

## *Future Memorials*

**Jonathan Jones, Tom Nicholson, Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy**

**19 October 2013 – 9 February 2014**



Images: Left, Jonathan Jones (Kamilaroi/Wiradjuri) with Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy (Wurundjeri) after William Barak (Wurundjeri), *Untitled* (shield design) 2013, fluorescent tubes and fittings, electrical cable, Courtesy of the artists

Right, Tom Nicholson, *Towards a monument to Batman's Treaty* 2008-2013, 101 A0 sheets pasted to the museum wall, 3456 used bricks collected by citizens in and around Healesville, Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane

TarraWarra Museum of Art (TWMA) presents the new and ambitious multi-faceted project *Future Memorials*, developed by Sydney-based Wiradjuri-Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones and Melbourne-based non-Aboriginal artist Tom Nicholson in collaboration with senior Wurundjeri Elder Prof. Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy AO from 19 October 2013 to 9 February 2014.

Taking its cue from the proximity of TWMA to the site of Coranderrk Aboriginal Station which was originally located on almost 5,000 acres along the Yarra River between 1863 and 1924, *Future Memorials* explores the effects of colonialism and seeks new ways to understand and renew the relationship between the past and the present. The exhibition also coincides with the 150th anniversary year of Coranderrk, which is regarded as one of most significant sites of Koorie history in Victoria.

Commissioned by TWMA and developed in close consultation with the Coranderrk's Wandoon Estate Aboriginal Corporation and other key stakeholders in the Wurundjeri story from the Yarra Valley area, the *Future Memorials* project develops in two distinct phases beginning with an exhibition, in TWMA's North and Vista Galleries, of new contemporary installation works by Tom Nicholson and Jonathan Jones.

Tom Nicholson presents the new work *Towards a Monument to Batman's Treaty* in TWMA's North Gallery, an installation of thousands of bricks comprising the constituent elements of an 'unrealised' public work conceived as a proposition towards 'a future realisation'. Operating between the appearance of a ruin and the function of a preparatory drawing the work references the exact height of Batman's Hill (now Southern Cross Station) and the exact number of bricks used in Melbourne's first chimney, built by William Buckley, an escaped convict who lived with the Wathaurung people on the Bellarine Peninsula for 32 years. The chimney was built for the pioneer John Batman, the originator of 'Batman's Treaty', a highly contentious land treaty document he claimed to have negotiated with the Wurundjeri in 1835.

The bricks used within the work also represent an important participatory community aspect as many have been donated by residents from the community of the Yarra Valley, alluding to the history of the bricks made in the Coranderrk Station's kiln and used for its buildings, which were taken to build the expansion of nearby Healesville during the township's early development when the station was closed in 1924. Surrounding the installation will be over 100 interpretative wall plaques detailing information on Batman's life and the early history of Melbourne to reveal the many different stories surrounding the treaty, enabling viewers to think about its ambiguous connotations as both an act of misappropriation and an implicit recognition of Aboriginal sovereignty and the possibilities of re-animating the form of the monument towards a more complex, even contradictory, articulation of our history.

# MEDIA RELEASE

OCTOBER 2013 to FEBRUARY 2014



**Jonathan Jones presents the new work *untitled (shield design)***, a corridor of yellow fluorescent lights situated in the museum's 45 metre long Vista Walk Gallery. The conceptual basis for the design of this large-scale installation is the wooden parrying shield made in 1897 by the great Wurundjeri *Ngurungaeta* (leader) and artist William Barak (1824-1903) in 1897, which features a distinctive carved diamond design, on loan for the first time from the Koorie Heritage Trust collection. The colour of the light in the work takes its inspiration from the story that in 1903 Barak predicted the timing of his own death, stating that he would die when the yellow *muyan* (wattle) bloomed. Barak, like a shield, was steadfast in his campaign for his peoples' rights and protection, promoting the strength and legitimacy of the community through his leadership at Coranderrk while maintaining their strong cultural heritage. The use of light as a medium for the artwork also links back to Barak's own paintings of traditional ceremonies which included two fires, one for the Wurundjeri and one for guests.

**The second phase of the project, *Untitled (Seven monuments)***, will take place in 2014 after the exhibition at TWMA ends, when the artists and Aunty Joy Wandin Murphy collaborate, after community consultation, in the creation of a series of 7 site-specific public artworks marking the original boundaries of the once thriving, self-sufficient Coranderrk Aboriginal Station.

The monuments will chart the gradual shrinking of the original Coranderrk lands from 1863 to the present day, allowing viewers to re-imagine the borderlines of the former mission station back on to the landscape. A series of seven upside-down, buried flagpoles with only the footings visible above ground will be monumentalised with cairns re-purposed from the bricks used in the *Future Memorials* exhibition. Each cairn, accompanied by a cluster of indigenous Coranderrk bushes, will bear a plaque on its each of its four faces: one will describe the history of the boundaries of Coranderrk; the others will communicate Wurundjeri beliefs and cosmologies and list one of the 7 Wurundjeri seasons of the year to further reveal the largely invisible indigenous history of the area.

TWMA Director Victoria Lynn says, "This important new public art project signifies TWMA's continuing commitment to commissioning new contemporary art and its recognition of our place within the indigenous history of the local landscape. It will provide a profound meditation on the nature of the monument as a tradition closely linked to colonialism, and on the possibilities of new kinds of public art making and monuments".

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