



**STOLEN/
WEALTH**

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20 JUN - 04 AUG 2019

A play on the recent term 'stolenwealth'* to replace commonwealth, this show is a dual exhibition that explores colonial history through the displacement of people and resources. Looking at the repercussions both domestic and abroad, **STOLEN** investigates the impact of being taken from your family at a young age while **WEALTH** examines the accumulation of capital by colonial powers and the aftermath on those that have had their resources, including land, stolen from them.

Featuring artists Millie Bruce née Yarran and Judy Watson for **STOLEN**, and Abdul Abdullah, wāni, Pierre Mukeba, Frances Tapueluelu, Lisa Waup, Peter Waples-Crowe, and Sha Gaze + Ayuen K Bol for **WEALTH**, this dual exhibition will encourage you to consider your own definition of wealth, that the finer things in life could be the things you can't put a price on.

Wyndham City acknowledges the peoples of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which Wyndham Art Gallery stands and we pay our respects to their elders, past and present.

**Stolenwealth is a term first coined by Aboriginal activist Robbie Thorpe.*

Wyndham Art Gallery
Great Art. Deep West.

Image (Cover) : Abdul Abdullah - *Journey to the West*

Image (Left) : Abdul Abdullah - *Ulysses*



STOLEN/ WEALTH

Curator's Note by
Dr Megan Evans

The term STOLENWEALTH was first coined by Aboriginal activist Robbie Thorpe. It plays with the wording of commonwealth and subverts the idea of whose common and whose wealth.

Placing the two exhibitions STOLEN and WEALTH side by side is a recognition of the impact of the colonial powers across the globe that came to be known as the Commonwealth, on the people and lands that they occupied. The artists in both shows deal with different aspects of this impact on their lives and their lands.

STOLEN introduces audiences to the power that government policies have had to affect the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait people.

Judy Watson's work *under the act* draws on official documents from the Queensland State Archives as well as personal family photographs to highlight the *Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of Sale of Opium Acts of 1897*, revealing the categories, 'full blood', 'half-cast', 'quadroon', 'octoroon', ascribed to Aboriginal people of the day. These labels still echo in the misunderstanding of many non-Aboriginal people who look for a stereotype of what they think an Aboriginal person is, often judging someone's right to identify based on racist categorization.

The late **Millie Bruce née Yarran's** work shows the pain inflicted on her from being a member of the generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their

Image: Pierre Mukeba - *Infinite Pain*

Image courtesy of the artist and GAGPROJECTS | Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

families by Australian Federal and State government agencies and church missions, under acts of their respective parliaments. Millie was removed from her mother and placed in children's homes along with hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by people who followed brutal government policies and yet failed to imagine the damage done to both the children and their parents. The trauma of these acts live on today in the individuals who managed to survive, as well as the generations that follow them.

WEALTH presents the work of artists whose countries of origin have been colonised. Colonial powers accumulated the wealth of many countries, occupying the land, claiming the resources as their own and in many cases enslaving the people who were the rightful owners of those lands and resources.

Pierre Mukeba makes work that directly confronts this violence and the legacy of internal conflict that has been left behind. **wāni** and **Lisa Waup**, on the other hand, present imagery of survival and celebration in defiance of that history, a different, perhaps decolonial perspective on what wealth really is. **Abdul Abdullah's** work *Journey to the West* shows a man in a mask sitting in a throne style environment surrounded by gold drapery. This elaborate set alludes to the wealth of the commonwealth with what could be an imposter, arrogantly posed with his head thrown back. Alongside his other work *Ulysses*, which features a tattoo inscribed into the back of a man's head saying DO THE RIGHT THING, the message is clear. **Peter Waples-Crowe** reworks the imagery of the coloniser to portray the absurdity of European labels placed on Aboriginal people with works like *Ngarigo King*. **Frances Tapueluelu's** work plays with the role of Pasifika men in the world rugby scene, acknowledging their physical prowess and how this has shaped a global game. **Sha Gaze and Ayuen K Bol** collaborated on their amazing sculptural work that imagines a new kind of rich, cultural wealth.

These artists call out the savagery of colonization and place it in a perspective that makes us think about progress and the real cost of the power relations that have shaped centuries past. It also provides some new models for a future in which the majority of the world's population, who are black, flourish.

STOLEN

Millie Bruce née Yarran and Judy Watson

STOLEN is a word that has been associated with the generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were forcibly removed from their families by Australian Federal and State government agencies and church missions, under acts of their respective parliaments.

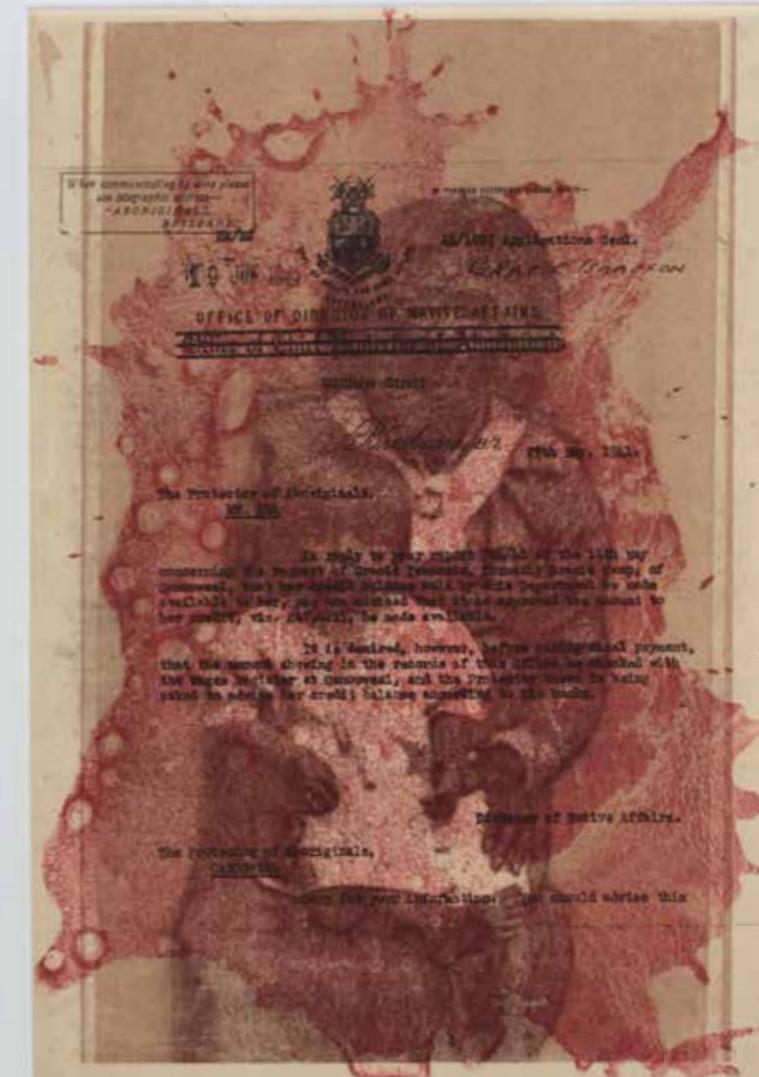
The late Millie Bruce née Yarran was directly affected by these legislations and her work depicts the human pain associated with being removed from her mother.

Artist Judy Watson draws on official documents from the Queensland State Archives as well as personal family photographs to highlight the Aboriginal Protection and Restriction of Sale of Opium Acts of 1897, revealing the categories, 'full blood', 'half-cast', 'quadroon', 'octoroon', ascribed to Aboriginal people of the day.

This exhibition opens a dialogue about the importance of family cohesion and looks at the impact of government policies on the lives of real people.

Wyndham Art Gallery
Great Art. Deep West.

Image : Judy Watson - *under the act*, 2007 (page 2) etching with chine colle, 42.0 x 30.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and grahame galleries + editions. Photographed by Carl Warner



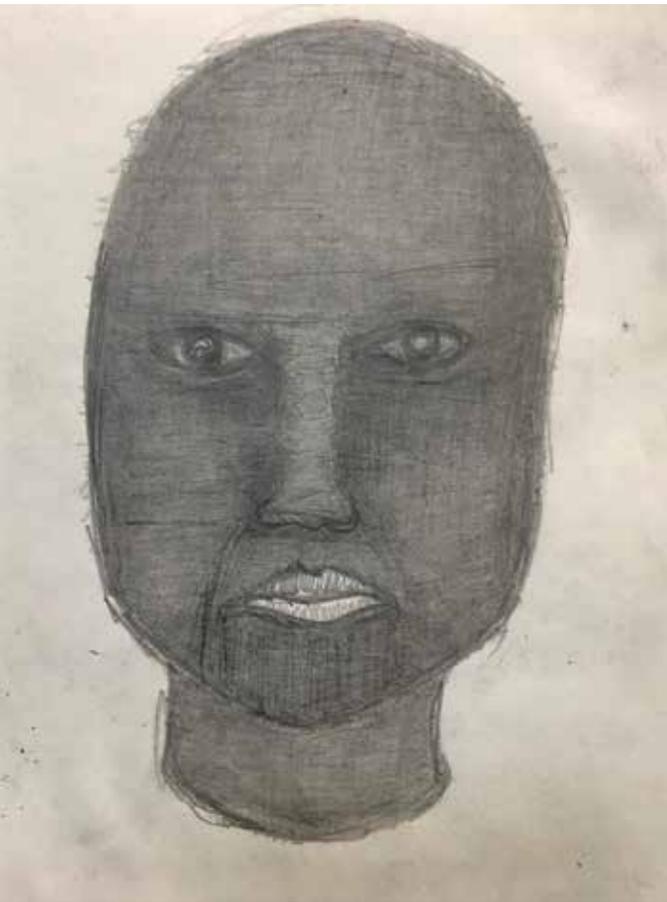


Image: Millie Bruce née Yarran - *Untitled*

Stolen Agency

by Professor Brian Martin

Firstly, let us clarify some terms that will locate our position and trajectory of revealing the premise of Stolen Agency.

What is the meaning of the word Stolen?

As a verb (used with object)- stole, stolen, stealing. To take (the property of another or others) without permission or right, especially secretly or by force. To appropriate (ideas, credit, words, etc.) without right or acknowledgement.

As a verb (used without object), stole, stolen, stealing. To commit or practice theft. To move, go, or come quietly, or unobserved.¹

The key descriptive words here are taken without permission, secretly, without right, to commit theft. Therefore, we can say that it is something that is removed, taken with force or without permission. This is crucial in understanding what this means for people and in particular Indigenous peoples.

What is agency?

For Indigenous peoples, locality and the premise of *Place* is vital to one's being, identity and ways of knowing. This can be described as Country and in so, Country is a living subject with its own agency. This agency is the world, with Country and all entities sharing an intra-activity that can be explained as relationality. There is a differential sense of being enacted in the ebb and flow of agency and this is how things 'become' in the world. This is vital to an understanding of agency as it suggests that there exists an inherent 'relatedness' between things internally. It is here that we can recognize that all matter, including knowledge, has agency and this is of fundamental importance to Indigenous ways of knowing.

In this, how knowledge is acquired is also significant to knowledge itself, it is acquired through cultural practices, language and ceremony. These are predicated on Place. Shawn Wilson presents the argument that Indigenous peoples think and behave in a manner different to that of non-Indigenous peoples. Firstly, by positioning himself as an Opaskwayak Cree from Manitoba Canada, he states:

An Indigenous epistemology would include not only a set of knowledge that is the intellectual property of the people, but also the manner in which that knowledge is understood. My understanding of the similarity between Indigenous peoples' way of thinking can be best stated as being circular and egalitarian.²

¹<https://www.dictionary.com/browse/stolen>

²Wilson, S. (1999). Recognising the importance of spirituality in Indigenous learning. Retrieved from <http://www.acea.org.au/Content/1999%20papers/Shawn%20Wilson%20%20paper.pdf>. p 2

It is not only how knowledge is understood, but it is important how that knowledge is obtained and shared amongst people. What becomes important then in this circular egalitarian worldview is your relationship with an idea, or how you view it. This is also premised by *Place*.

It is important to Indigenous peoples how and when knowledge is premised through *Place*. However, being removed from *Place* has 'affect' on cultural practices, language, ceremony and agency. In this instance, knowledge and how it is obtained is radically shifted.

Stolen Generations

Another word to clarify is generations. Notice this is plural. The Stolen Generations.

Throughout the 19th and 20th Centuries, various policies were formed enacting the removal of Aboriginal children from their mothers, their fathers, their sisters and brothers, their families and communities. These policies were forged under the guise of 'protection'. Protection from whom? It was apparently protection from ourselves. In context of the vile decline in our population after white contact, only an ignorant dominant power would assume we would face extinction at our own hand.

So why take, why steal people? This is the crucial part of these acts of colonial violence. We need to remember that under the assumption of 'finding' this continent through 'terra nullius' (land belonging to no-one), we need to unpack how this occurred. Recalling that under social-Darwinist theories, the hierarchy of the races included the following:

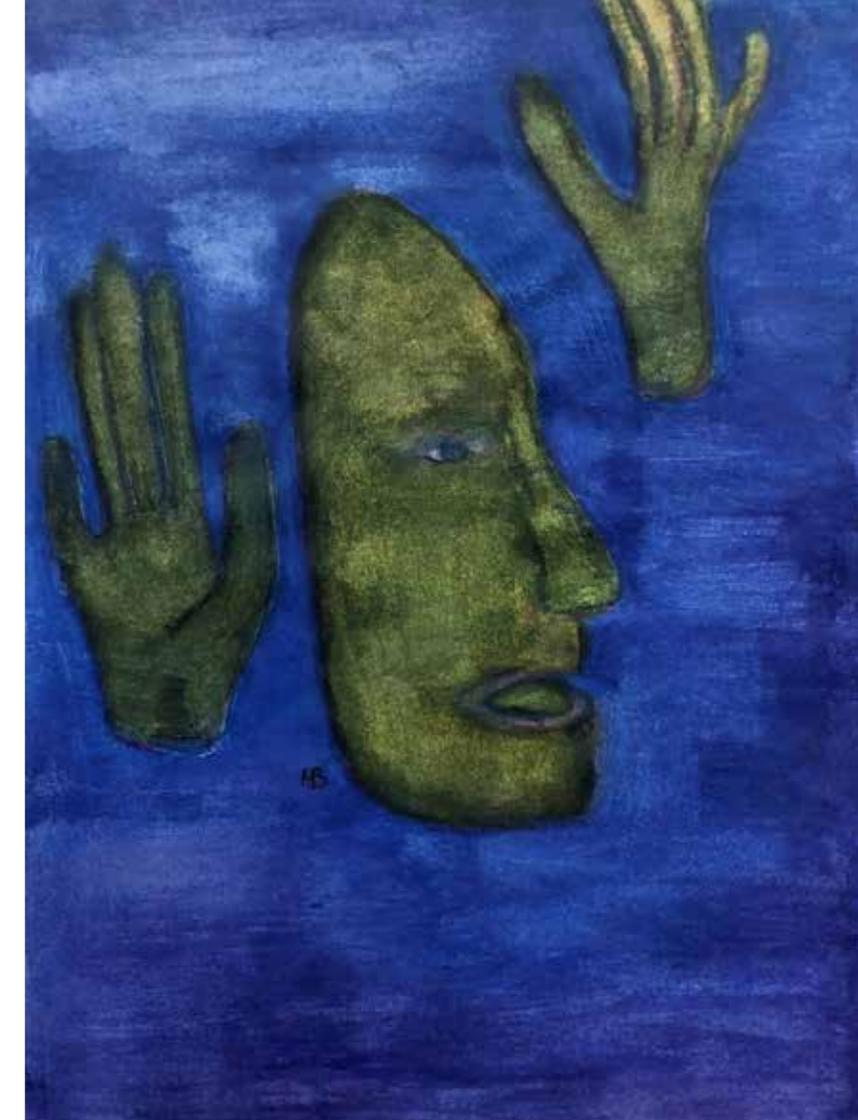
Anglo-Saxon male- at the top of course;
Followed closely by Anglo-Saxon female, then;
Various European races

Asian races (defined as Mongaloid)
African people (defined as Africus Negroid)
Then primates.....and....
then the Australis Negroid.

As we did not make the first rung of the evolutionary ladder, we were not deemed human. But we could be seen as property. Our Country was seen as land, as property. And we were included in this objectification and subjugation as such.

This is what had given rise to such notions of blood quantum; 'half-caste', 'quadroons', 'octoroons', etc. Under these definitions, policies were formed in order to protect our 'quantum'- to save us from ourselves. For example, The Victorian Aboriginal Protections Act(s) (Vic), the Aboriginals Protections and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act (QLD), the Aborigines Amending Act (NSW) to name but a few. Under these acts, children were stolen for different periods of time and/or were never to re-unite with their families ever again. Like most policies or ideologies that are

Image: Millie Bruce nee Yarran - *Untitled*



race or violence based, they kept changing according to location and specific period of time. This has also contributed to the complexities around peoples finding out who they are and where they are from. A significant part of being Stolen is also where you are taken to and from. Removal from the relationality of family and agency of Place meant that you were disconnected with culture, language and practice. But it goes deeper. The forcible removal meant your agency was and is shifted significantly, and your world reconfigured. On top of this, people were taken into homes or to other families where they suffered further subjugation and acts of violence.

It is estimated that approximately 100,000 children were stolen from their families.

What happens to something/someone that is stolen? What happens to its/their agency?

An act against something with no permission, an act that is forceful, that is in secret, that goes against someone's agency and *Place*, is one that reconfigures their agency in an abrupt and volatile way. We ask, what happens to someone who is Stolen? What happens to their Agency. And if they return, are they ever the same? They develop a different type of Agency, one different from before but carrying the scars of their removal, their agency was Stolen.

Ngay nyuhmba gara gihng Wurundjeri jugun, BoonWurrung jugun and ngadjang-gali Bunjil

Ngay nyuhmba gara gihng durumbinjima-burre Mum and Nana





WEALTH

Abdul Abdullah, Lisa Waup, Pierre Mukeba, Peter Waples-Crowe, wāni, Sha Gaze + Ayuen K Bol and Frances Tapueluelu

'You can't take it with you' - What defines wealth?
Is it how big your house is, the size of your bank balance?

WEALTH is an exhibition of work by artists whose countries of origin have been colonised.

The show examines the accumulation of wealth by colonial powers and the impact of colonisation on those that have had their resources, including land, stolen from them. Visitors will be challenged to think about what we value and what the cost of wealth really is.

Wyndham Art Gallery
Great Art. Deep West.

Image : Abdul Abdullah - Journey to the West



Wyndham Art Gallery presents, Wealth.

by Adut Wol

We would like to first acknowledge this exhibition takes place on the lands of Wada wurrung and Wurundjeri where sovereignty has never been ceded. We pay our respects to elder's present, past and future.

Wyndham Art Gallery presents WEALTH, an exhibition that explores the concept of wealth. I spent most of my primary school years thinking about how wealthy I was going to be by the age of 26. I was going to be 26 with my own house, a full bank account and a professional job that required a suit. But here I am an artist, and here you all are as artists. What is your definition of wealth? Is it the roof over your head, your bank balance, could it be your designer bag or are you just happy to be breathing?

Wealth can mean different things to different people depending on their perception in life.

Image: Pierre Mukeba - *Slavelike Labour*
Image courtesy of the artist and GAGPROJECTS | Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

Wealth is family.
Wealth is history.
Wealth is knowledge.

This exhibition throws out assumptions about wealth. The Wyndham Art Gallery has brought together many artists from different walks of life to present their definition of wealth.

Artists are far too familiar with what it is like to have wealth, and to have that wealth ripped right out of their hands. Artists stretching as far away as the continents of Africa where their wealth has been stolen from them, then sold back to them in a form of Refugee status. Resources that are used to buy skyscrapers in Paris, and those same thieves then insult the refugees who come from the countries they originally robbed.

This exhibition will invite visitors to question themselves about what they consider of value. Some define wealth as

Image: Peter Waples-Crowe - *Ngarigo King*





Image: Frances Tapueluelu - 'they like playing that coconut style of rugby.....throwing the ball around' Quote from Billy Moore an ex rugby league player from Queensland who was commenting on the New Zealand Warriors Rugby League team

having an abundance of valuable possessions, or money. One of the most influential musicians of all time, who grew up in Jamaica, once part of the commonwealth empire, referred to wealth as not '*how much wealth a man acquires, but in his integrity and his ability to affect those around him. Your life is worth much more than gold*' - Bob Marley.

We are honoured to have the works of Pierre Mukeba, wāni, Abdul Abdullah, Peter Waples-Crowe, Frances Tapueluelu, Lisa Waup, and finally dynamic duo Ayuen and Sha Gaz in this exceptional exhibition.

We welcome these artists here to share with us their common, wealth.

Wealth is family.

Wealth that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were robbed of when white settlers came.

Wealth is history.

History that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were robbed of when white settlers came.

Stolen Wealth is the Stolen Generation still finding their way home, still connecting the pieces of their history and still seeking knowledge and peace in these altered lands they once recognise. Between 1910 and 1970 the Australian Colonial

government robbed the Aboriginal people off their wealth through the policies that allowed them to remove Aboriginal children, the heart of their community, from their families. Families were torn apart, children were stolen and placed under a fraudulent system that produced what is now known as the stolen generation.

How could their wealth have been passed on? How was the knowledge of their family, their land and their wealth supposed to be passed on when their footprints were ploughed from their path and hidden from them?

We have Indigenous Aunties and Uncles who still remember what it was like being taken away, Aunties and Uncles who could remember at the exact point where their wealth washed away with every colonial fleet to touch ground on their lands.

Image : Sha Gaze + Ayuen K Bol - *Watu Wa Bahari*





Today, Aboriginal families still fight for their wealth. They're not asking for their time back, they are not asking for the government's dispensable gold, or paper money. They are demanding their land, their source of wealth.

To have an exhibition like this where Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander artists Peter Waples-Crowe, and Lisa Waup honour us settlers with their wealth, is truly a gift to the rest of us.

As settlers of these lands, as refugees to this land we will be forever grateful to the Indigenous communities. There can never be any words that can truly be said as a black settler living on these stolen lands. Our shared history of colonialism has forced us to adapt, to re-connect and re-write our stories.

French president Emmanuel Macron once said, *'in some countries today seven or eight children are born to each woman'*. This came out of his mouth when asked why he thinks Africa (all 54 countries of it) are considered failed states.

The French colonial Empire ruled over North, West and Central Africa from around 1830 to 1960. Many banks from some of these countries are still under the French grip. Yet they do not understand how their colonial legacy has left entire countries begging for what is theirs.

There seems to be a disconnection between colonial heads and the

Image: Pierre Mukeba - *Psychological Trauma*
Image courtesy of the artist and GAGPROJECTS | Greenaway Art Gallery, Adelaide

damaged countries they have been to, as though somehow they stopped their brains transmitting the atrocities they have committed.

Wealth is stolen history, stolen knowledge and stolen language.

wāni and Pierre Mukeba, are some of the names in this exhibition, whose work and language is telling a tale of colonial power, robbery and the battle of re-connection to a history which is ongoing.

One could ask, why you can always find a French speaking Congolese-man in the West of Africa, but not a Congolese speaking Frenchman in France?

Wealth: an abundance of valuable possessions or money

Common: belonging to all or share by all

Commonwealth: Any government in which all people involved have a say.

Common-wealth: wealth shared amongst each other equally

Image : wāni - *Kongo must come*





To be forced to learn the language of colonisers and then read your history written in their words is the greatest injustice of all.

Thank you to all the artists who have lent us their history, their knowledge and their wealth here today.

History re-writes itself every day, these artworks are a testament to that, from representing a history of African artists living in Australia, to the continuation of history by Indigenous and Torres Strait islander people.

We hope this exhibition will shed a light on what wealth is to you. Is it in your pocket?

Image: Peter Waples-Crowe - *Colonised 4*



Image: Abdul Abdullah - *The wedding (conspiracy to commit)*

Go Deeper:

A series of experiences that offer a deeper insight into the works and the creative practices of the exhibiting artists featured.



Artist In Conversation

AS A MATTER OF FACT

Join a stimulating conversation with artists Pierre Mukeba, Peter Waples-Crowe, Frances Tapueluelu and wāni, moderated by prominent academic Professor Brian Martin to discuss the impact of these policies on lived experience.

THU 11 JUL 2019
6:00pm - 8:00pm

Image: Sha Gaze + Ayuen K Bol - *Watu Wa Bahari*

Sunday Salon

Join us in a recycling bonanza as we adorn and beautify T-shirts otherwise destined for the bin or Op-shop!

STOLEN/WEALTH exhibiting artist, Peter Waples-Crowe will facilitate material collaging and painting with second-hand clothing. Create the newest fashion trend as you examine the impacts of colonisation through wealth and access to abundant resources, such as textiles, of which Australia recycles 23 kilograms per person per year.

Light snacks will be provided, Children are welcome and bookings are essential \$10

SUN 28 JUL
1:00pm - 5:00pm

wyndhamarts.eventbrite.com



Elders Gathering

In partnership with IPC Health, a gathering for elders, family and community to connect and celebrate the opening of NAIDOC week.

SUN 07 JUL
2:00pm - 4:00pm

Image: Peter Waples-Crowe - Colonised 3



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wyndham.vic.gov.au/arts

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