



In our hands, We hold

**Sharyn Egan
Mabel Juli
Lorraine Connelly - Northey
Chantal Fraser
Brett Nannup
James Nguyen
Clare Peake
Beverly Thomson
Katie West**

**Curated by
Zali Morgan &
Abigail Moncrieff**



Lorraine Connelly-Northey, *narrbong-galang* (many bush bags) 2026 (detail)
found rusted corrugated iron, fencing wire
Courtesy of the artist, photograph: Ezra Alcantra

Whadjuk Nyoongar artist **Sharyn Egan** works in numerous media, including painting, sculpture, woven forms and site-specific installations, often choosing materials such as ochres, resins and grasses that connect to land. Drawing from her personal experience of the Stolen Generations, much of her artwork is a commentary on her life as a Nyoongar woman and the associated trauma, emotions and deep sense of loss and displacement.

Mabel Juli is a senior Gija artist working at Warmun Arts Centre. She is renowned for her refined depictions of Garnkiny doo Wardel (Moon and Star), an important Ngarranggarni (Dreaming) story that explores forbidden love, kinship and the origins of our mortality. This Ngarranggarni took place in and formed Darrajayn (Springvale Station in East Kimberley region) the ancestral land where Juli was born, raised and lives near- this is country she returns to regularly to maintain her connection to culture.

Waradgerie artist **Lorraine Connelly-Northey** was born and raised on the adjoining cultural boundaries of the Wamba Wamba and Wadi Wadi peoples, known today as the township of Swan Hill in the north-west of Victoria. Over the last decade she has been living on her mother's land of connection, Waradgerie (Wiradjuri) country. Using industrial materials found on Country, Connelly-Northey uses her knowledge of traditional weaving practices to transform recycled materials into traditional forms such as kooliman and dilly bags.

Noongar artist **Brett Nannup** was trained in printmaking by his mother, Laurel Nannup, and has worked with master printmakers in Australia and abroad. His work explores the intersection of Noongar and Western worlds through rich textures and storytelling. His neon works explore the interconnectedness shared across generations through lived experiences of love, loss, trauma, renewal and acceptance, as well as cultural protection.

Born in Aotearoa, **Chantal Fraser** is a Meanjin/Brisbane-based Sāmoan multi-media artist. Informed by lived experience, Fraser's practice examines and subverts the structures of capitalism and state authorities, often by using ornamentation and personal adornment. Fraser's practice expands the concept of adornment beyond objects and uses this expansion to invite us to think about our own agency.

Clare Peake's practice is engaged in processes of unravelling, undoing, reforming and repeating as a means to understand and comprehend the world around her. Her glass beaded woven work functions as a portal and situates weaving as a process of artists knowledge, and a marker of time and labour. Peake was born in Geraldton WA, and lives and works in Broome, on Rubibi Country.

James Nguyen was born in Bảo Lộc, Việt Nam and lives, makes and writes in Naarm. Nguyen often works with his family and friends to find moments of shared intimacy, play, and poetic justice. Leaning on the tropes of cinema, the false exceptionalism of diaspora and broken languages, James creates visual encounters that have been described as incisive, irreverent and especially irrelevant.

Katie West is an artist and Yindjibarndi woman based in Noongar Ballardong Country. Her practice is grounded in the understanding that the health of human society and Ngurra (Country) mirror one another. Through installations of found objects and sound transmitted via radios, textiles, video and photography, Katie's works invite attention to the ways we weave our stories, places, histories, and futures.

Beverly Thomson is a Yamatji woman living and creating on Wardandi Country. As a multidisciplinary artist, she moves fluidly between pottery, weaving, and her signature "dirty pot" eco-dyeing techniques. Drawing from the natural world and Indigenous perspectives, Thomson's work explores the balance between human presence and our environment while honouring personal narratives and experiences of motherhood.

In our hands, we hold **Zali Morgan and Abigail Moncrieff**

In our hands, we hold

We hold the stories of our old people. The stories of those who can no longer tell theirs or were given the opportunity. Some we hold closer than others.

We hold the interwoven truths of our history. Stories and written history interwoven present a complete picture of our past. The incompleteness of written history can no longer be justified as what we hold as our guiding light.

We hold the fibres, materials and textures to make as we did in the past, and to make as we need to now. Natural fibres were used to make baskets and items of the everyday; now, contemporary everyday items are used to weave stories together.

Woven stories and histories collide through materials and concepts into spaces that we can no longer hold as individuals, and rather need our collective hands to stabilise. *In our hands, we hold* is a space for this collective action. Bringing together artists who share family and Country ties, material interests, and a collective notion of reflection through their works to make sense of the world today, this space asks us to remember the comings and goings, whilst holding us in the now.

When we think of remembering loved ones, it is often sad or hard and even painful. But rather, through his work *Interwoven* 2026, Brett Nannup invites us to a time of warmth and tenderness to remember his mother's care. With the visual reference to his mum's, Nan Laurel's, crocheted rugs, he also acknowledges the teaching about Culture and knowledge and how such teachings are never separate from ways of life. They have always been interwoven.

Sharyn Egan's floating empty cradles revisit a traumatic childhood, evoking a deep sense of loss. Sharyn was taken as a child and denied maternal connection, as well as access to her Nyoongar culture. The rows of babies in their formulaic cribs reference the harsh conditions and the absence of tenderness that the artist experienced at New Norcia Mission. The

materials Egan uses revisit her childhood- the strip weave she learnt in her childhood, as well as the oil pastel strips of paper in these cribs are a return to drawings she made on paper with crayons as a child. This artwork serves as a poignant reminder of the deep wounds inflicted on children and their parents and the resilience of those affected. These works acknowledge this heartbreaking history.

Gija artist Mabel Juli, draws on the Ngarranggarni (creation stories) for her iconic moon and star works, including *Wardal and Garnkeny*, 2011. This work tells the story of forbidden love and a deep understanding of kinship. Located on Juli's ancestral Country, this story is drawn from Yarin country in Darrajaayn (Springvale Station), which lies south of Warmun. Whilst embedding her distinct style in Contemporary Australian art, Juli draws the East Kimberley aesthetic tradition of utilising ochre and natural earth pigments applied as part of a bold and contrasting minimalist colour-block patterning. This tradition, as did many styles across the continent, arose from the ceremonial and customary practices and has evolved to be central to many artists' across desert Country. This style of work is both ancient and contemporary, adaptive and evolutionary. It represents the First Peoples.

A sense of radical generosity is a sensibility that unites the artists in this exhibition- a sharing of complex personal or private histories, a sharing of their knowledge and culture that is powerful and everlasting. Lorraine Connelly-Northey's *narrbong galang* (many bags) are fashioned from industrial materials that the artist sources from Country, as she physically engages with the work as she sources the materials and "takes back hold on country." The *narrbong* are vessels that hold knowledge and represent an unknowably large source of collective wisdom, some of which has been shared or handed down to the artist by her parents and also held by others. In Lorraine's hands, each *narrbong* exists within a network that generates strength in its connectedness- a vessel for an individual wisdom that becomes enriched through sharing and exchange.

Sāmoan-Australian artist Chantal Fraser explores the aesthetics of power, reflecting on the experiences of her family and community, of class-based discrimination and racialized capitalism. Through beauty and ornamentation, the materials and objects associated with working classes are elevated, such as bejewelled welding helmets and safety glasses, or gorgeous body amulets made from saucepan lids and household items. *The Ascended* (2023) is a five chapter video work, featuring the figures of seers, heralders, warriors, dancers, and mother figures performed by participants including Jori Etuale, Lisa Fa'alafi, Saskia Sassen, and the artist's mother, Punipua Fa'alaitaua Elizabeth Thomsen Fraser. *The Ascended* is a powerful demonstration of love, as it bridges the heavenly and earthly realms as Fraser identifies Moana Nui (Pacific Ocean) people as Atua (deities).

TÀM TÀM by artist James Nguyen similarly draws on personal and familial histories. Always materially resourceful and using what is at hand, Nguyen's woven work uses Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Karawun grass and plant fibres found curbside in his neighbourhood in Naarm/ Melbourne to form practice knots. After losing their farmland to nationwide redistribution policies after the war in Vietnam, his family survived by eating silkworms – the artist describes *Đan né*, making baskets, nets, feeding trays and cocoon frames from bamboo and grass-as a process by which he and his family would go foraging for white mulberry leaves using any available plant fibres to weave and knot all night. As the artist says, 'For silkworms to weave for you, you must be prepared to also weave for them.'

The glittering weaving work, made from glass beads, by artist Clare Peake posits artist knowledge as labour and process. Processes of undoing, reforming and repeating are a means to understand and shape the world around her- as she takes time and through acts of repetition, the artist is transported elsewhere. Specifically centred on female ways of knowing – the shamanistic eye at the centre of the work

acknowledges the process of weaving as a process of artist knowledge, and also a portal.

Bev Thomson's evocative sculptural piece *Birthing Tree* similarly transports us through time and place. Her work includes 53 gumnuts made by Thomson by hand; each of these gumnuts honours a year of her mother's life. Lovingly crafted by the artist from textiles and ceramics, this tree "was created with love and in honour of my mother, who was born on Country and all the mothers before who have birthed on Country and who were born on Country. Look up and imagine you can hear the wind in the leaves ..."

Knowledges shifting from the everyday to ancestral, deep time as seen through the present moment, the world views here are multi-faceted and layered, with a specificity that belongs too to each of the artists and the communities amongst whom they live. Katie West's textile and video installation is immersive and porous- made in 2022, this body of work centres a 'relational materiality (the agency of material and its influence on the maker) while celebrating embodied knowledge (the body knows how to act).' West's interest in embodied knowledge, knowledge that is shared through singing and artmaking, and held in our hands, our minds and our bodies, ensures that knowledge is shared across generations.

Together these works gesture towards a network of sharing and exchange, of knowledges and Culture, held and shared, of complex histories that form a connectivity through and processes of collaboration and exchange. They remind and inform us that nothing is in isolation, we are the creation of the past, and also the guiding light for the future.

Together we must hold. Hold each other. Hold our artists. Hold our communities.

1. Chantal Fraser, Griffith University Art Museum: <https://www.griffith.edu.au/art-museum/whats-on/2023/chantal-fraser>

2. Conversation with the artist, 29th June 2026.

3. From the essay *We hold you close: a song for material intimacy* by Katie West and Eloise Sweetman.

Brett Nannup, *Interwoven* 2026
steel etching plate with neon, 107 x 105cm
Courtesy of the artist, photograph: Ezra Alcantara



In our hands, we hold
15 Aug - 1 Nov 2026
Walyalup Fremantle Arts Centre