


A package of resources collated by Annie-renae Winters and Museums & Galleries of NSW to assist tour venues, front-of-house staff, educators and volunteers navigate the themes, ideas and vocabulary of the touring exhibition *Void*, curated by Emily McDaniel.



VOID

Introduction to Training Pack



The touring exhibition *Void* is curated by Emily McDaniel, in conjunction with UTS Gallery and Bathurst Regional Art Gallery and presented nationally by Museums & Galleries of NSW. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government's Visions of Australia program.

About this Training Pack

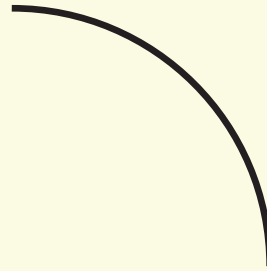
Museums & Galleries of NSW (M&G NSW) is currently investigating the practice of 'cultural mediation' with the aim to equip gallery and museum staff with the tools to implement this engagement strategy across the sector.

Cultural mediation is about deepening the engagement of audiences at a peer-to-peer level through personal opinions being shared, knowledge being transferred and audiences with specific needs (such as those living with disability, at-risk youth, and migrant communities) being offered a tailored pathway.

Volunteer, education and front-of-house staff are often the first people confronted with difficult questions from audiences. They engage their communities through public programming, enabling safe spaces for discussion, creativity and enquiry for all visitors. Through this training pack, M&G NSW aims to help gallery staff develop an inclusive and culturally sensitive vocabulary to talk about the themes and ideas in *Void* to the local community.

This training pack includes conversations that were had at the *Void* Education Symposium at Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, 5 December 2019, as well as further information (in the form of books, video clips, insight), compiled by Kamilaroi educator Annie-renae Winters.

The aim of this training pack is to simply provide fodder for conversation, and allow meaningful connections, stories, experiences and ideas to lead interactions between the exhibition, the gallery, and its public.



The term **cultural mediation** first developed in the 1980s in Europe and North America. Initially associated with the transfer or transmission of knowledge, it has since become known more as an act of forming relationships of mutual exchange between the visiting public, artists, works, objects and the institutions charged with the collection, preservation, interpretation or presentation of cultural objects and material. Today cultural mediation is widespread across continental Europe. France, in particular, has incorporated it into their tertiary studies and mediators are used in large institutions like Palais de Tokyo and the Pompidou Centre.

“Cultural mediation is not about changing people’s opinions, or making visitors love contemporary art - it is about creating a moment”

- Marion Buchloh-Kollerbohm, Head of Cultural Mediation, Palais de Tokyo, France

About the Tour

Void was first held at UTS Gallery from 25 September to 16 November 2018. A larger iteration of the exhibition was created for the tour, which launched at Bathurst Regional Art Gallery in December 2019. Museums & Galleries of NSW will tour *Void* to eight destinations across four states: **Bathurst Regional Art Gallery**, NSW; **Canberra Museum and Gallery**, ACT; **Wagga Wagga Art Gallery**, NSW; **Geraldton Regional Art Gallery**, WA; **Bendigo Art Gallery**, VIC; **Newcastle Art Gallery**, NSW; **Tweed Regional Gallery and Margaret Olley Art Centre**, NSW; **Artspace Mackay**, QLD.

About this Exhibition

Void explores the multiple ways in which artists visually articulate the unknown as space, time and landscape. The work of the included artists does not simply define the void as presence and comparative absence, but rather they utilise form to represent the formless. The void is a multifaceted concept that brings together contemporary Aboriginal artistic practice from across the country. Curated by Emily McDaniel, the exhibition features existing works across the mediums of drawing, painting, sculpture, ceramics, textiles and photography by eminent artists such as Pepai Jangala Carroll, Rusty Peters, Jonathan Jones, Mabel Juli, Mick Namarari Tjapaltjarri, Dr. Thancoupie Gloria Fletcher AO, James Tylor, Andy Snelgar, Hayley Millar-Baker, Freddie Timms, Doreen Reid Nakamarra, John Mawurndjul AM, Jennifer Wurrkidj and Josephine Wurrkidj.

About UTS ART

UTS ART aims to integrate creative practice into daily life on campus. Their annual exhibition and collection programs are complemented by curated public events, learning programs and publications. UTS ART is a space for reflection and exchange where audiences can encounter a diversity of art and ideas.

About Bathurst Regional Art Gallery

A combination of beautiful natural landscapes and the dynamic history of villages such as Hill End, Carcoar, Sofala and Millthorpe have created a unique attraction for visual artists in the Bathurst region since 1815. Bathurst Regional Art Gallery has forged strong links with surrounding townships and within the local community to create a vibrant space showcasing the full spectrum of artistic endeavour. Built in 1989, it was the first purpose built regional gallery in NSW, and provides professional development

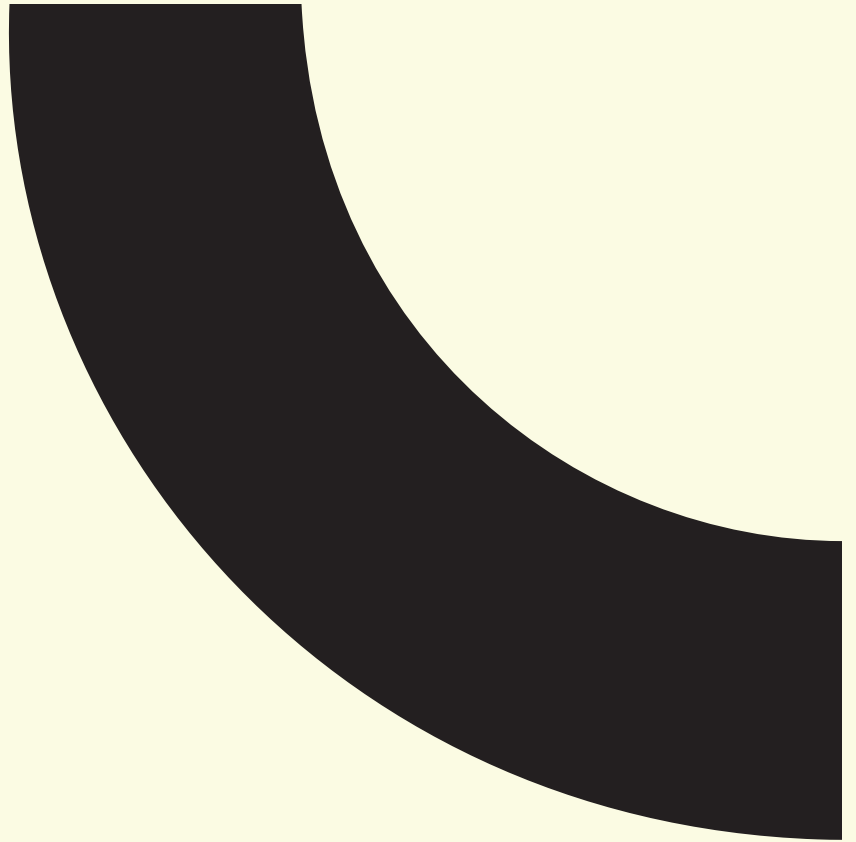
opportunities for local and regional artists. The Gallery is a creator of quality touring exhibitions, and operates the highly celebrated Hill End Artists in Residence Program. Located on historic Keppel Street, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery is a modern, well-equipped and highly celebrated regional gallery.

About the Curator

Emily McDaniel (Wiradjuri) is an independent curator, writer and educator passionate about storytelling and facilitating conversations, and is from the Kalari Clan of the Wiradjuri nation in central New South Wales. She recently held the position of Coordinator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Learning Programs at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia and has also worked in public programs and education positions at the Art Gallery of New South Wales and Object Gallery, with particular emphasis on outreach, access and Indigenous programs. For many years McDaniel worked in the Community and Cultural Development sector, working with Southwest and Western Sydney communities.

About Museums & Galleries of NSW

Museums & Galleries of NSW runs the largest regional touring program in NSW and is committed to touring exhibitions of contemporary visual art to communities throughout Australia. In the last three years, M&G NSW has reached half a million people through 16 exhibitions of contemporary art that toured to 51 separate galleries across six States and Territories. These exhibitions have presented the work of 410 living artists, primarily to regional audiences, nationwide. Our program features the leading names in Australian contemporary art including: Tracey Moffatt, Angelica Mesiti, Richard Bell, Louise Weaver, David Griggs, Patricia Piccinini, Soda_Jerk among others.



VOID

Education Symposium Notes

By Annie-renae Winters



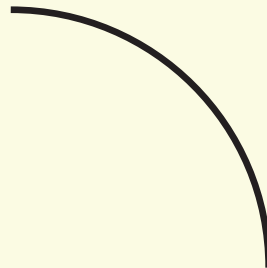
Australian Government
Visions of Australia



The touring exhibition *Void* is curated by Emily McDaniel, in conjunction with UTS Gallery and Bathurst Regional Art Gallery and presented nationally by Museums & Galleries of NSW. This project has been assisted by the Australian Government's Visions of Australia program. The *Void* Education Symposium is supported by International Art Services and Charles Sturt University Community-University Partnership Grant.

Void Education Symposium

To launch the *Void* tour, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery hosted the *Void* Education Symposium on 5 December 2019, which brought together educators from each venue along the tour to workshop ideas and identify programming opportunities. Emily McDaniel and the learning resource authors (drawn from UTS and MCA) provided further support, assistance and skill-sharing opportunities for regional partners.



“Art is the classroom and it’s our way of learning.”

- Annie-renae Winters

Annie-renae Winters

Academic and Teacher

Annie-renae Winters is a Kamilaroi woman who grew up on Wiradjuri/Durag land. She has worked in education within Sydney independent and private schools for over 10 years. She has ran a not for profit design school focusing on Indigenous design incorporated into art education. She has been a tutor/lecturer in the Indigenous health faculty in Western Sydney for two years now, and teaches primary aged classes in Western Sydney schools. Her current thesis is research looking at the strengths of Aboriginal culture and art within school based programs.

Winters has been involved in the education outputs of *Void* since its first incarnation at UTS Gallery (25 September to 16 November 2018). She is a contributor to the Learning Resource and has run yarnng circles in conjunction with this exhibition. Since working on the themes of this show, she has also brought concepts of the void and its multidimensional meaning into her own classroom. Winters has compiled this document based on her experience and learning from the *Void* Education Symposium at Bathurst Regional Art Gallery.



Void Education Symposium, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. Photograph by Vanessa Low, Museums & Galleries of NSW, 2019.

Presenters

The *Void* Education Symposium, held at Bathurst Regional Art Gallery in December 2019, brought together Wiradyuri Knowledge holders and traditional Owners, educators connected to the *Void* exhibition, local representatives and volunteers from the museum and gallery sector, and educators from Bathurst Regional Art Gallery, NSW; Canberra Museum and Gallery, ACT; Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, NSW; Geraldton Regional Art Gallery, WA; Bendigo Art Gallery, VIC; Newcastle Art Gallery, NSW; Tweed Regional Gallery and Margaret Olley Art Centre, NSW; and Artspace Mackay, QLD.

Emily McDaniel

Independent curator, writer and educator from the Kalari Clan of the Wiradjuri nation in Central NSW

Alice McAuliffe

Creative Producer and Educator

Stella Rosa McDonald

Acting Curator UTS ART

Jonathan Jones

Wiradjuri / Kamilaroi Artist whose practice delves into historical records, archival information, and First Nations knowledge.

Amy Bambach

Education Writer and Consultant

Annie-renae Winters

Kamilaroi Academic and Teacher

Gunhigal Mayiny Wiradyuri Dyiland Enterprise

Plains People of the Wiradyuri Enterprise

The Knowledge holders and traditional Owners intrinsically linked to Wiradyuri Country

Dr Barbara Hill

Senior Lecturer & Fellow of The Higher Education Academy (HEA), UK. Lead Gulaay Indigenous Australian Curriculum and Resources team. Division of Learning and Teaching

Yanhadarrambal Jade Flynn

Ngiyeempaa man with Wiradyuri and Yorta Yorta heritage, and an Elder with the Bathurst Wiradjuri & Community Elders group

Melinda Lewis

Lecturer, GLO Courses & Resources
Lead, Indigenous Cultural Competency

Curator Walkthrough led by Emily McDaniel



Emily McDaniel, *Void* Education Symposium, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. Photograph by Vanessa Low, Museums & Galleries of NSW, 2019.



Notes

- Often Aboriginal art is described as minimalist. We might not see it immediately, but that just means we need to see things differently. The purpose is to be challenging the way, we see things. The void always contains intention. The silence has meaning.
- The void often talks about the space in between, the celestial particles, the sky scapes, the water space. Acknowledging it all. It's part of us.
- Emily steers away from using the term 'the dreaming' in her shows, as she believes this process of creation is continuous, not a dream that we wake up from.
- Mabel Juli's work is dense and has a real gravity. She often retells her stories over and over. This is one of her visual story telling techniques. She uses blank space in her work intentionally.

“Silences add meaning and emphasis”

“It isn't empty space, it's filled with significance, we need to just change the way we think”

- Emily McDaniel

“The blank space is intentional... to protect, to conceal, or for some, to ignore”

- Emily McDaniel



Guide Tips

- A great connection that Emily McDaniel raised in her curator's talk was the way the theme 'void' connects to many different topics (from emptiness to openness; from absence to potentiality; from loss to protection). This is a key point that can be used.
- Many of the discussions on the day centred around including Aboriginal perspectives. A good point to remember is that for many Aboriginal visitors this is also new information. Making sure that guides and educators don't assume Aboriginal people know all this information is important. Keeping this in mind can help to create a culturally safe space within the gallery. Aboriginal visitors are still the rightful knowledge keepers of this information. This remains true even as they are learning.
- You don't have to know the answers to all the questions. Saying to visitors and students that you don't know but will research and find answers with them creates shared learning and responsibility. This can be a very powerful learning experience.



Emily McDaniel, *Void* Education Symposium, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. Photograph by Vanessa Low, Museums & Galleries of NSW, 2019.

Learning Resource & UTS Overview

“Think of Void as a framework
to have more localised
conversations”

- Emily McDaniel

“I don’t tell stories, I hand down
knowledge”

- Mallyan Uncle Brian Grant

“I really want you all to think
about the localised conversations
happening on your country”

- Emily McDaniel

“Making the space for
communities to come in and talk
is the most important thing”

- Emily McDaniel



Notes

- Join together with groups who have successfully navigated this space. These groups could be other teachers and classes in your school. You may even make your own sharing group at school. Research online community projects, ask to join the M&G NSW *Void* online learning forum . Remember to research and use the internet and not just expect the school’s Indigenous teachers and students to do all the work. Do your research, share the load. There are places you can check information online before contacting land councils and specifically formed Aboriginal organisations.
- Many of the works are site specific and it is important to remember that when using the works in an education context.
- The *Void* Learning Resource emphasises inquiry first.

“How do we change the spaces that we
make through our public programs”
- Emily McDaniel

“Get comfortable being uncomfortable” as non-Indigenous educators in this space

- Alice McAuliffe

“Whether your First Nations or not... it’s about finding those connections”

- Emily McDaniel



Guide Tips

- Every time you ask a question you create space.
- Remember to build relationships with the visitors and tour groups first.
- Ask open ended questions about the exhibition and make sure visitors know they don’t have to like every piece of art they view. Help them to articulate what they feel and think about the works. This is a powerful tool they will need for life in expressing themselves clearly.
- It is important to create relationships with schools and the community before big events like NAIDOC. Make it a year long learning, not just for one week of the year.
- Sometimes let the visitors lead the conversations and the students lead the lessons.

“Breaking down the barriers of different knowledge forms”

- Emily McDaniel

“We’re talking about knowledge and the way in which it presents itself”

- Emily McDaniel

“It’s not until relationships are formed that you feel comfortable”

- Annie-renae Winters

Practical Session \ Talking Points



Activity

Alice McAuliffe and Annie-renae Winters ran a workshop that could be useful for both gallery staff and tour groups. It was a practical and quick word association activity responding to the *Void* exhibition.

Participants were asked to write down words that come to mind when hearing “void”. Words such as ‘dark’, ‘fear’, ‘empty’, ‘open’, and ‘negative’ came up, as well as words such as ‘potential’, ‘open’, ‘future’, and ‘vessel’. Similar words were then connected using washi tape, e.g. ‘open’ could be paired with ‘space’; ‘potential’ could be paired with ‘possibility’.

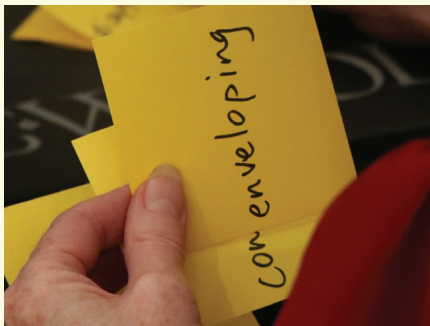
This exercise expanded the concept of what the void could mean to different people, and drew out notions that the void is not one thing, but a creative starting point to explore ideas.

“Encourage students to think of the term void in a broad sense of the word. Not just focusing on the negative aspect of a void, have ideas already to generate more discussion, encourage students to have a go even if they can’t spell a word right. We don’t want ideas to be squashed due to shame of spelling or fear.”

- Annie-renae Winters

“We’ve been using void in our classroom, even in kindergarten... the void has become a really positive thing for them”

- Annie-renae Winters



Creating Connections

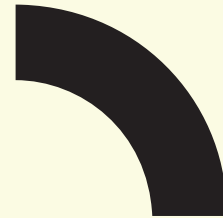
Discussion led by Wiradyuri Elders and Traditional Owners from Gunhigal Mayiny Wiradyuri Dyilang Enterprise with Dr Barbara Hill and Melinda Lewis of Gulaay

This session focused on Incorporating Indigenous content, looking at terminology and

- Cultural authority (traditional knowledge being recognised)
- Cultural safety
- Different elder groups
- Community groups



Wiradyuri Elders and Traditional Owners from Gunhigal Mayiny Wiradyuri Dyilang Enterprise speak at *Void* Education Symposium, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. Photographs by Vanessa Low, Museums & Galleries of NSW, 2019.



Notes

- Try to connect with local knowledge and communities first.
- A powerful analogy given in the Elders' session was the concept of a 'sitting down place'. A place to process, feel safe and be heard. A lot of young people don't have a sitting down place to learn and they need one. Indigenous ways of being can help this for all students.
- Moving around and sitting with community is very important in Aboriginal relationships, unless we visit and sit and learn, we don't understand the story.
- The art is powerful because the stories it holds can't be silenced.
- Every community is different and has different laws, this is a very important concept to remember when engaging respectfully with community groups.
- When creating culturally safe spaces, do this with manners, it is important to do it slowly and be humble
- Many people ask what is a welcome to country and why is it so important. It holds cultural significance as it encourages people to stay safe.
- Even being just involved with community - going along to events, being genuinely interested - can go a long way in creating a relationship.
- The Elders Hub at Bathurst University is an open space where people can have a yarn with Elders. This is a great resource for the community.



Void Education Symposium attendees sit in a yarning circle around Hayley Millar-Baker's work *Meeyn Meerreeng (Country at Night)*, 2017, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. Photograph by Vanessa Low, Museums & Galleries of NSW, 2019.

Yarning Circle

Led by Annie-renae Winters, the yarning circle allowed everyone who had participated in the meaningful discussions of the day to take a moment and process the information both inwardly and outwardly.

Winters started the session by explaining that a yarning circle can take many forms, and this is just one way to orchestrate one. The yarning circle took place as one large group around Hayley Millar-Baker's impactful artwork in this instance, but it could also have been broken down into smaller groups, or have involved creating a craft at the same time, which could be a useful tool for varying age groups, attention spans, or level of anxiety.

Winters set the tone of reflection, describing a few of her reactions to the exhibition, and the themes present in *Void* from her perspective. The group was then asked to take a moment to sit calmly in their thoughts in silence. This was followed by Winters asking each person to say one word that the term "void" now conjured for them, with saying nothing being an option. This was particularly successful because the group had participated in the practical word association session earlier in the day. Flowing in a clockwise motion, each person said one word. Then in the opposite direction each person was asked to reveal one take-home message from the day. For some people it was deeply personal and made them reflect on life experiences and family, for others it was the beginning of a positive change or outlook, and for a few it was a simple reflection on a work in the show that spoke to them. As the reflection went around the circle in order, people tended to respond to or consider the previous answers in their responses, allowing a communal building of ideas and emotions to occur.

Winters and McDaniel then wrapped up the session thanking everyone for their participation and openness.

"An exhibition is made up of artworks, but is made by the people who enter the space and their connections"

- Emily McDaniel

Smoking Ceremony



Smoking Ceremony by Mallyan Uncle Brian Grant and Yanhadarrambal Uncle Jade Flynn, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery. Photographs by Vanessa Low, Museums & Galleries of NSW, 2019.

Learning and Thinking Beyond the Exhibition

Recommended Reading

- Book: *Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe
- Book: *Young Dark Emu* by Bruce Pascoe
- Book: *Little leaders : visionary women around the world* by Vashti Harrison - http://tiny.cc/LittleLeaders_ByVHarrison - pages 58-59 feature Dr. Thancoupie Gloria Fletcher AO
- Paper: *Night Skies of Aboriginal Australia - A Noctuary* by Dianne Johnson - http://www.aboriginalastronomy.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Night_Skies.pdf
- Artist Statement: Hayley Millar-Baker's statement about *Meeyn Meerreeng (Country at Night)* - <https://www.hayleymillarbaker.com.au/artist-statement>

Recommended Viewing

- Short Film: *Mimi* by Warwick Thornton. Snippets of this film can be viewed here: <https://aso.gov.au/titles/shorts/mimi/clip3/>
- Video series: Jonathan Jones speaking about his Kaldor Public Arts Projects *barrangal dyara (skin and bones)* - https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLTsJDv8cZV8Y0xpXssocRmNed50M_rNvW
- Video clip: James Tylor speaking about his practice - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KHFBlsiNY>
- Video clip: Hayley Millar-Baker speaking about her practice - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TseqxbtAAZk>
- Video clip: Andy Snelgar speaking about his practice - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yOn9ECkrJYA>

Recommended Research

- Resource: Museum of Contemporary Art, Australia national tour of John Mawurundjul - https://www.johnmawurndjul.com/national-tour/?mc_cid=e95e4f02a4&mc_eid=22e3a9eb7a
- Language: Definition of Kuninjku terms written by Murray Garde - https://www.johnmawurndjul.com/resources/glossary/?mc_cid=e95e4f02a4&mc_eid=22e3a9eb7a
- Location: AIATSIS Map of Indigenous Australia - <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/articles/aiatsis-map-indigenous-australia>

