Jonathan Jones: *guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin.gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi* (they made a solitude and called it peace)

Bathurst Regional Art Gallery

2 October – 22 November 2015
JONATHAN JONES

guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin.gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi
they made a solitude and called it peace

BATHURST REGIONAL ART GALLERY
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guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin.gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi (they made a solitude and called it peace): landscape, 2015, film still.
guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin.gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi (they made a solitude and called it peace) by Wiradyuri/Kamilaroi artist Jonathan Jones is a Bathurst Regional Art Gallery Bicentennial Commission in collaboration with the Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community Elders that looks at a time when two cultures met and clashed with fatal consequences.

On behalf of the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery (BRAG) I thank Jonathan for undertaking this commission and creating a series of works that are a moving tribute to this darkest period of our recent history.

In realising this exhibition, the first time the Gallery has been given over to the work of a single artist, Jonathan Jones has worked closely with the Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community Elders, to whom BRAG gives thanks for entrusting us with this culturally important and sensitive project.

they made a solitude and called it peace comprises a series of moving-image works, installations and the physical outcomes of community-engagement workshops.

This exhibition follows on from a project undertaken in November 2014, the multi-award winning Possum Skin Cloak Healing Workshop initiated by BRAG Curator Sarah Gurich. That project was a collaboration between BRAG, the Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community Elders, the local Aboriginal community and Bamirra Arts Victoria. The physical outcomes of this culturally important workshop were two possum skin cloaks, that became central to the 2015 Proclamation Day Ceremony when Wiradyuri elder Dinawan Dyirribang presented Bathurst’s Mayor with one of the cloaks in a powerful and symbolic gesture of reconciliation. This act echoed a similar exchange that had taken place 200 years earlier when a Wiradyuri man presented Governor Lachlan Macquarie with a cloak, shortly after the Proclamation of Bathurst in 1815.

In planning BRAG’s Bicentenary exhibition program, Curator Sarah Gurich and Education and Public Programs Officer Emma Hill wanted to present to the people of Bathurst a series of exhibitions that strongly reflected on, celebrated and gave voice to the widest range of cultures and peoples that have shaped Bathurst. This exhibition amply fulfils these objectives.

I would like to thank a number of people who have been instrumental in ensuring the success of this project: Dr Jeanine Leane, Genevieve O’Callaghan, Aden Wessels, Sharon Hickey and BRAG’s staff.

The commission has also received special funding from both Bathurst Regional Art Gallery Society Inc. and Bathurst Regional Council.

Lastly, I want to sincerely thank Sarah Gurich, our Curator who has worked closely with Jonathan Jones and the elders, for her oversight of what I believe is one of the most culturally important exhibitions in the Gallery’s long and illustrious history.

Richard Perram OAM
Director, Bathurst Regional Art Gallery
October 2015
The Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community Elders are pleased to present the exhibition *guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin.gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi (they made a solitude and called it peace)*, 2015, with Jonathan Jones, as part of the Bathurst Bicentenary. For us the Bicentenary is a commemoration, an opportunity to reflect on the past and think about the future.

The Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community Elders are a group of local Wiradyuri and Aboriginal elders committed to maintaining culture in the region. This exhibition is an important way of telling our story.

We are represented by three important local animals – biladurang (the platypus), wambad (the wombat) and dyagula (the lyrebird). The biladurang creation story is connected to this region and binds us to our past; wambad represents determination and the way forward; and dyagula represents the many voices and many people who have come to settle in the Bathurst region.

As the first inland town in Australia, Bathurst and the surrounding region have had a long and complex history of invasion. Wiradyuri had heard of the invasion from neighbouring nations in the east, and when the newcomers arrived we followed our protocol and shared our land and its resources.

Soon the land was cleared and fences were erected, preventing our traditional way of life. Conflict broke out and Wiradyuri, led by the warrior Windradyne, formed a resistance movement.

In response, the government declared martial law in 1824, which endorsed the killing of Wiradyuri in an act of open war. But when Wiradyuri women and children were massacred, Windradyne walked to Parramatta to meet with the governor to declare peace.

This exhibition tells the stories of our history, our people and our Country. We have been working with Jonathan on this exhibition, directing him, teaching him and supporting him. We are happy to see young Wiradyuri standing up and telling our stories.

Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community Elders

October 2015
P6: *bindugaanygalangbu barrimagalang dhindhagalangbu potatobu* (freshwater mussel shells, musket balls and potatoes), 2015, installation view detail.

P8: Jonathan Jones with the Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community *guwinyalgu gurawinybu* (stone tools and blossoms), 2015, installation view detail.

Opposite: Jonathan Jones with the Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community Elders *guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin*gu *gulbalangidyal ngunhi* (they made a solitude and called it peace): *portraits*, 2015, installation view detail.

PP12–17: Jonathan Jones with the Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community Elders *guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin*gu *gulbalangidyal ngunhi* (they made a solitude and called it peace): *portraits*, 2015, film stills. *(left to right)*
Uncle Bill Allen Jr Dinawan Dyirribang
Uncle Ray Rogers & Aunty Gloria Rogers Dindimaa
Aunty Jill Bower Gunhi Mudha
Uncle Brian Grant
Aunty Joylene Simpson
Uncle Jim Beale Kalmadyne Goombrydge
Which piece of Australia was founded in peace?

guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin.gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi (they made solitude and called it peace) by Jonathan Jones.

Jonathan Jones challenges the selective colonial memory of Australian settler history through works that draw on and are informed by the deep archive of Wiradyuri history that forms that greater canvas for his latest exhibition. guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin.gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi (they made solitude and called it peace) explores the Wiradyuri history of Bathurst through a series of stark and poignant moving images, installations and community-history workshops. The visual impact is a powerful juxtaposition of an official history of a peaceful settlement against the bloody and valiant struggle of the Wiradyuri people in what should be remembered as Australia’s first inland war and a seminal site of resistance, and the continuing resilience of the Wiradyuri descendants whose unbroken links to this land through memory, story and oral history are acknowledged.

Jones, a Sydney-based artist, is a member of the Wiradyuri and Kamilaroi peoples of New South Wales. Since the late 1990s he has exhibited both nationally and internationally. His site-specific installations capture the local, the ‘country that nourishes, nurtures and inspires the stories behind his works’. Jones has the unique ability to harness the life-blood – the dynamic of the Country1 that he is depicting. His use of local oral histories told by the elders is the foundation of this and what gives his work its voice. It says loudly and clearly that, for Aboriginal people, the local is a powerful site of memory and cultural continuance.

One of the most important aspects of the project has been to listen to and make moving portraits of local elders standing on and speaking to significant sites around the Bathurst area. These stories and images represent the ongoing role that elders play as the custodians of Aboriginal history and reveal, in many cases, the ongoing battle that our elders face on a daily basis regarding the recognition, protection and preservation of Country and cultural identity.

This exhibition coincides with the settler bicentenary of the founding and renaming of this place we now know as Bathurst.
But there are some who have always known this land as something else and whose history is one of deep time. When I was reading up on the settler history of Bathurst in an article from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1842, much was made of the feats and conquests of the British settlers; Evans, Blaxland, Wentworth and Oxley were names that featured prominently. Evans, for example, changed the name of the river, from the Wambool (which we know from the elders is an important site, especially for women) to the Macquarie in honour of the colonial governor of the day, and the lands surrounding were renamed Bathurst after Lord Bathurst, the secretary to the colonies. The white maleness of the colonial regime began to encroach on this area quite rapidly in the years following 1815, as this and other official reports of the local history of the area show. Much credit was given to the early British settlers for their tenacity and commitment to maintaining and enforcing Englishness on the foreign environment through such things as the Peel Common and the Bathurst Hunt, as well as the town’s many grandiose European style buildings.

It took me a long time as I waded through the ‘triumphant and progressive history’ detailed in this particular article to find any mention of the Wiradyuri people. And then, it was a few sentences scattered amidst sheep farms and foxhunts that read: *In 1824, settlers were much troubled by natives and there is on record a punitive expedition under the leadership of Major Morisset, consisting of four magistrates, 40 police and some settlers who made over towards Mudgee, and in an encounter that took place, many natives were killed.*

There is no mention in this triumphant history that the settlers were almost defeated by the Wiradyuri, who fought fiercely for their Country, or that the situation became so dire for the new settlement that in 1824 Governor Brisbane declared a state of martial law against the Wiradyuri people, who were led by Windradyne on the Bathurst Plains. The undisclosed number of the Country’s first people is a massacre and one of the many skeletons in the colonial closet that Aboriginal history and creative expression challenge. There was no mention either of the many more undisclosed numbers of Wiradyuri men,
women and children who died between March and December 1824, when martial law officially ceased. What is recorded is Brisbane’s comment: ‘...the judicious and humane measures pursued by the magistrates assembled at Bathurst...have restored tranquility without bloodshed.’

This sentiment is a familiar trope in western conquest and empire history – to silence brutally and to call it and write of it in the annals of western history as ‘peace’. The quote from Calgacus, cited by the Roman historian Tacitus (c.AD 83–84) and used as the title of the exhibit, is poignant and evidences this. But colonisers were not counting on their once-conquered, enslaved, oppressed peoples seizing back their moments of history. In particular, here in Wiradyuri Country, and in Australia in general, the colonisers seriously underestimated the resilience of Aboriginal people – a resilience that is born of and nurtured by connections to place, to Country.

As a nation, it has taken Australia a long time to even begin to consider the narratives, experiences and the long and continuing history of place that the Wiradyuri people have here. Artworks such as those of Jones expose and interrogate settler myths of ‘discovery, progress and peaceful settlement’. The display on the title wall that features the fine lines and sophisticated aero-dynamic properties of a Wiradyuri dhulu directly above the cumbersome colonial musket turns conventional and deep-seated notions and perceptions of ‘who was civilized and who was savage?’ on their head and asks ‘which technology was the most advanced and appropriate for the terrain?’

On the floor, directly below the spear and musket, is a visually stark, geometrically perfect slate-grey circle. On closer inspection, this dark circle reveals a dense, neatly placed array of smoky-blue, jagged-edged flint-stones scattered intermittently with the intricately beautiful, asymmetrical blossoms of yellow-gold bottlebrush. This work reinterprets an excerpt from Blaxland’s first recorded encounter with the Wiradyuri people when he crossed the mountains and found the remnants of a camp. He reported on finding ‘flowers shaped like bottlebrush’ and ‘full of honey’ and ‘shavings and pieces of sharp stones’. Blaxland concluded that ‘the natives...had been busily employed in sharpening their spears’.

Here, Jones’s flint and flower circle highlights the irony of another familiar trope of empire and conquest discourse used to describe Aboriginal, or in the deficit language of the colonisers, ‘primitive peoples’ – that of ‘a stone-age culture’ – of peoples outside of time, with no evolving histories and no capacity for progress. Strategically placed below the unwieldy settler musket that required flint-stone to fire it and was notoriously slow to activate and unreliable in reaching its target, this circular exhibit contests this all too familiar and persistent western archaeological, historical and anthropological rhetoric.

Symbolically these sharp, unevenly broken pieces of stone gathered on Country and arranged now as a tight-knit, cohesive circle represent colonial attempts to scatter and dissipate the Wiradyuri people’s history and culture. Yet gathered together, these fragments of stones are the gems of a deep history of place and a people.
The simple images made by potato print stencils on the rear wall remind us of the harsh and vicious English property laws that triggered the Wiradyuri wars in the first place, when a group of Wiradyuri people who were given potatoes by a local farmer the day before were shot when they returned the following day for more potatoes. Directly below this are two possum skin cloaks replicating the cloak given to Governor Macquarie by the Wiradyuri when he visited the site that became the city of Bathurst. In the space between the cloaks and the potatoes one is left to ponder the nature of reciprocity and the act of giving and taking.

This exhibition interrogates the false peace of silence and asks ‘which piece of Australia was founded in peace?’ But it goes beyond an interrogation and exposure of a shallow colonial past to reclaim the triumph for the Wiradyuri custodians and their descendants.

And so Bathurst is a good place to begin a deeper exploration of Australia’s recent past. It is symbolic of the interior – the heart of inland Australia. Bathurst has been described in settler histories as a blueprint for colonisation – the great opening up of the interior that helped define national identity. I think it is a blackprint for Aboriginal history – this is the heartland of Australia’s first resistance. It is an important site of memory. Jones’s work probes this – deeply.

Dr Jeanine Leane
Australian Research Council Fellow
Australian Centre for Indigenous History, Australian National University
October 2015

1. Country for Aboriginal people means something different to the way settler Australians use the term. Country for Aboriginal people is more than just land. Country is a state of mind, but it is more than just transcendental – it is connected to something material, real and tangible. Country means the memories of the people on our land and our sense of it. Therefore the term should always be capitalised.
P18: guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin.gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi (they made a solitude and called it peace): landscape, 2015, film stills.

PP20–21: guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin. gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi (they made a solitude and called it peace): landscape, 2015, installation view detail.


Above: *marrgabu murraywayburring* (*parrying shields and pathways*), 2015, installation view detail.

PP32–33: *madhan.galang gidharra (gold trees)*, 2015, installation view detail.
guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin.
gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi (they made a solitude and called it peace): landscape, 2015.

3-channel video, PAL, surround sound, 6 mins 16 secs
Commissioned by Bathurst Regional Art Gallery as part of the B200, 2015.

This film explores the history and beauty of Wiradyuri country. It tells the story of sovereignty, bloodshed, conquered lands and the endurance of Wiradyuri people. Wiradyuri country was the setting for Australia’s first inland frontier war. In response to the resistance movement led by Windradyne and other Wiradyuri, martial law was declared in the region in 1824, the consequences of which are lived today by the local community. This film examines these stories, locating country as the connector between the viewer and history.

The work takes its title from Calgacus, a Caledonian chieftain who resisted the Roman Empire in northern Scotland in c.AD83–84. These words were also used by local pastoralist William Suttor Jr to describe the Bathurst massacres.

Jonathan Jones with the Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community Elders

These portraits celebrate the Aboriginal elders of Bathurst. Like those before them, these elders are actively engaged in maintaining country, culture and community for the next generation.

guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin.
gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi (they made a solitude and called it peace): portraits, 2015.

6-channel HD video, PAL, stereo sound, 10 mins 5 secs
Commissioned by Bathurst Regional Art Gallery as part of the B200, 2015.

These portraits speak to the complexity of Wiradyuri lived experiences, history and country, and the enduring role of elders in our community.

Cinematographer: James Todd
Camera Assistant: Onni Elliott
Grip: Gavin Kennelly
Producer: Sabrina Organo
Production Assistant: Genevieve O’Callaghan
Post Producer/Editor: Elliott Magen
Post Production: Definition Films
Digital Colourist: Billy Wychgel
VFX/Compositing: Ben Blick-Hodge
Sound Design: Wes Chew, Sam Gain-Emery and Luke Mynott, Sonar Sound
Technician: Aden Wessels

[PP10 & 12–17]
bindugaanygalangbu
barrimagalang dhindhagalangbu
potatobu (freshwater mussel
shells, musket balls and potatoes),
2015.

Bronze, lead, potatoes
Collection of the artist

[PP6 & 36]

Jonathan Jones with the
Bathurst Wiradyuri and
Aboriginal Community
guwinyalgurawinybu (stone
tools and blossoms), 2015.

Stone waste from the Bathurst
Wiradyuri and Aboriginal
Community stone-tool making
workshop held in September
2015, grevillea

[PP8, 24–25 & 34]

dhulubu barrimabu (spear and
musket), 2015.

Spear, maker unknown,
nineteenth century, south-east
region
Wood
Private collection

Brown Bess flintlock rifle, 1771
Iron, wood
Private collection

[Outer Cover & PP24–25]
Above: *marrgabu murrwaybu (parrying shields and pathways)*, 2015, installation view detail.

P34: Jonathan Jones with the Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community *guwinya* 
*gurawinybu (stone tools and blossoms)*, 2015, installation view detail.

P36: *bindugaanygalangbu barrimagalang dhindhagalingbu potatobu (freshwater mussel shells, musket balls and potatoes)*, 2015, installation view detail.
Jonathan Jones with the Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community
*badhangbu murrubu (possum-skin cloak and designs)*, 2014–15.

*possum pelts, thread, ochre, pokerwork*
Bathurst Regional Council collection

*possum pelts, thread*
Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community collection

*potato stamp, paint*

(pp28–29)

*marrgabu murrwaybu (parrying shields and pathways)*, 2015.

*marrga (parrying shields), makers unknown, nineteenth century, south-east region wood*
Private collection

*maps from A geographical dictionary, or Gazetteer of the Australian colonies, 1848*
William Henry Wells with John Allan (lithographer)
ink on paper
Private collection

(pp30–31 & 38)

*madhan.galang gidharra (gold trees)*, 2015.

*burradhaa (white cypress, Callitris glaucophylla), 24 carat gold*
Collection of the artist

(pp32–33)

All artworks © Jonathan Jones.

All installation works dimensions variable.
ARTIST’S ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the Bathurst Wiradyuri and Aboriginal Community Elders group for their strength, support and guidance, without which this project would not have been possible. Thank you to Uncle Brian Grant, who I have been lucky enough to know for many years and who led me to the elders’ group, Aunty Gloria Rogers Dindimaa for her belief in me and in the arts, Uncle Jim Beale Kalmadyne Goomburydje for his peaceful words, Aunty Joylene Simpson for her calm support, Aunty Jill Bower Gunhi Mudha for her determination, and Uncle Bill Allen Jr Dinawan Dyirribang for his leadership. Thank you also to Aunty Denise Scott and Uncle Bill Sr, and Leanna Carr-Smith and Jade Flynn for their assistance with the elders.

I would also like to thank the Bathurst Regional Art Gallery team, including Richard Perram, Sarah Gurich and Emma Hill, for commissioning the project and trusting in the process. Thank you to the Wagga Wagga Hands On Weavers, in particular Aunty Lorraine Tye, and Uncle Allan Murray for sharing their knowledge in weaving and stone-tool making, and the community members who participated in the workshops.

For their amazing assistance in making and displaying the films, thank you to Elliott Magen, Aden Wessels and Sabrina Organo. For the audio, thank you to Wes Chew, Sam Gain-Emery, Luke Mynott and Antony Partos of Sonar Sound. I would also like to thank David Knight at Gearhead and everyone who worked on the film, along with Steven McGregor, Darren Dale and Rachel Perkins for their advice.

Thank you to the Peel Native Flora and Fauna Reserve Trust, including Deborah Munns, Chris Marshall and Anne Kerle, and the Suttors of Brucedale, in particular David Suttor.

I would also like to thank Uncle Stan Grant and Lee Carr for their assistance in translating; Stephen Campbell and Deborah Swan for their support with sourcing material; Brendan Hackett, Mandy Woods and Angus Adameitis for their assistance; and Genevieve O’Callaghan for her ongoing support.

This project is dedicated to my Nan, and inspired by my mentor, Michael Riley.
Jonathan Jones: *guwiinyguliya yirgabiyi ngay yuwin.gu gulbalangidyal ngunhi* (they made a solitude and called it peace)