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OONYAWA - from Museum back to Country **New exhibition at the South Australian Museum**

Traditional stories and contemporary voices will combine in *Oonyawa - from Museum back to Country*, a new exhibition being hosted at the South Australian Museum that features stunning work by Aurukun artists from Western Cape York.

Developed by independent curators Gina Allain and Louise Ashmore, the exhibition showcases archival material from the Museum, together with paintings, photographs, film and audio material created during an Indigenous Cultural and Language Support project in 2012 and 2013.

Through a series of workshops, Wik, Wik Waya and Kugu Traditional Owners, Elders, artists and community members, including youth, reconnected with their own Country. For some it was an opportunity to be on their traditional land for the first time and for all an opportunity to share and express the vitality of their links with Country; a matrix of physical and spiritual relationships between their stories and songlines, as well as the chance to embody these intimate connections artistically.



Joshua Woolla at the Cairns Indigenous Art Fair 2010, Photo by Gina Allain.

Curator Gina Allain said the return to Country culminated in a camp near a significant Wik “storyplace” Oonyawa, allowing artists to engage with the present and their past in an active and creative dialogue.

“Linking past and present Oonyawa brings Museum collections, archival material, linguistic and innovative aesthetic development together to demonstrate an ultra-creative ability that blends evocative and ancestral traditions with a wonderful contemporary artistic sensibility,” Ms Allain said.

“The project epitomises how a continuing link between culture and land is nurtured through art practices.”

South Australian Museum Director Brian Oldman said the exhibition was an opportunity to draw on the Museum’s relationship with the Wik peoples.

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“Oonyawa - from Museum back to Country underlines the responsibilities shared by museums, collections, communities, individuals and custodianships to ensure continuity of tradition,” Mr Oldman said.

“The exhibition draws on Museum collections and research, and pairs with contemporary material to create a beautiful journey.”



Jean Walmbeng, *Oonyawa*.2013. Acrylic on canvas.
© courtesy the artist, photo by Gina Allain

Oonyawa: from Museum back to Country will be at the South Australian Museum from Saturday 13 December 2014 until 28 February 2015.

Five of the artists will present talks at the opening on Sunday 14 December 2014 at 1pm.

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