven, Stephen Wilcox, Sheila van Holst Pellekaan, Chris Tyler-Smith, Yali Xue, Kaye N. Ballantyne, et al., "Scientific Reports Aboriginal Australian Mitochondrial Genome Variation – an Increased Understanding of Population Antiquity and Diversity," October 11, 2016.
<https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2017/release/dna-study-of-indigenous-australians>

#80N35

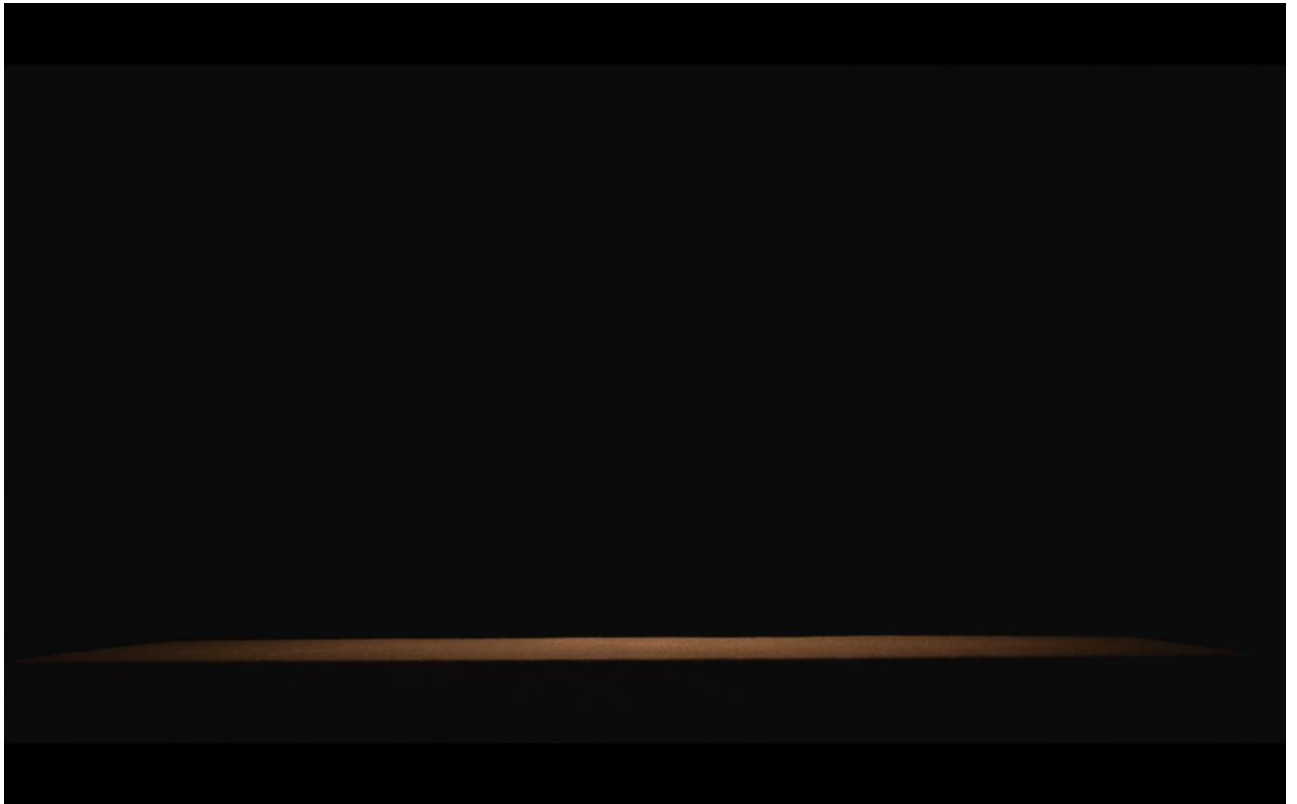


Figure 8 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 9 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

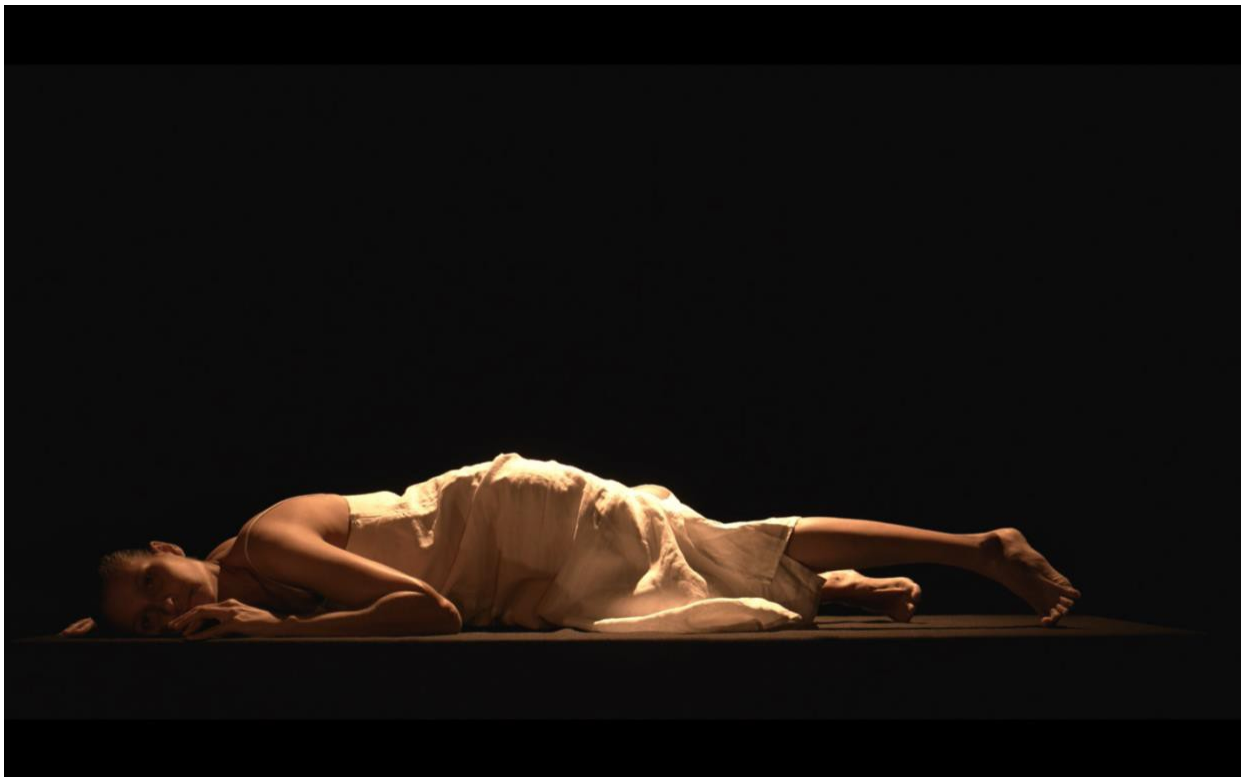


Figure 9 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 10 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 11 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 12 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

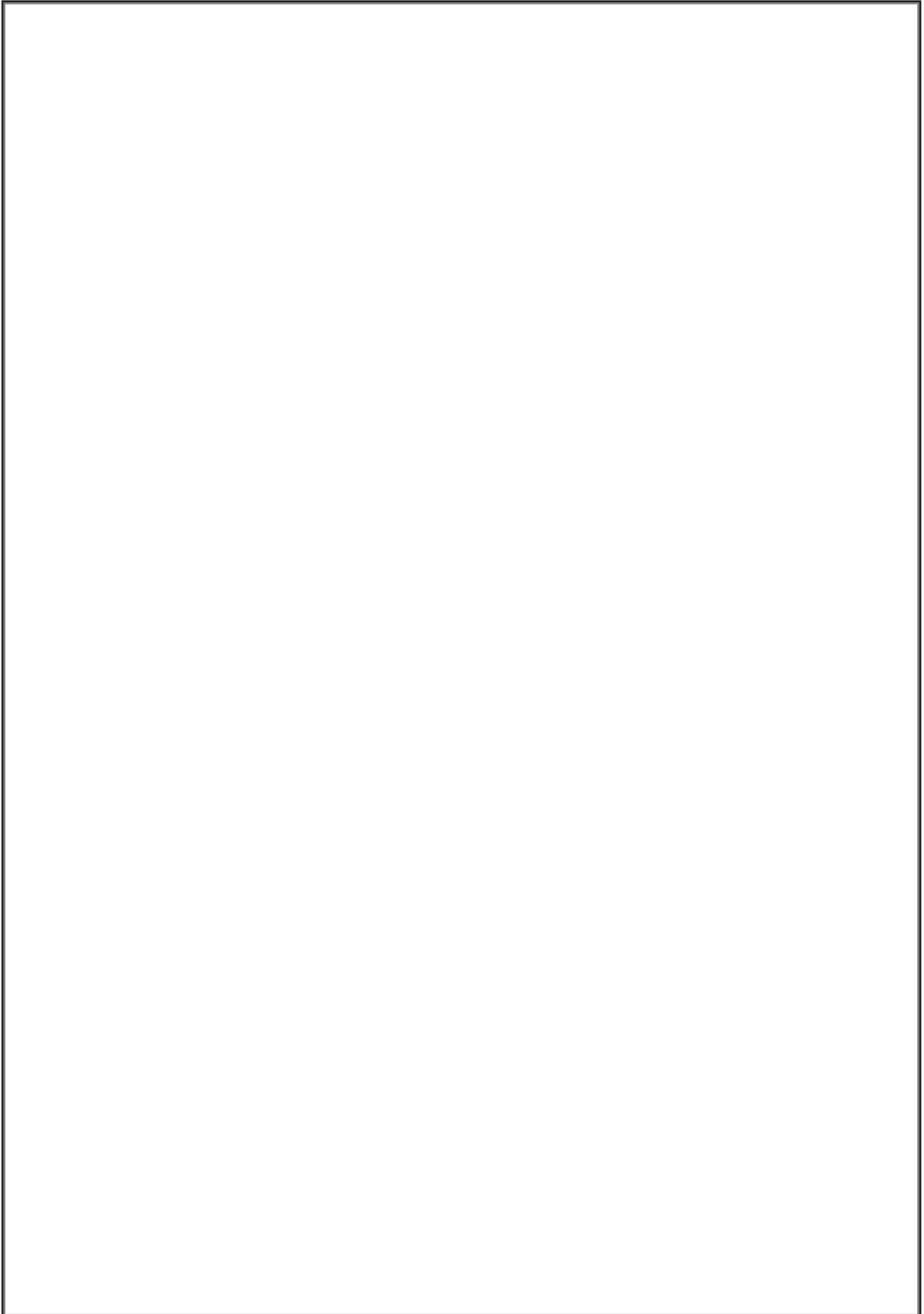


Figure 13 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 14 BONES (#80N35) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

#80N35





#8L00D

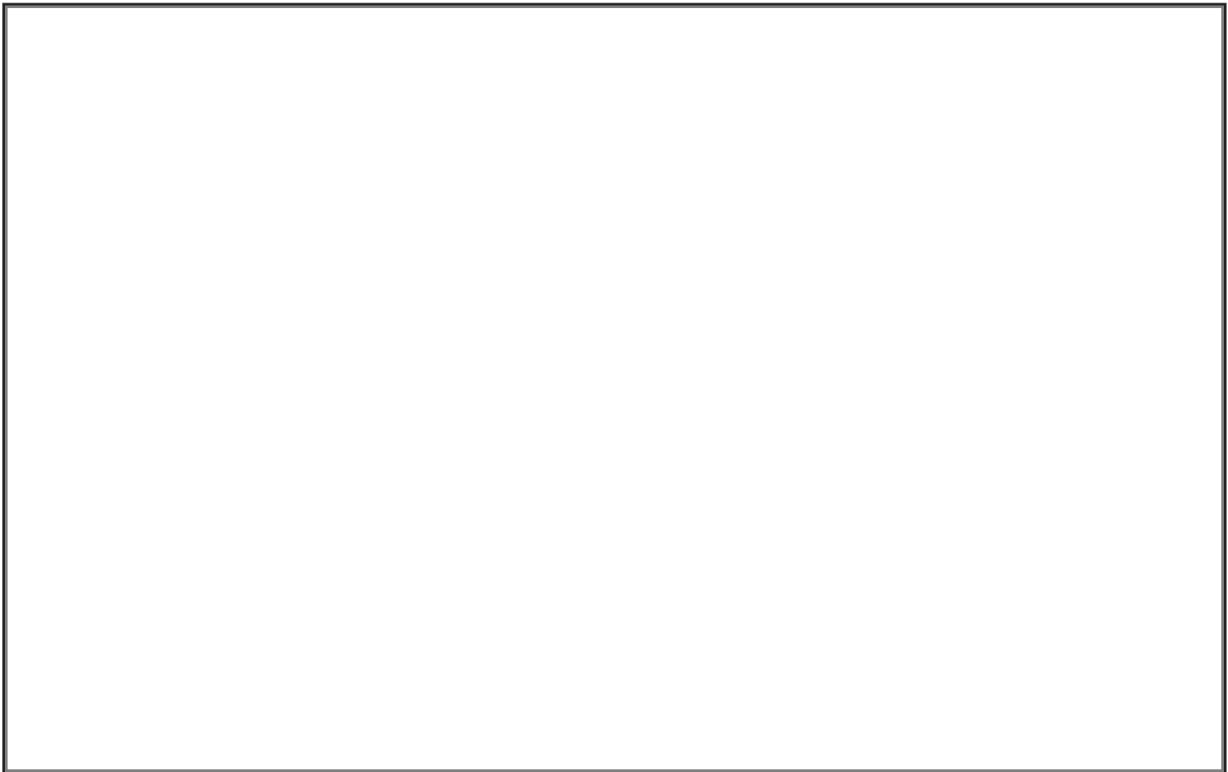


Figure 15 BLOOD (#8L00D) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

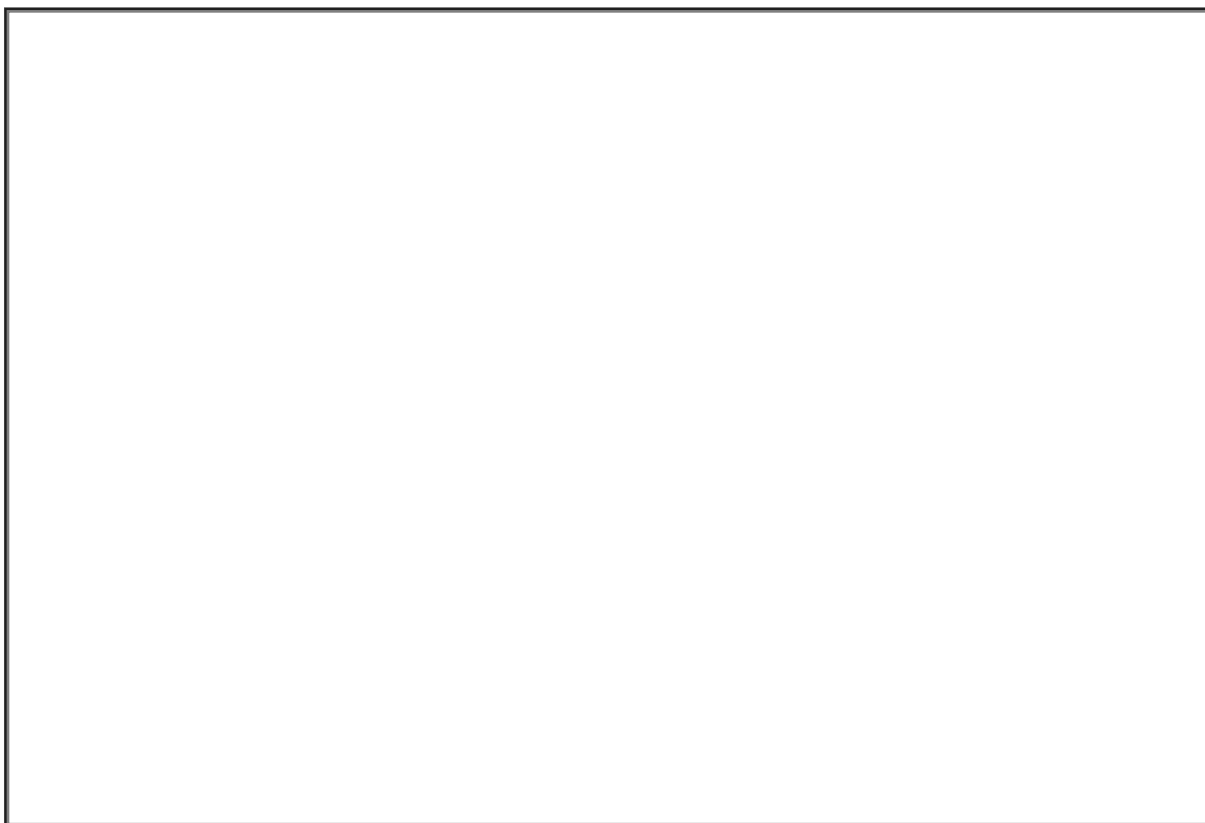


Figure 16 BLOOD (#8L00D) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 17 BLOOD (#8L00D) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

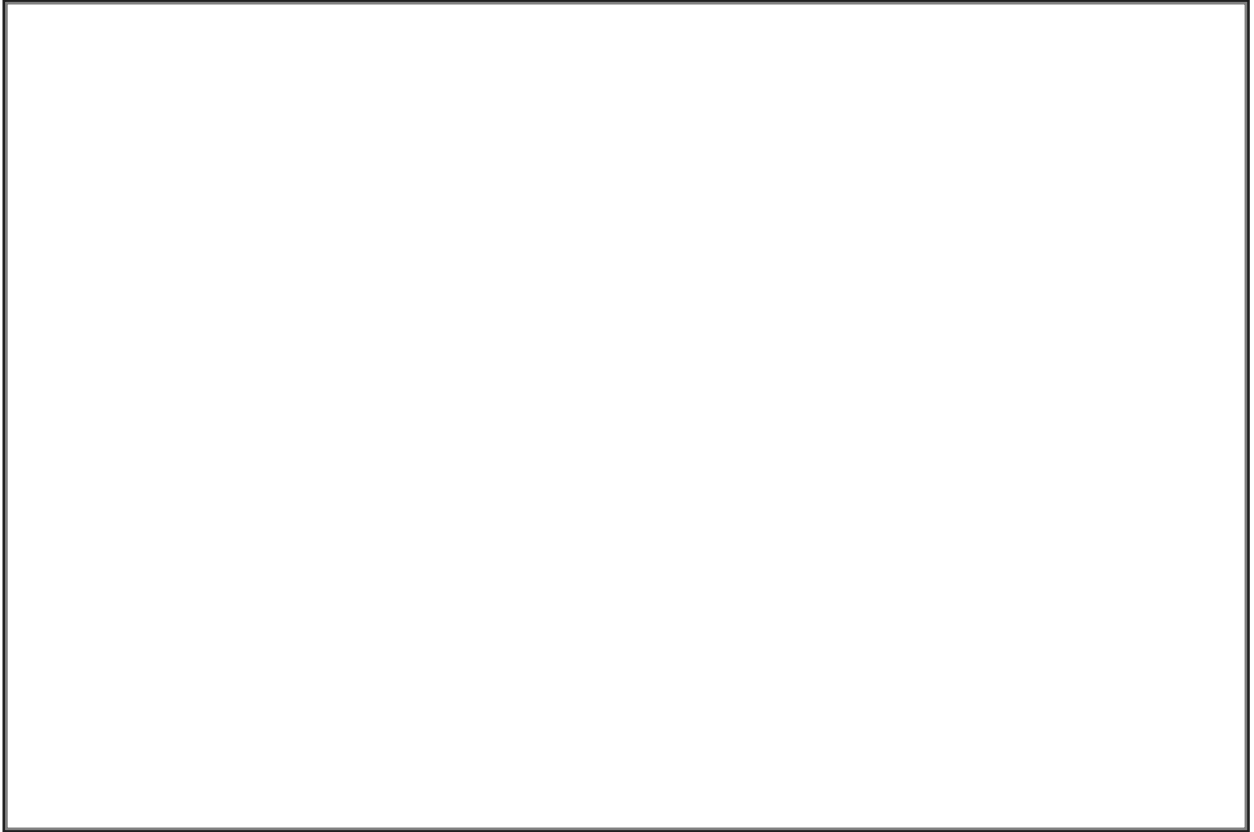


Figure 18 BLOOD (#8L00D) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

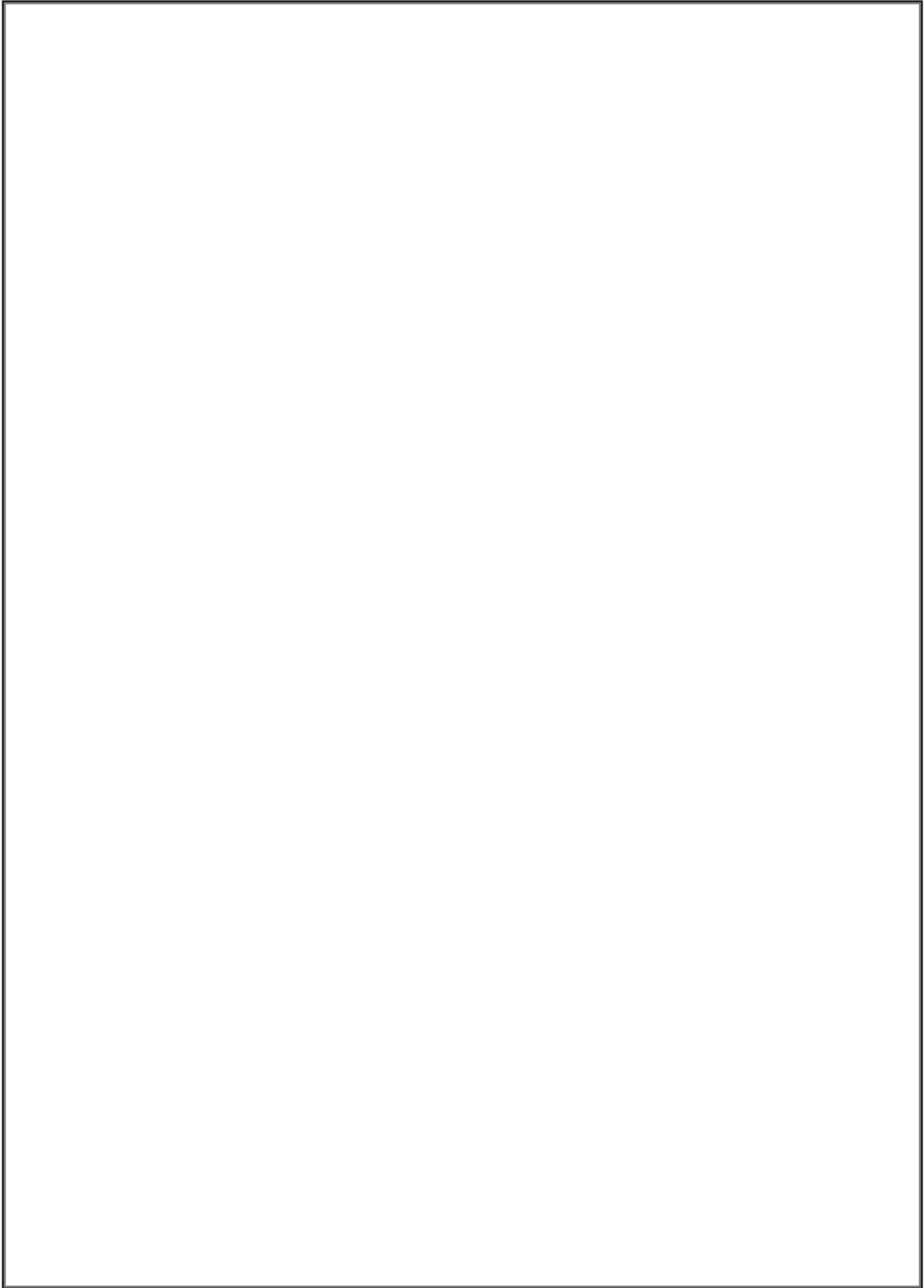
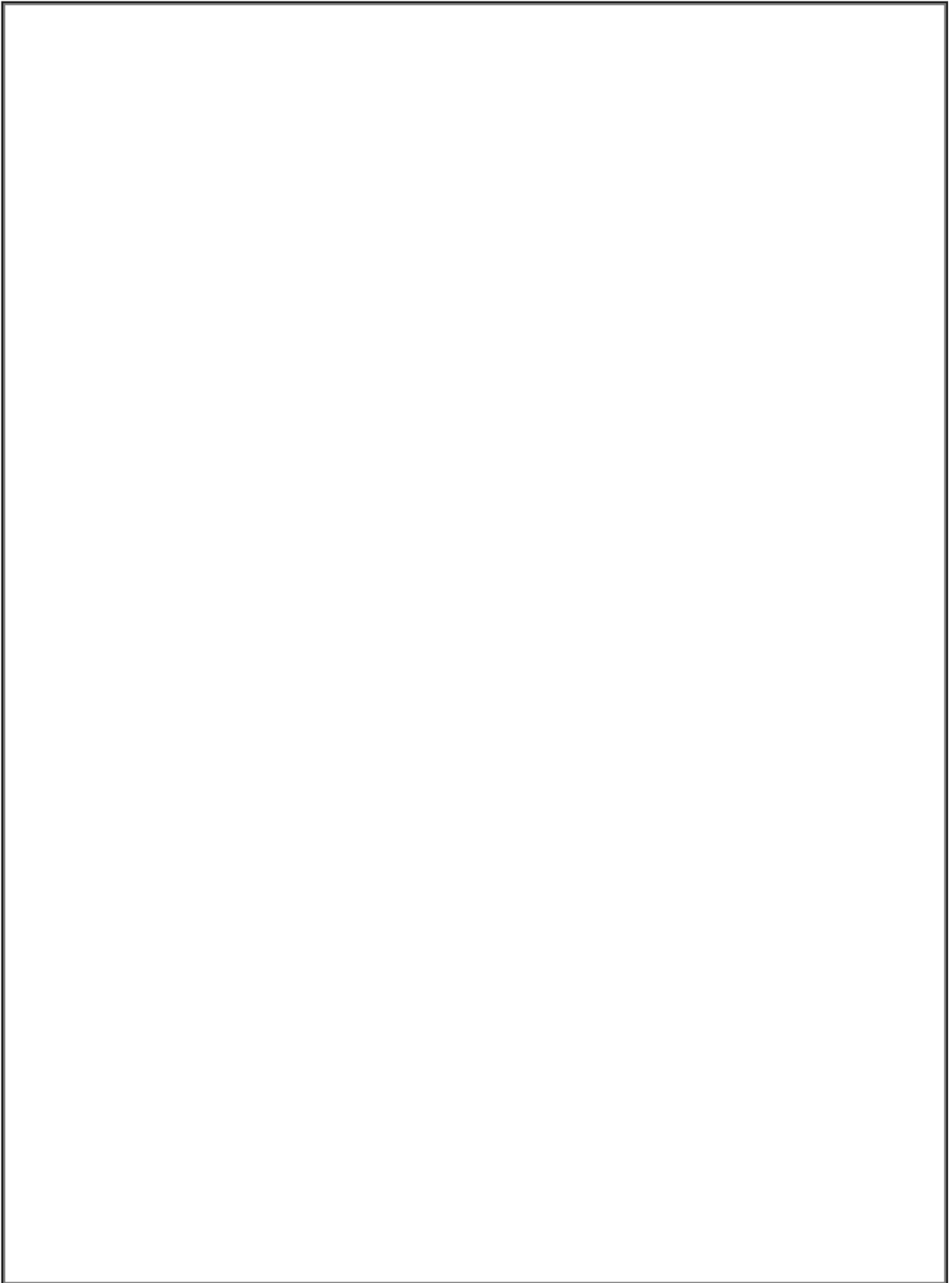


Figure 19 BLOOD (#8L00D) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

#8L00D





#83713F



Figure 20 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 21 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 22 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 23 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

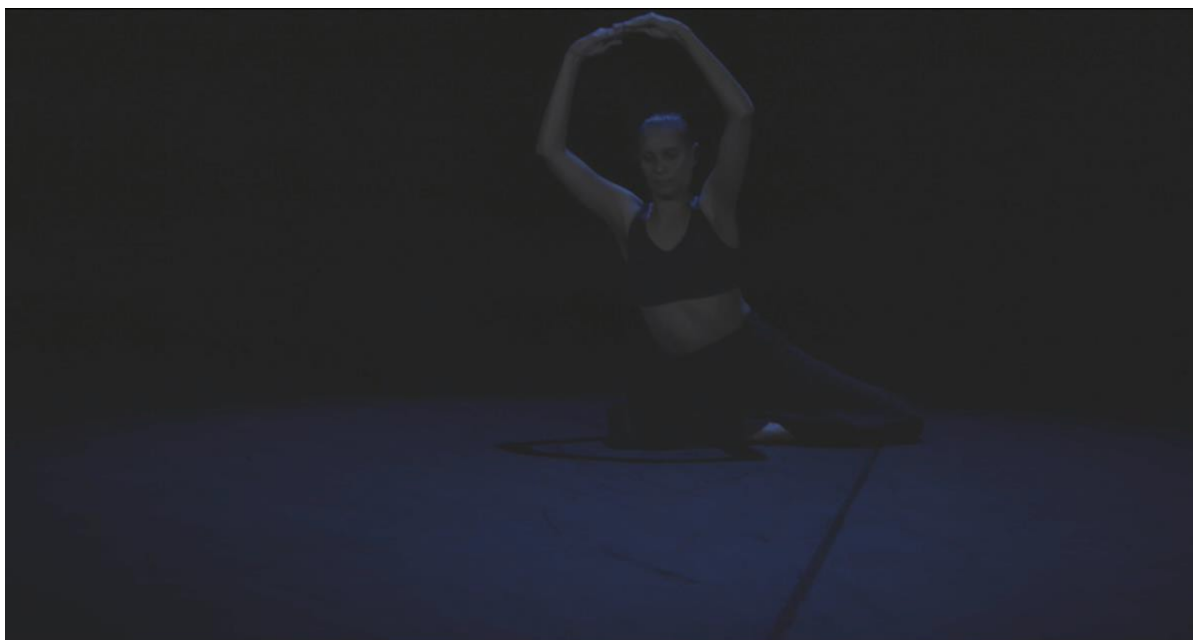


Figure 24 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 25 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 26 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 27 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

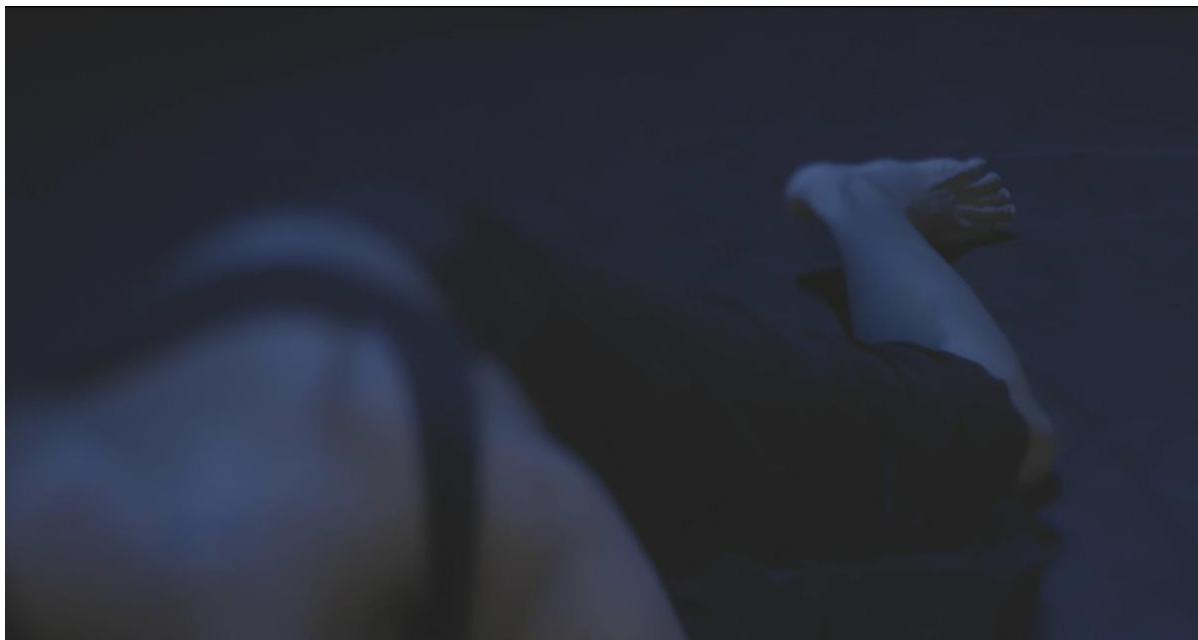


Figure 28 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

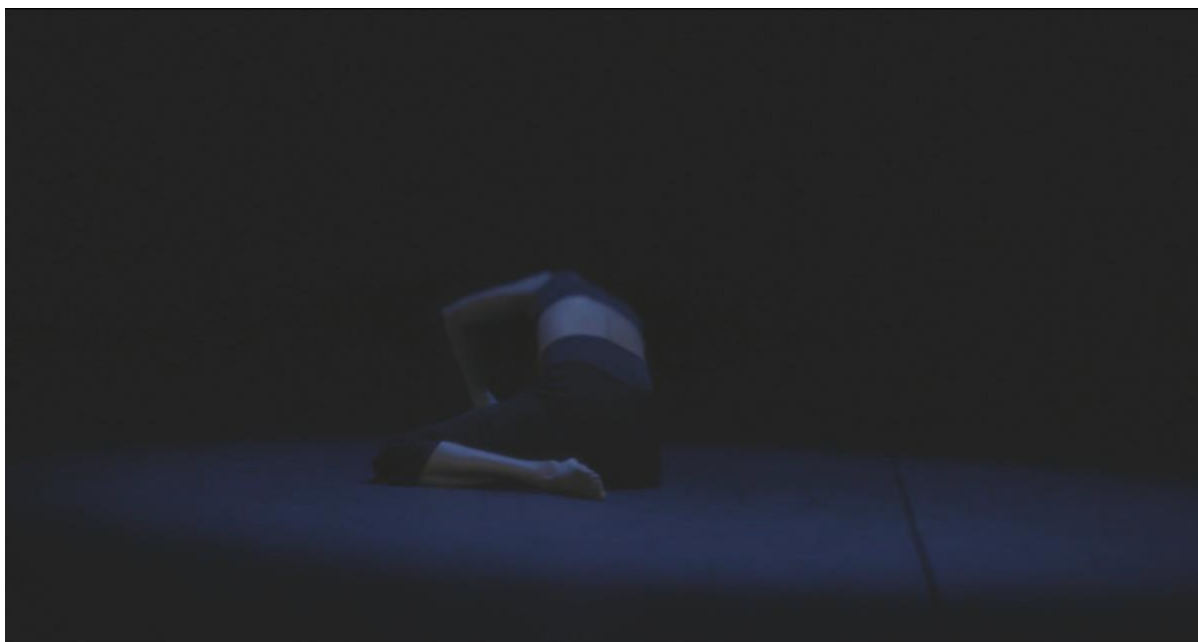


Figure 29 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 30 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

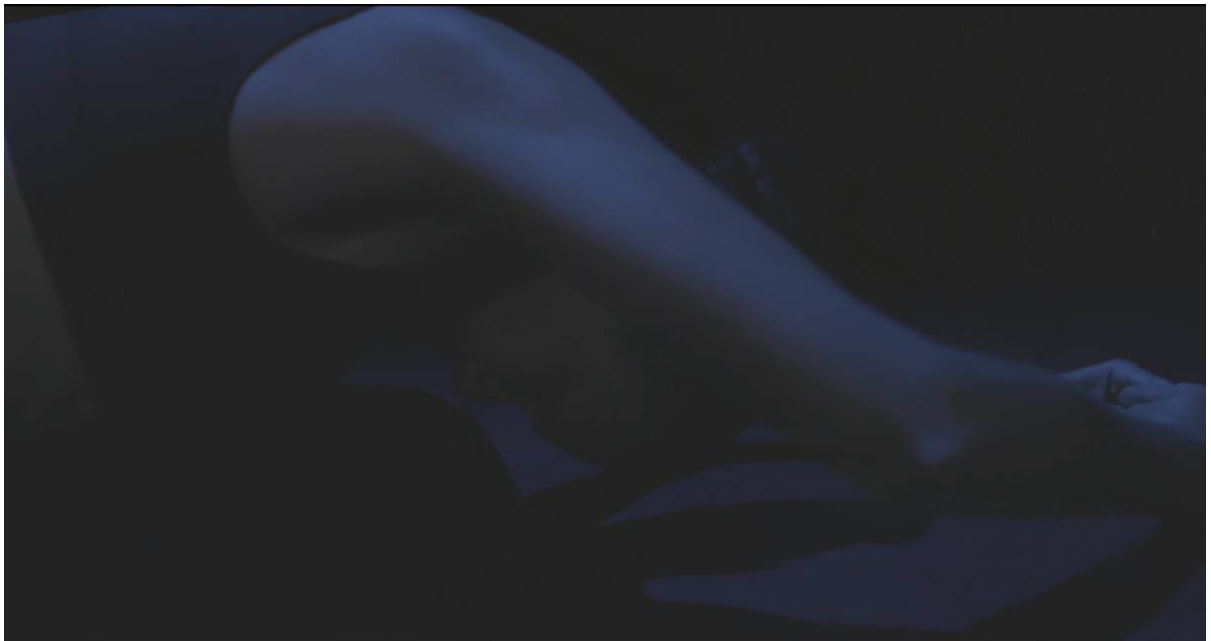


Figure 31 BELIEF (#83713F) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

#83713F





#8IR7H



Figure 32 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 33 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 34 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 35 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

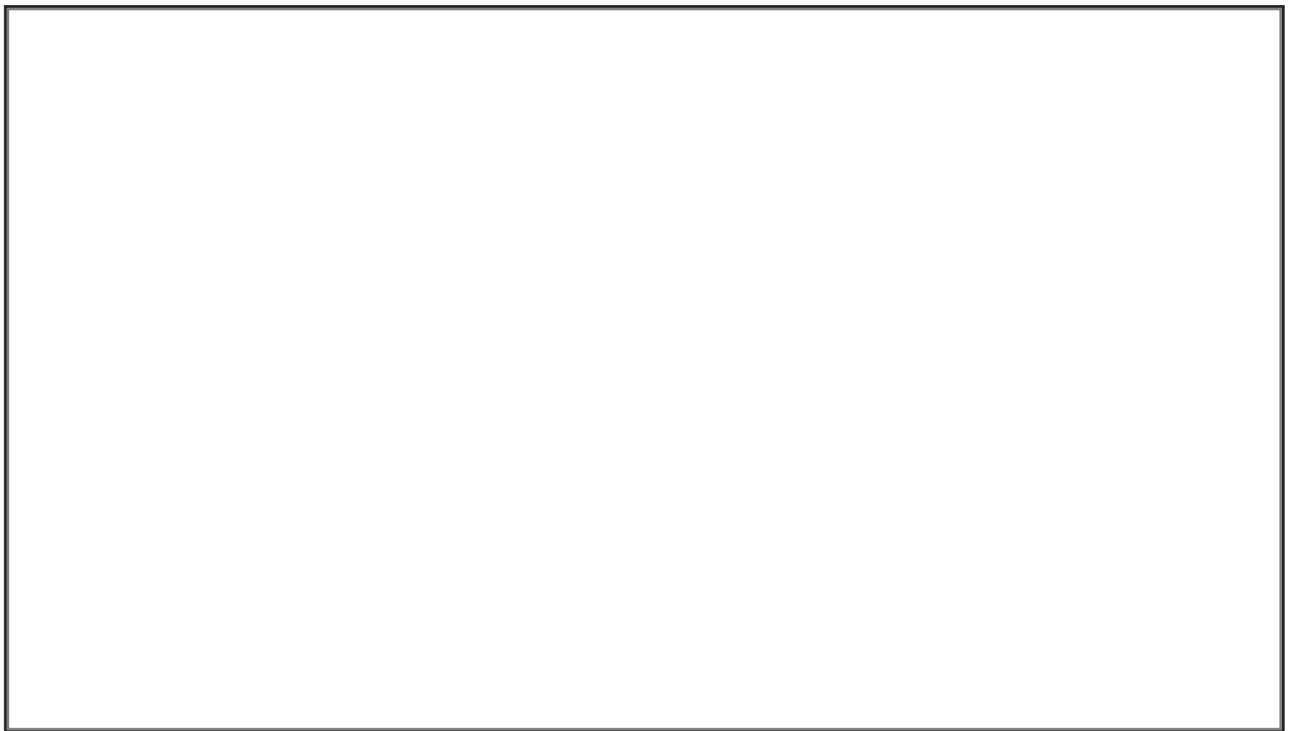


Figure 36 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

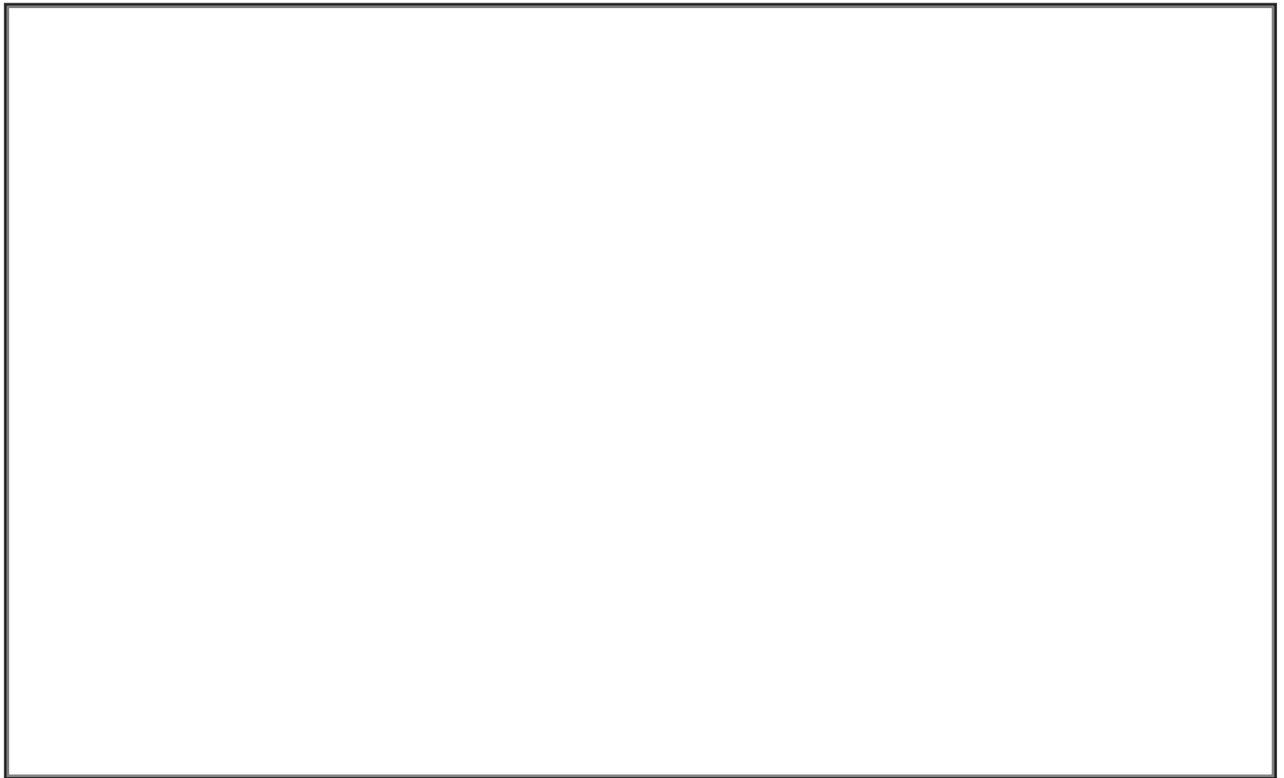


Figure 37 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.



Figure 38 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

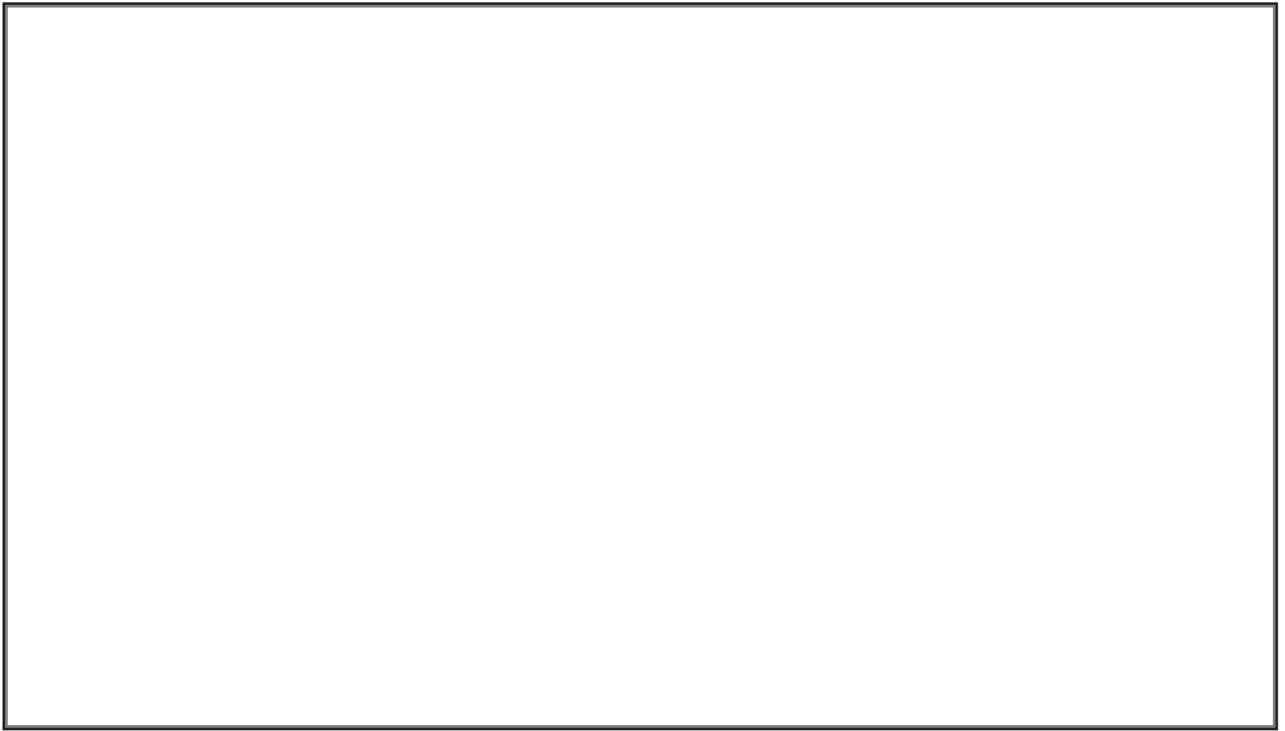
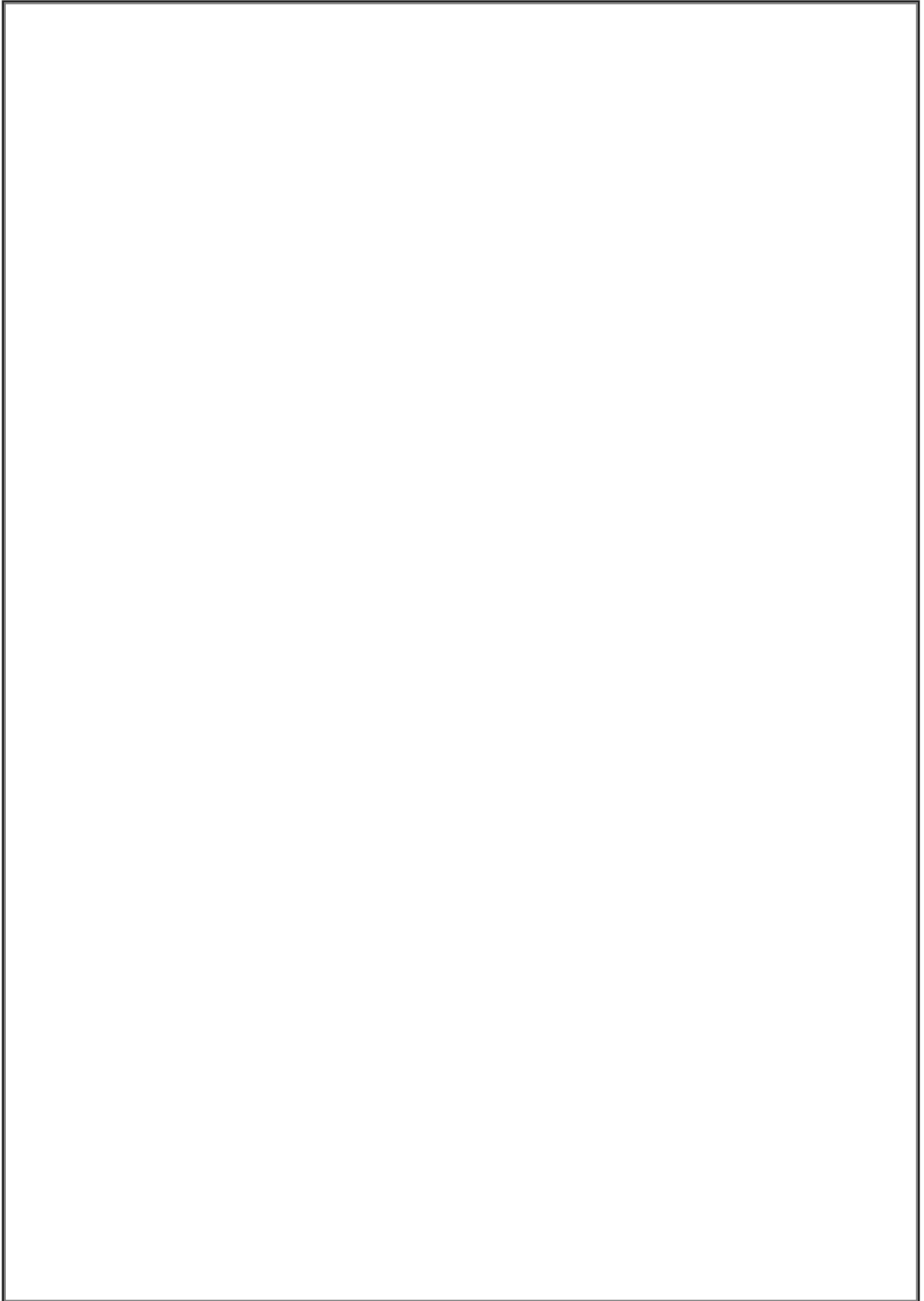


Figure 39 BIRTH (#8IR7H) Exhibit, 2017, Space 221, Faculty of Fine Arts and Music: Dance, University of Melbourne, Southbank Campus, Melbourne. Image courtesy of the artist.

#8IR7H





Conclusion

The act of making art exposes a society to itself. Art brings things to light. It illuminates us. It shed light on our lingering darkness.¹³⁰

I began this journey thinking I knew where it would lead me. Instead, it has been a far greater journey than I could have ever foreseen. There have been tears of joy, sorrow, triumph and loss in this time. In all of this beautiful chaos, I realised my voice in the writing. I know now, that my dance storying is a manifestation of my subconscious, my truth-telling, even when I am not prepared to listen. My future self and dance creating will know the connection between my cultural identity and dance practice; until then, I will continue advancing our *herstory* towards a more inclusive narrative and nationhood.

¹³⁰ Cameron, *The Artist's Way: A Spiritual Path to Higher Creativity*, 176.

Project Documentation

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[australia-council-award-for-dance/](https://www.australiacouncil.gov.au/news/media-centre/biographies/vicki-van-hout-australia-council-award-for-dance/)

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Appendix A: Practice-led Learning Enquiry Herstory

Rheannan Port

Practice-led Learning Enquiry Herstory

2017- 2020

FEBRUARY

23	Orientation, Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development	
23	Research Seminar	Dr Lou Bennett
23	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae
24	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae
28	Research Methods Dance	Helen Herbertson
28-	Writing Residency, Sandy Point Victoria	Jenny Kemp

MARCH

3	Research Methods Dance	Helen Herbertson
1-3	Writing Residency, Sandy Point Victoria	Jenny Kemp
7	Indigenous Art and Voice	Ron Murray
9	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae
14	Indigenous Art and Voice	Mick Harding
16	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae
20	The Body, Next Conversations	Dance Massive
21	Indigenous Art and Voice	Lin Onus's "Fruit Bats"
21	Decolonising the Landscape	Tiriki Onus
22	<i>Sovereignty</i> Exhibition	ACCA
23	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae
28	Indigenous Art and Voice	Tammy Anderson
25	<i>Anti-Gravity</i> Dance Massive	Chunky Move
26	<i>Diversity</i> Dance Massive	Mariaa Randall
30	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae

APRIL

3	Lighting the Wilin Ceremony	
4	Indigenous Art and Voice	Monica Weightman
4	Lin Onus Oration	Maree Clarke
4	Boomerang Burning Workshop	Mick Harding
5	Research Seminar: "The Re-(E)mergence of Nature in Culture"	Dr Huhana Smith
6	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae
7	Research Methods Dance	Dr Siobhan Murphy
7	Possum Skin Workshop	Tiriki Onus
10	<i>Who's Afraid of Colour</i> Exhibition	NGV Federation Square
10	<i>Weaving the Waterways: Women and Fishing</i>	Koori Heritage Trust
11	Indigenous Art and Voice	Maree Clarke
12	Research Methods Dance	Leisa Shelton
13	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae
14	Research Methods Dance	Dr Siobhan Murphy
27	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae
28	Research Methods Dance	Dr Siobhan Murphy
29	Mae Hwa Dance Performance, PhD Research	Soo Yeun

MAY

2	Indigenous Art and Voice	Mandy Nicholson
4	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae
9	Indigenous Art and Voice	Prof. Tony Birch
12	Research Methods Dance	Dr Siobhan Murphy
13	National Indigenous Dance Forum	Blak Dance Yirramboi
14	National Indigenous Dance Forum	Blak Dance Yirramboi
14	Aboriginal Ballet Dancers of Australia	Blak Dance, Australian Ballet
16	Indigenous Art and Voice	Tiriki Onus
18	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae
18	Signature #3 Master of Dance	
23	Indigenous Art and Voice	Richard Frankland
25	Research Methods	Dr Jen Rae

26	Research Methods Dance	Dr Siobhan Murphy
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JUNE

3	Endnote Workshop	
9	Endnote Workshop	
9	Academic Skills Tutorial	
30	<i>Van Gogh</i> Exhibition	National Gallery Victoria

JULY

1–15	Study Leave	Ayapathu and Lama Lama Country Cape York Peninsula
17	Academic Writing Workshop	
24	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation	Tiriki Onus
31	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation	Tiriki Onus

AUGUST

1	Indigenous Choreographers, Residency Arts House	Mariaa Randall Ngioka Bunda-Heath
4	Dance Research Seminar	Dr Siobhan Murphy
7	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation	Richard Frankland
8	Indigenous Choreographers. Residency Arts House	Mariaa Randall Ngioka Bunda-Heath
11	Indigenous Choreographers, Residency Arts House	Mariaa Randall Ngioka Bunda-Heath
14	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation	Richard Frankland
15	RMIT Indigenous Business Studio	
18	Dance Research Seminar	Dr Siobhan Murphy
18	Halls Creek District High School Aboriginal Advisory Committee	Michelle Martin
21	Indigenous Art Changing the Nation	Tammy Anderson
24	Wilin Graduate Research Seminar	Dr Sally Treylon
28	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation	Tammy Anderson

29	Saltbush	Insite Arts and Compagnia TPO, Geelong
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SEPTEMBER

4	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation	Brian McKinnon
6	Pieces for Small Spaces	Lucy Guerin Inc.
7	Pieces for Small Spaces	Lucy Guerin Inc.
8	Pieces for Small Spaces	Lucy Guerin Inc.
11	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation	Brian McKinnon
14	Wilin Graduate Research Seminar	PhD candidate Ethnomusicology Anita Asaasira
14	Victoria College of the Arts Secondary School	
16	<i>Bennelong</i>	Bangarra Dance Theatre
18	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation	Ethnomusicologist Dr Reuben Brown
24	National Dance Awards	
25	National Dance Forum	Dance In The Digital Domain
26	National Dance Forum	Dance In The Digital Domain
27	Pieces for Small Spaces	Lucy Guerin Inc.
28	Pieces for Small Spaces	Lucy Guerin Inc.

OCTOBER

2	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation	Ethnomusicologist Dr Reuben Brown
4	<i>Tanderrum</i>	Melbourne Festival
7	<i>If We Let The Colours Run</i> Rehearsals	Jordan Gilmour
9	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation	Fred Gesha
10	Pieces for Small Spaces	Lucy Guerin Inc.
12	Pieces for Small Spaces	Lucy Guerin Inc.

12	Wilin Graduate Research Seminar	
13	Dance Research Seminar	Dr Siobhan Murphy
14	<i>If We Let The Colours Run</i> Rehearsals	Jordan Gilmour
14	<i>The Season</i>	Malthouse Theatre
16	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation Possum Skin Cloak	Tiriki Onus
19	Wilin Graduate Research (Elan) Managing Data Seminar	Ethnomusicologist Dr Reuben Brown
20	Indigenous Graduation Gala Dinner	University of Melbourne
26	Wilin Graduate Research Seminar	Tiriki Onus
27	Dance Research Seminar	Dr Siobhan Murphy
28	<i>If We Let The Colours Run</i> Rehearsals	Jordan Gilmour

NOVEMBER

8	<i>Toruk: The First Flight</i> Cirque du Soleil	
10	MFA Dance (live) Presentation	Dr Siobhan Murphy Dr Sally Treylon Anne O'Keefe
10	<i>If We Let the Colours Run</i>	Jordan Gilmour
16	Fan The Flame, Wilin Centre	
18	<i>House of Mirrors</i>	Melbourne Festival
18	<i>Past Legacy: Present Tense</i> NGV Federation Square	
20	Indigenous Art and Changing the Nation Wilin Centre Assessment	
20–23	Symposium—Wilin Centre Philosophies of Practice	
23	Launch Indigenous Research Unit Wilin Centre	
24	<i>RESTORATION</i> NAISDA End of Year Production	
25–26	Dance Rites Homeground	

	Sydney Opera House	
28	NHMRC Project VCA Southbank	
30	Pieces for Small Spaces	Lucy Guerin Inc.

DECEMBER

13–17	Pieces for Small Spaces Performances	Lucy Guerin Inc.
25	Gugu Yalanjii Country Daintree	
29	Aquarium Cairns	

2018

JANUARY

10	Mossman Gorge Centre Kuku Yalanji Cultural Tour	
28	Memorial Ceremony Wurundjeri Elder Pascoe Vale Early Learning Centre	

FEBRUARY

6	Presentation to Faculty Academic Wilin Centre Conference	
10	Commonwealth Games Baton Relay Melbourne	
27	Indigenous Art and Voice	Tiriki Onus

MARCH

6	Indigenous Art and Voice	Tammy Anderson
8	Indigenous Research Seminar, Dr Reuben Brown 'Shut Up and Write' Lionel's Bar, Southbank	Dr Reuben Brown
11	Spinifex Gum	

	Monash University	
13	Indigenous Art and Voice	Richard Frankland
20	Indigenous Art and Voice	Mick Harding
22	Wilin Jams Lionel's Bar, Southbank	

APRIL

9	Mura Buai (Everyone Everyone) Ghenoa Gela Kurrawa Park	
9	Track and Field Commonwealth Games Gold Coast QLD	
10	Track and Field Commonwealth Games Gold Coast QLD	
10	Swimming Finals Aquatic Centre Gold Coast QLD	
11	FSG Ngullingi Ya Wahlu Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Festival: Fake Art Harms Culture Gold Coast QLD	
11	Track and Field Commonwealth Games Gold Coast QLD	
12	Track and Field Commonwealth Games Gold Coast QLD	
14	Interwined—Indigenous Fashion Parade Kurrawa Park	
15	Closing Ceremony Commonwealth Games Gold Coast QLD	
17	Indigenous Art and Voice	Geneieve Greeves
19	Elle Richads Post Graduate Confirmation Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development	Elle Richards
24	Indigenous Art and Voice	Mandy Nicholson
26	International Indigenous Art as Voice Conference 2020 Meeting	Richard Frankland

27	Indigenous Art and Voice	Ron Murray
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MAY

1	Indigenous Art and Voice	Maree Clarke
6	Production Preparations— <i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i>	
7	Production Preparations— <i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i>	
8	Indigenous Art and Voice	Monica Weightman
9	Production Preparations— <i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i>	
10	Production Preparations— <i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i>	
10	PhD Presentation Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development	Anita Asaasira
15	Indigenous Art and Voice	Mandy Nicholson
22	Indigenous Art and Voice	Tiriki Onus
24	Production Preparations— DNA-CE: Strands of Identity	
26	Production Preparations— Simon Green Cinematography <i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i>	
28	Production Preparations— Jacinta Keefe Photography <i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i>	
31	Production Preparations— Rehearsals <i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i>	

JUNE

5	Production Preparations— Rehearsals <i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i>	
6	Dress Rehearsals	

	Faculty of Fine Arts and Music	
7–9	Master of Fine Arts Dance Faculty of Fine Arts and Music Examination <i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i>	

JULY

7	Victorian NAIDOC Awards	Crown Casino
8	National NAIDOC Awards NITV	Sydney
20	Tropical Lab 12 Sense	Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore

AUGUST

3	Tropical Lab 12 Sense	Lasalle College of the Arts, Singapore
6	Indigenous Art and Voice	Vicki Couzens
10	Stingray Story Choreography 2 nd Years VCA Dance	
17	Visual Art Installation MFA	Mimmalisa Trifilo
20	Indigenous Art and Voice	Brian McKinnon
22	Stingray Story Choreography 2 nd Years VCA Dance	
31	Stingray Story Choreography 2 nd Years VCA Dance	

SEPTEMBER

3	Indigenous Art and Voice	Paola Balla
17	Indigenous Art and Voice	Fred Gesha

OCTOBER

1	Indigenous Art and Voice	Dr Reuben Brown
3	Tanderrum Ceremony	Federation Square
8	Indigenous Art and Voice	Dr Sally Treylon
10	Stingray Story Choreography 2 nd Years VCA Dance	
11	Cultural Workshop	

	Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development	
11	Stingray Story Choreography 2 nd Years VCA Dance	
12	Donald Thompson Collection University of Melbourne and Melbourne Museum	
15	Indigenous Art and Voice	Tiriki Onus
17	Stingray Story Choreography 2 nd Years VCA Dance	
19	Murrup Barak University of Melbourne	
25	Australian Elizabeth Theatre Trust Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development	
25	Stingray Story Choreography 2 nd Years VCA Dance	

NOVEMBER

1–15	<i>Diversity</i> Spirit Festival, Adelaide	
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2019

JANUARY

22–27	International Association of Blacks in Dance Dayton, Ohio USA	
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FEBRUARY

15	NRL Indigenous AUS vs Māori NZ, AAMI Park	
19	Collaborating with Country in music composition and performance practice—James Howard, PhD Candidate Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and	James Howard

	and Cultural Development	
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APRIL

5	Welcome to Country Ceremony Mount Alexander Koala PK Conservation Reserve VIC Dja Dja Wurrung	
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MAY

5	Weaving Stories by Glenda Nicholls Meat Market Waddi Waddi/Yorta Yorta/Ngarrindjeri Yirramboi Festival	Glenda Nicholls
8–11	Blood Quantam—Dr Tracey Bunda and Ngioka Bunda-Heath.	Lucy Guerin Inc
16	Acknowledgement of Country The Living Pavilion Next Wave and Melbourne School of Design University of Melbourne	

JULY

10	Bruce Pascoe <i>Dark Emu</i> reading Hosted by Readings Carlton	Bruce Pascoe
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AUGUST

7	From Country to Couture: Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair	Darwin, NT
9–10	National Dance Forum Tracks Dance Company	Darwin, NT
9	National Indigenous Arts Awards	Darwin, NT
10	National Indigenous Music Awards	Darwin, NT
11	Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair	Darwin Convention Centre, Darwin, NT

SEPTEMBER

4–7	Balit Liwurruk Strong Girl	St Martins Youth
20	Te Toki Haruru— the resounding adze	VCA

NOVEMBER

29	<p>PhD Completion Seminars</p> <p><i>Computer!</i></p> <p><i>Locating the Tjabi Song Traditions in the Pilbara Region of Western Australia</i></p> <p><i>Pese o le Fa'aulufalega: Continuity and Innovation in the Musical Traditions of Samoan communities in Diaspora</i></p> <p><i>Sounding Uganda: Contribution of Archival Sound Recordings to the Construction of a National Musical Identity</i></p> <p>Research Unit for Indigenous Arts and Culture (RUIAC), Wilin Centre for Indigenous Arts and Cultural Development</p>	<p>Andrew Morrumburri</p> <p>Dowding Yirrama</p> <p>Rita Seumanutafa</p> <p>Anita Desire Asaasira</p>
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DECEMBER

3	<p><i>Yuggerabul Meriam le Songs from the Heart</i></p> <p>John Wayne Parsons</p> <p>PhD Indigenous Arts and Culture</p>	John Wayne Parsons
17	<p><i>Disrupting Artistic Terra Nullius; The ways that First Nations women in art and community speak back to the colony and patriarchy</i></p> <p>Footscray Community Arts Centre</p>	Paola Balla
24–31	Ayapathu/Lama Lama Country	

	Cape York Peninsula Queensland	
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2020

MARCH

9	Ayapathu/Lama Lama Country Cape York Peninsula Queensland	
29	Burial Ceremony	Yintjingga Port Stewart

JUNE

27	Stage 4 Lockdown COVID- 19	Melbourne VIC
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Appendix B: Directory for Project Documentation

The following folders of project documentation (image, video and audio files) and extra support materials can be found in the following Dropbox:



The directory below details the information for each folder of works (file name, title and file type).

Credits

#80N35 and #83713F photography by Simon Green.

#8L00D photography by Jacinta Keefe.

#8IR7H photography by Nina Veretennikova.

All live video documentation (AVCHD) by Nina Veretennikova.

#80N35

1	<i>BONES #80N35 #1</i>	Image
2	<i>BONES #80N35 #2</i>	Image
3	<i>BONES #80N35 #3</i>	Image
4	<i>BONES #80N35 #4</i>	Image
5	<i>BONES #80N35 #5</i>	Image
6	<i>BONES #80N35 #6</i>	Image
7	<i>BONES #80N35 #7</i>	Image
8	<i>BONES #80N35 #8</i>	Image
9	<i>BONES #80N35 Video</i>	Video work
10	<i>BONES #80N35 Video documentation</i>	Video documentation of the exhibit

#8L00D

1	<i>BLOOD #8L00D #1</i>	Image
2	<i>BLOOD #8L00D #2</i>	Image

3	<i>BLOOD #8L00D #3</i>	Image
4	<i>BLOOD #8L00D #4</i>	Image
5	<i>BLOOD #8L00D #5</i>	Image
6	<i>BLOOD #8L00D Video</i>	Video work
7	<i>BLOOD #8L00D Video documentation</i>	Video documentation of the exhibit

#83713F

1	<i>BELIEF #83713F #1</i>	Image
2	<i>BELIEF #83713F #2</i>	Image
3	<i>BELIEF #83713F #3</i>	Image
4	<i>BELIEF #83713F #4</i>	Image
5	<i>BELIEF #83713F #5</i>	Image
6	<i>BELIEF #83713F #6</i>	Image
7	<i>BELIEF #83713F #7</i>	Image
8	<i>BELIEF #83713F #8</i>	Image
9	<i>BELIEF #83713F #9</i>	Image
10	<i>BELIEF #83713F #10</i>	Image
11	<i>BELIEF #83713F #11</i>	Image
12	<i>BELIEF #83713F #12</i>	Image
13	<i>BELIEF #83713F VIDEO</i>	Video work

#8IR7H

1	<i>BIRTH #8IR7H #1</i>	Image
2	<i>BIRTH #8IR7H #2</i>	Image
3	<i>BIRTH #8IR7H #3</i>	Image
4	<i>BIRTH #8IR7H #4</i>	Image
5	<i>BIRTH #8IR7H #5</i>	Image
6	<i>BIRTH #8IR7H #6</i>	Image
7	<i>BIRTH #8IR7H #7</i>	Image
8	<i>BIRTH #8IR7H #8</i>	Image

9	<i>BIRTH #8IR7H #1 VIDEO</i>	Video
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DNA-CE Soundscape

1	<i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity Speaker 1</i>	Audio
2	<i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity Speaker 2</i>	Audio
3	<i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity Speaker 3</i>	Audio
4	<i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity Speaker 4</i>	Audio
5	<i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity Speaker 5</i>	Audio

AVCHD

1	Clip #1 8IR7H	Video documentation (live)
2	Clip #2 80N35	Video documentation (live)
3	Clip #3 80N35	Video documentation (live)

SUPPORT MATERIAL

1	<i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i> Cover page of program	Image
2	<i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i> Program	Image
3	<i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i> Program pamphlet	Image
4	<i>DNA-CE: Strands of Identity</i> Program poster	Image



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Port, Rheannan Marlena

Title:

Aboriginal contemporary dance practice: embodying our ways of being, knowing and doing through dance storying

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