

Stop(the)Gap: International Indigenous art in motion



SAMSTAG  
MUSEUM

## Acknowledgements

Education Resource written by John Neylon, art writer, curator and art museum/education consultant.

The writer acknowledges the particular contribution of Brenda L Croft, Erica Green and Emma Epstein, and that of the Samstag Museum of Art staff, the participating artists and advisory curators.

Published by the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art  
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ISBN 978-0-9807175-5-6

Samstag Museum of Art Director: Erica Green  
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Cover image: Warwick THORNTON, *Stranded* (detail), 2011  
film still, commissioned by Adelaide Film Festival Investment Fund 2011, © the artist



# Stop(the)Gap: International Indigenous art in motion

Education Resource: John Neylon

## About this Education Resource

This Education Resource is published to accompany the exhibition

*Stop(the)Gap: International Indigenous art in motion*

24 February – 21 April 2011

Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art, Gallery 1 – 3

A Samstag Museum of Art and 2011 BigPond Adelaide Film Festival project

This Education Resource is designed to support learning outcomes and teaching programs associated with viewing the *Stop(the)Gap* exhibition by:

- Providing information about the artists
- Providing information about key works
- Exploring Indigenous perspectives within contemporary art
- Challenging students to engage with the works and the exhibition's themes
- Identifying ways in which the exhibition can be used as a curriculum resource
- Providing strategies for exhibition viewing, as well as pre- and post-visit research

It may be used in conjunction with a visit to the exhibition or as a pre-visit or post-visit resource.

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## Year Level

This Resource is primarily designed to be used by secondary to senior secondary visual art teachers and students. Components can be adapted for use by upper primary and also tertiary students.

## 1 Background briefing

# About this exhibition

*Stop(the)Gap* is a major international Indigenous moving image project, developed for the 2011 BigPond Adelaide Film Festival in partnership with the Samstag Museum of Art. Curator Brenda L Croft brings together recent works by renowned Indigenous artists from Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Canada and the USA, to challenge global preconceptions of contemporary international Indigenous expression.

The exhibition at the Samstag Museum of Art is accompanied by a complementary program of moving image exhibitions, film screenings, outdoor projections and forums, presented across various Adelaide venues. <http://tix.adelaidefilmfestival.org/browseAtt2.asp?g=2&a=167>

### Artists

The project at the Anne & Gordon Samstag Museum of Art features the moving image work of six artists:

**Rebecca Belmore** (Canada)

**Dana Claxton** (Canada)

**Alan Michelson** (USA)

**Nova Paul** (Aotearoa/NZ)

**Lisa Reihana** (Aotearoa/NZ)

**Warwick Thornton** (Australia)

### Curator

The curator of *Stop(the)Gap*, Brenda L Croft (Gurindji/Malgnin/Mudpurra peoples), is lecturer of Indigenous Art, Culture and Design at the University of South Australia. Prior to this she was the Senior Curator of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the National Gallery of Australia from 2002–2009 and has worked extensively throughout the contemporary Indigenous and Australian arts and cultural sectors for two and a half decades.

### Curatorial advisers

Also contributing to this project are international Indigenous curatorial advisers Kathleen Ash-Milby (Navajo, USA), Associate Curator at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, New York; David Garneau (Métis, Canada), Associate Professor of Painting, Drawing and Theory, University of Regina, Canada; and Megan Tamati-Quennell (Māori: Te Atiawa, Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Mutunga, Kati Mamoe people, Aotearoa/New Zealand), Curator of Contemporary Māori and Indigenous Art, Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa.

### Curatorial perspectives

Croft comments:

“Indigenous communities around the globe share colonial histories relating to dispossession, injustice, inequity and misrepresentation. Even in the 21st century, contemporary Indigenous art continues to be negatively configured through the historical contexts of Western art; its complex diversities and issues are distilled through Western perspectives of ‘authenticity’, ‘authority’, and ‘tradition’. Through these practices, the capacity of contemporary Indigenous communities to engage globally, across disciplines and ever-shifting borders, is misconstrued and ignored, arguably intentionally.

In *Stop(the)Gap*, individual artists’ works vary visually and in content and media, but all address issues of human rights, the continuing impact of colonialism, and cultural identity in a contemporary world.

The emphasis is on both avant-garde moving-image work – as opposed to still imagery or mainstream/traditional Western film constructs which are effectively showcased through existing festivals, and performative practices – as many of the artists are multi-disciplinary in their practice.”

Brenda L Croft (Gurindji/Malgnin/Mudpurra peoples), ‘Self-abrasion of our nations’, 2011

## Consider

- Survey others (such as students within own class, teachers) in terms of what they understand by the term 'Indigenous art'. Ask them to describe or give examples. Analyse the results to see if there is divergence or common ground between different perceptions. Then consider to what degree these perceptions match your own research or understanding of the term.
- In the context of the above survey, how reliable or accurate to you think your perceptions or that of others to be? Consider and discuss your reasons.
- There is a long tradition within Australian art of Indigenous artists adapting 'non-traditional' technologies (such as acrylic paint on canvas) and using visual systems of representation derived from Western European art. Research this tradition to familiarize yourself with some key developments and artists.
- In the above context does your research reveal any issues or debate concerning the classification or understanding of such art as Indigenous or traditional? Look closely at the reasons given and terminology used within any discussion or debate.
- What do you think the term 'authentic' Aboriginal art means? In what context is this term usually used? Do you think your understanding of this term is reliable or accurate? Why?

## Resources

- Brenda L Croft, curator of *Stop(the)Gap*, was also curator of the *National Indigenous Art Triennial 07 (NIAT 07)*. The work of the artists in this project reflects the wide diversity of expression and styles associated with contemporary Indigenous art in Australia.

A checklist of *NIAT 07* artists would provide the basis for your research into a number of the 'Consider' research tasks above. This list (along with a gallery of images and an extensive Education Resource) can be found online: <http://nga.gov.au/Exhibition/NIAT07/>

In the introductory essay of the *NIAT 07* catalogue Croft states:

"All of these artists are contemporary, irrespective of their domicile, their experiences, their connection to country and cultural practices – they are creating work in the here and now. Demarcations defined by others come and go, resurfacing and fading away – primitive, ethnographic, traditional, urban naïve, folk, authentic – all of these artists consider themselves Indigenous first and foremost, their heritage being the framework and foundation, which underpins their creativity."

Brenda L Croft, 'Cannot buy my soul', *Culture Warriors*, The National Indigenous Art Triennial, National Gallery of Australia 2007, p. XI

- All of the *Stop(the)Gap* artists have extensive www profiles varying from extended biographies and professional profiles, media articles and interviews and academic essays. Most of the artists have dedicated artist websites which provide comprehensive introduction to practice. These sites are referenced in the artists' profiles (Section 2).
- The Samstag Art Museum *Stop(the)Gap* catalogue (with complete curatorial essay) can be accessed online: <http://www.unisa.edu.au/samstagmuseum/exhibitions/2011/docs/SMASTGCatalogue.PDF>



Lisa REIHANA, *Groundswell*, 2002, eight channel digital video installation, sound, 30:00 minutes  
courtesy the artist and ARTPROJECTS, New Zealand

## 2 Exploring the works

# Rebecca Belmore

Rebecca Belmore of Anishinaabe-Canadian heritage, was born in Upsala, Ontario, and lives and works in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. The official Canadian representative at the 2005 Venice Biennale, Belmore's work as a multi-disciplinary artist combines moving and digital imagery, as well as performance and new media. It is grounded upon her experience as a contemporary First Nations woman.

"Belmore's performances bring to the fore the complexity of associations and issues with remarkable incisiveness, penetrating the surface of complacency like a sharp knife slipped under soft flesh."

Jessica Bradley, 'Art and the Object of Performance', *Caught in the Act: An anthology of Performance Art by Canadian Women*, edited by Tanya Mars and Johanna Householder.

Artist website: <http://www.rebeccabelmore.com/home.html>

### Work

*The Named and the Unnamed*, 2002, video installation, 38:25 minutes

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, The University of British Columbia

"*The Named and the Unnamed* (2002) is an installation incorporating Belmore's performance *Vigil*, conducted in downtown eastside Vancouver as a testimony to the increasing numbers of vanished First Nations women. Over several decades, more than 500 aboriginal women disappeared across Canada. The province of British Columbia had the highest concentration, particularly from the inner city and along Highway 16 (also known as The Highway of Tears) in northern B.C.. Largely ignored by the authorities in what many considered an officially sanctioned lack of care based on their race, low socio-economic status, and supposed expendability, many women have been found murdered, some the victims of serial killer(s)."

Brenda L Croft, statement about *The Named and the Unnamed* from the exhibition catalogue essay

"[Belmore's] work is beyond simply uncovering the trauma; she recovers or sets right or balances the imbalance. ...'*The Named and the Unnamed*' performance creates a liminal space that can be understood as an aboriginal epistémé. Soft yellow lights are digitally superimposed and float over Belmore's body in a random pattern. Each individual light symbolizes the presence of the murdered women and hence gives symbolic life and energy to the memory of each victim. It is this use of light and energy that is reminiscent and takes us back to Belmore's understanding of and connection to the power of the northern lights."

Jolene Rickard, Tuscarora Nation, 'Rebecca Belmore: Performing Power', 2005

"*The Named and the Unnamed* is Belmore's offering to the silenced ones, invoking their names, scrawled up her arms like tattoos or scarification marks, their lives, their loved ones left behind. Globes of light twinkle like stars in the night sky, one for each of the women in the downtown area. The harsh summer light of the gritty urban setting contrasts with the torn, frayed fabric of Belmore's red dress, nailed again and again to wooden posts like a crucifixion. Water cleanses, refreshes, reflects like tears; roses are stripped bare by Belmore's teeth as she summons the names of her sisters."

Brenda L Croft, statement about *The Named and the Unnamed* from the exhibition catalogue essay.

### Framing questions and research

- How do you think you would feel or behave as a member of the audience watching this performance taking place?
- Given that this work was performed in an area of Vancouver where a number of women had been murdered or disappeared, does this change the meaning of the work in any way?
- In this performance the artist makes extensive use of symbolic actions, objects and materials. Identify as many as you can.



Rebecca BELMORE, *The Named and the Unnamed*, 2002, photograph by Howard Ursuliak  
Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, The University of British Columbia

- This performance incorporates or makes references to rituals used in a diversity of cultural ceremonies. Are any of these rituals still used within contemporary society? If so, why?
- Within this performance the artist uses her body to communicate coded messages about violence to women. Watch a segment to closely observe how the artist does this.
- One commentator (Charlotte Townsend-Gault) has commented that "*The Named and the Unnamed* consists of a sequence of tableaux which picture violation. They do so in quite simple terms, drawing on a polyglot repertoire of symbols: the lightness of air, the heaviness of water, the purity of white, the incomprehensible blackness of death, red the ever-troubling passion that threatens purity and causes death." Consider these perspectives while watching and analysing the work.
- During the performance the artist calls out the names of women. These names are inscribed on her arms. What is the significance of this?
- Why do you think the performance ends with the artist leaning on a pick-up truck with a sound system playing James Brown's *It's a Man's, Man's World*?
- Do you think this kind of public performance is an effective way of communicating about such social issues?
- Croft comments that "Belmore's performative ritual is a cleansing reclamation of victims who continue to be denied equal justice." What do you think this statement means and how might it apply to this work?

## 2 Exploring the works

# Dana Claxton

Dana Claxton is from the Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux nation, and her family reserve is Wood Mountain, Canada. Claxton works in film, video, photography, installation and performance; she is also active as an independent curator and educator.

"I'm influenced by my own experience as a Lakota woman, as a Canadian, as a mixed blood Canadian, and then my own relationship to the natural and supernatural world. So taking that whole bundle of experiences, it all goes into the artwork, I think that's where the multi-layering comes in because I've had a very multi-layered life. And it's all those experiences that go into the work."

Dana Claxton, artist statement

Artist website: <http://www.danaclaxton.com/>

### Work

*Rattle*, 2003, four channel digital video installation, sound, 11:25 minutes  
courtesy the artist

"[A] political focus is apparent as a thread running through Dana's career. Within the works of beauty and the works of rage there is always a passion for justice. In the 2003 four-channel installation *Rattle*, Dana talks about the subversive nature of the piece in its depiction of beading. Flanking the rattle, the visual prayer, are examples of beadwork. Dana says that this was a subversive act. She took beadwork, relegated to Craft and museum, and blew it up to flood the gallery walls with the beauty of beading, reclaiming the gallery space for Aboriginal art expressions."

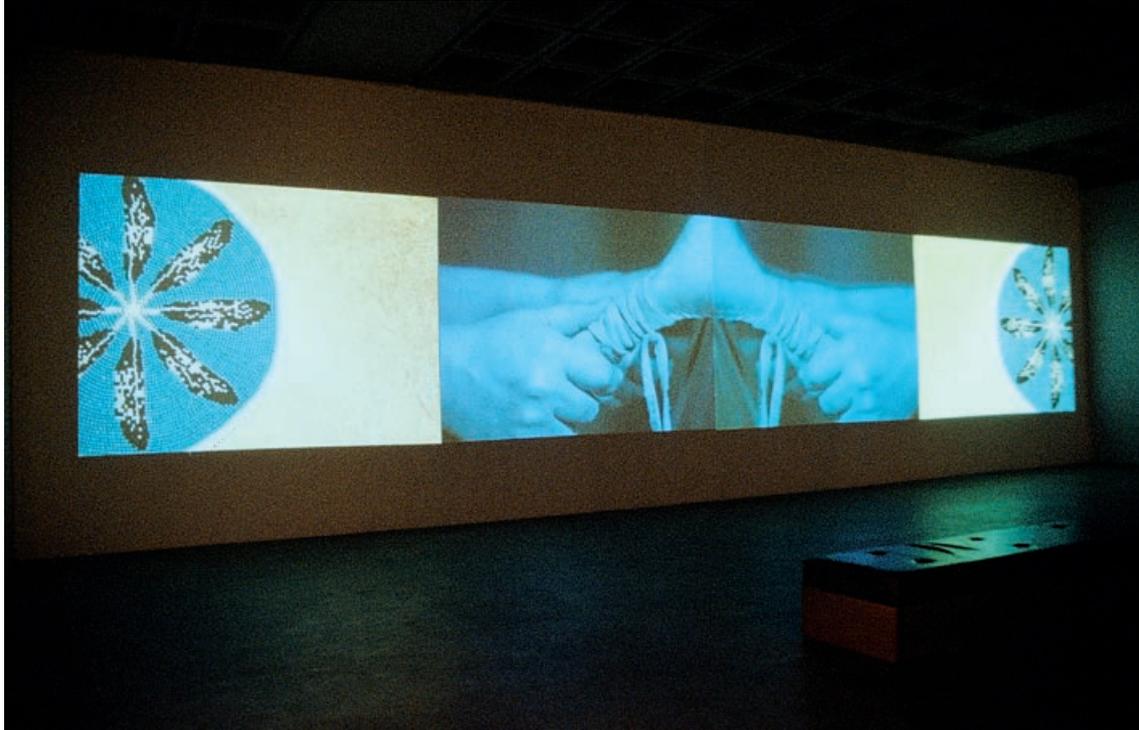
Tania Willard, Curator, Secwepemc (Shuswap) Nation

"Claxton describes *Rattle* (2003) as being 'a visual prayer attempting to create infinity... [m]uch like a palindrome'. Her intent is 'to bring spirit into the gallery space'. The visual and aural quadrasonic sequence of traditional horsehair and beaded rattles, endlessly shaken in real time and streamed in slow motion, is mesmerising, melding ancient ceremony and contemporary technology in a 21st century prayer or song cycle. Framed by projections of customary beadwork, the endless resonance of sound and sight entices the viewer to enter into a trance-like meditation."

Brenda L Croft, statement about *Rattle* from the exhibition catalogue essay

### Framing questions and research

- Consider making a work based on the idea of isolating and featuring an aspect of ritual behaviour you have observed.
- This work has been described as a "mediated visual prayer". (<http://w.bos17.com/biennial/artist21>) What do you think this description might mean and how does it apply to *Rattle*?
- Using the same set of photographic images experiment with different ways of combining them within a single work.
- Based on the experiments above, consider projecting moving images onto still images and assess the result.
- See if you can find examples of art from different cultures which are designed to immerse or take the viewer on a sensory journey.
- Can you think of other ways the ideas in this work might have been communicated or expressed?
- Consider making a work which is designed to transform a space in such a way that a visitor or viewer becomes immersed within it.



Dana CLAXTON, *Rattle*, 2003, four channel digital video installation, sound, 11:25 minutes, courtesy the artist

- To get an overview of the history of the Lakota people search for information about the history of the US and Canadian colonial borders and the migration of Sitting Bull and his people to Canada in the later 19th century.
- “In Lakota culture there are sky teachings, and for Dana the plains’ sky is an influence in her work. In an interview with the artist, she talks about Lakota teaching: ‘I have been taught through Lakota teachings and spiritual teachings that it’s all about the sky. It’s all about how the sky will tell you everything that you need to know. It’s about watching and pondering, and about how the sky will show you things.’ ...In her surreal approach, Dana’s works act like the clouds in the sky, shifting to show us new things, new layers and images – endlessly.”

Tania Willard, Curator, Secwepemc (Shuswap) Nation, ‘Starting from Home’,  
<http://www.danaclaxton.com/>

Consider this interpretation while looking at and analysing *Rattle*.

## 2 Exploring the works

# Alan Michelson



Alan MICHELSON, *TwoRow II*, 2005, four channel digital video installation, sound, 13:05 minutes, courtesy the artist

Alan Michelson is a New York City-based Mohawk member of Six Nations of the Grand River (Haudenosaunee or Iroquois). His works address place, memory, and the North American landscape in profound, poetic, multimedia installations. Michelson has articulated his fascination with rivers as natural borders, reflecting on the ongoing colonial impact upon local landscapes and waterways as well as the ecosystems and communities they support.

Artist website: <http://alanmichelson.com/>

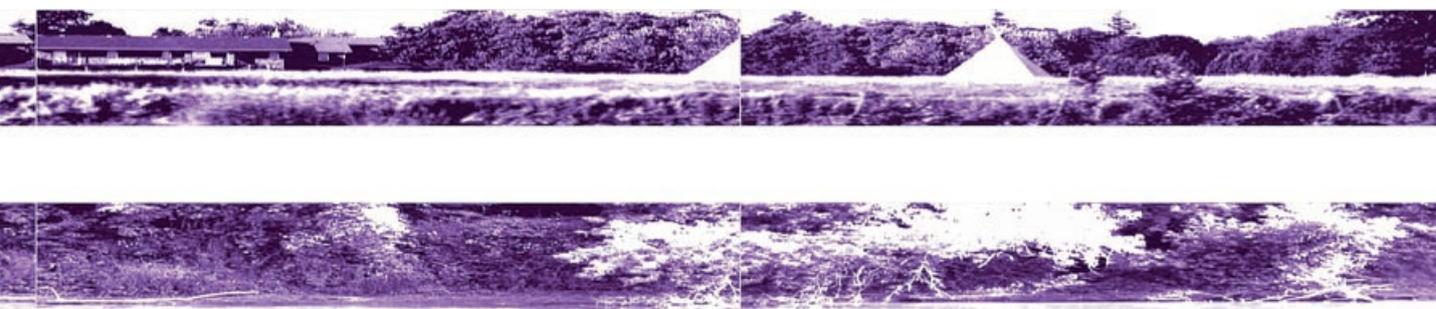
### Work

*TwoRow II*, 2005, four channel digital video installation, sound, 13:05 minutes  
National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Purchased 2006

“Four hundred years ago Europeans arrived in our lands, the French from the North and Dutch from the South, to trade with us. Observing the many differences between us, our ancestors made a diplomatic agreement with them, embodied in a belt of small clamshell beads (*wampum*) called the Two Row Wampum after its pattern of two parallel rows of purple beads divided by three rows of white beads. It stood for the flowing river of life, which both peoples were to travel in, separate but parallel courses, represented by the purple rows – “we in our canoe, and our white brother in his boat” – in peace, equality and friendship forever.

To us the agreement remains in effect, but once Europeans outnumbered us they seldom honored it. They wanted our lands – now upper New York State – and when we defended them through alliance with the British during the American Revolution we lost them instead. In their place the Crown granted us land in Canada – six miles on either side of the Grand River from mouth to source – a million acres. We hold only a fraction of that now, largely at Six Nations Reserve. I shot *TwoRow II* there on the Grand from a dinner cruise boat aboard which I recorded three of the four sound tracks. The other consists of stories of the river I recorded by Six Nations elders, which diverge from the non-Native cruise captain’s narration. The top row of video is the non-Native riverbank and the bottom the Six Nations’ side.”

Alan Michelson, artist statement



“Michelson’s monumental four-channel work, *TwoRow II* (2005), wends its way through Southern Ontario, Canada. Following the Grand River, it takes the viewer on a panoramic expedition of the contrast between the Six Nations Reserve and non-Native townships situated on opposite sides of the river. The title and palette refer to the purple and white Two Row Wampum, a traditional belt woven of *wampum* (clam shell beads), created in 1613 to document a treaty between the Haudenosaunee and Dutch colonists in Haudenosaunee territory (now upstate New York). Its design consists of two rows of purple beads representing the parallel, peaceful courses of two distinct vessels – Haudenosaunee canoe and European sailing ship – alternating with three rows of white beads signifying harmony and alliance.”

Brenda L Croft, statement about *TwoRow II* from the exhibition catalogue essay

### Framing questions and research

- Do you think that the artist’s method of counter-posing two images within a single work is effective in terms of what the work is about?
- *Wampum* belts of the kind featured in this work incorporated symbolism associated with important events such as treaties and other events of significance. Can your research tell you if this approach to encoding and recording is found in the art and design of other traditional cultures?
- After listening to the two parallel accounts within *TwoRow II*, the cruise boat captain’s commentary and stories of the river told by Six Nations elders, note and compare variations in the two accounts.
- The belt referenced in *TwoRow II* is the historic Two Row Wampum, commemorating a 1613 treaty of friendship and co-existence between the Haudenosaunee and the newly arrived Dutch on the Mohawk River. Research this historical event to better understand the context and significance of the *wampum* as treaty.
- *Wampum* belts made from shell beads have played a significant role in the ceremonial and political life of Native American cultures. Find out more about them.
- A feature of Michelson’s practice is his fascination with rivers as natural borders, reflecting an ongoing colonial impact upon local landscapes and waterways as well as ecosystems and the communities they support. How is this evident in *TwoRow II*?
- Some Aboriginal communities within Australia have used artworks to support land claims. Find some examples and compare examples with Michelson’s *TwoRow II*.

## 2 Exploring the works

# Nova Paul

Nova Paul is a filmmaker of Te Uri Ro Roi and Te Parawhau/Ngā Puhi descent. Paul's filmmaking practice utilises the optical printing process of three-colour separation, an early cinematic technique. Her first film to pioneer this was *Pink and White Terraces* (2006). It premiered at the Telecom New Zealand International Film Festival, Auckland, New Zealand, 2006.

Artist website: <http://novapaul.net/>

### Work

*This Is Not Dying*, 2010, 16mm film (digital transfer), sound, 20:00 minutes  
courtesy the artist

"*This Is Not Dying* (20:00 minutes, 16mm) is an experimental film that explores the poetics of place and daily life around the filmmaker's *marae* (tribal meeting place). Using a printing process similar to early Technicolor, the film captures ephemeral qualities of people, dust and light in her ancestral landscape creating prismatic shards of colour. Like water that follows well worn paths along a river, channels of red, green and blue trace around significant places to the filmmaker's family. A Ngā Puhi love song sung on the *marae* is improvised on steel and slide guitar by famed Māori show band figure Ben Tawhiti in direct response to the film footage. Here a sense of self-determinacy and vitality in the everyday lives of individuals and community at Maungarongo *marae* is created."

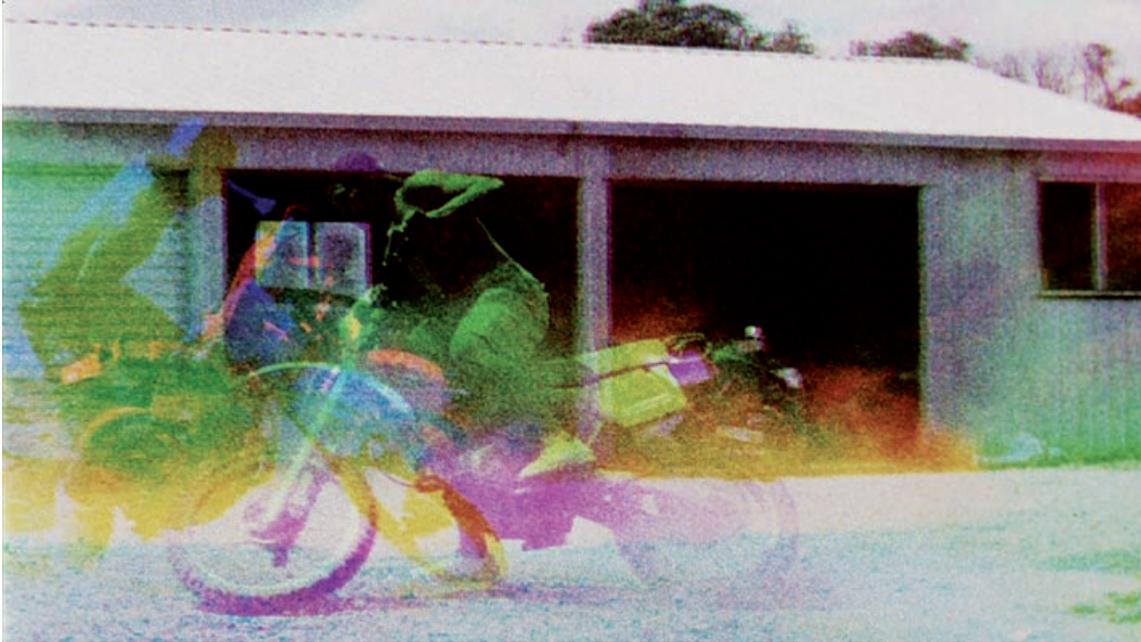
Nova Paul, artist's statement 2011

"*This Is Not Dying* (2010) emanates from daily life around the artist's *marae* (communal or sacred place), Maungarongo, near Whangarei, the northern-most city on the North Island of Aotearoa. Everyday gestures – such as sunbathing, fixing motorbikes, or setting tables for a meal – and familiar spaces and places to her family and community become 'other' places and spaces of liminality and luminosity, filtered by ethereal immersion in red, green and blue filters."

Brenda L Croft, statement about *This Is Not Dying* from the exhibition catalogue essay

### Framing questions and research

- "Enamoured with colour and the significance of small acts to say who we are and how we determine ourselves, Paul's lyrical works resist measured time. The moving images are like woven vignettes of textiles, layers of gauze, screen and screening." How does Croft's interpretation of this work fit with your reading and response to *This Is Not Dying*?
- The artist has commented that in her work colour traces around places of significance to her family, like water following "well-worn paths along a river". Is this a useful metaphor to apply to a reading of this work?
- The technique of overlaid separate colour filming has been used to create a sense of indeterminacy, as if this is a real place but at the same time, as if from a dream. Why do you think that artist has chosen this kind of effect?
- Consider if Paul's approach to making the familiar seem special, suggests options for your own artwork.
- Why do you think the artist chose the title *This Is Not Dying*?



Nova PAUL, *This Is Not Dying*, 2010, 16mm film (digital transfer), sound, 20:00 minutes, courtesy the artist

## 2 Exploring the works

# Lisa Reihana

Lisa Reihana is of Ngā Puhī: Ngāti Hine and Ngāi Tu descent. Her practice is wide-ranging and includes installation, moving image and time-based media, sculpture, photography, performance, costume, body adornment and text-based works. Her work comments on gender politics, cultural agency and museological interventions. Reihana completed a major commission *Mai i te aroha, ko te aroha* for Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington in 2008. A development of this work is included in *Te Po O Matariki* (2010) where Whirimako Black performs a *karanga*, the first sound heard on the *marae* in formal occasions and the call-and-response by senior Māori women as part of Māori welcoming ceremonies known as *powhiri*.

### Work

*Groundswell*, 2002, eight channel digital video installation, sound, 30:00 minutes  
courtesy the artist and ARTPROJECTS, New Zealand

"I consider this installation within a tradition of landscape painting. It's an 'up close' investigation of Ngawha Springs in Tai Tokerau, North Island, a site near my fathers tribal lands. The privately owned farm from where the images are drawn, was about to be sold. The myriad earthy palettes reference New Zealand's housing aesthetic where large buildings try to blend into their surroundings utilising colours 'drawn from nature'."

"The healing mineral springs of Ngawha Springs are an important *taonga* [treasure], and a place I've visited many times. In recent years a prison has been built nearby incarcerating a mainly Māori population. Historically it was a site for mineral mining – the cinnabar and native mercury deposits were worked in the 1890s and from 1927–34 and 1941–45. The tailings add a melancholic and post-apocalyptic air."

Lisa Reihana, artist statement about *Groundswell*.

"*Groundswell* (2005) is an intimate series of landscape vignettes of the living, breathing, corporeal terra firma of Ngawha Springs in Tai Tokerau, North Island – Reihana's father's traditional lands. Bubbling mineral springs appear to invoke the spirits of the ancestors, unhappy with the deleterious impact of mining which began in the late 19th century and has since generated a damaged moonscape."

Brenda L Croft, statement about *Groundswell* from the exhibition catalogue essay.

### Work

*Te Po O Matariki*, 2010, video, 13:30 minutes  
courtesy the artist and ARTPROJECTS, New Zealand

"In the spirit of memorial *Te Po O Matariki* draws together ethereal imagery to honour the gods. The Māori songstress Whirimako Black performs a *karanga* to those who have lost their lives in battle. Her silent song calls forth an apparition, the Tui or Parson bird, a harbinger of souls. The four wind goddesses appear against an atmospheric sky, forming an oval composition – both a cue to a new and contemporary representation of Māori women and to compasses found on early maps. The pop aesthetic includes digital representations of Māori *tukutuku* or woven panels."

Lisa Reihana, artist statement

### Framing questions and research

- Reihana's comments about *Groundswell* communicate a special, personal connection with a specific place. How is this sense of connection communicated in this work?
- Why do you think the artist has included in her comments that for her "The tailings add a melancholic and post-apocalyptic air."?
- The format for *Groundswell* appears to imitate a 19th century European salon tradition of arranging paintings on a gallery wall. Do you think this reference or resemblance shapes the meaning of this work in any way?
- Think about, record and later compare with others your first impression of this work; what it might be about or saying?
- Research the significance of *Matariki* within Māori culture.



Lisa REIHANA, *Te Po O Matariki*, 2010, video, 13:30 minutes, courtesy the artist and ARTPROJECTS, New Zealand

- The *karanga* (as performed in *Te Po O Matariki*) traditionally happens during the time a visiting group moves onto the *marae* (meeting area). Research this in the context of reflecting on Reihana's video.
- Of Reihana it has been said that "Her works communicate complex ideas about indigenous identity and bi-cultural living, and are drawn from eclectic sources, including Māori mythology and contemporary culture. Reihana reinterprets important oral histories and customary lore, making them available to a collective Aotearoa/New Zealand consciousness through their contemporary presentation." [www.qag.qld.gov.au/collection/pacific\\_art/lisa\\_reihana](http://www.qag.qld.gov.au/collection/pacific_art/lisa_reihana)
- Use the above statement as a basis for web research on the work of this artist to better understand how the two *Gap* works relate to her overall practice.
- A feature of Reihana's practice is the artist's use of moving image technologies to make art traditionally involving wood carving. An example is the artist's 2008 installation, *Mai i te aroha, ko te aroha*, ('From love, comes love'), for the Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa. The work comprises seven components including moving image, digital photography and textile design.
- An online magazine (*Fascinashion*) interview gives valuable insights (also some videos) into the artist's ideas and formative influences, <http://www.fascinashion.com/en/artylisa-reihana/285/>
- See also information about the artist in the *Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art 2002* Education Resource Kit: [http://www.visualarts.qld.gov.au/apt2002/pdf/APT\\_Lisa\\_Reihana\\_New.pdf](http://www.visualarts.qld.gov.au/apt2002/pdf/APT_Lisa_Reihana_New.pdf)

## 2 Exploring the works

# Warwick Thornton

Warwick Thornton is a Kaytej man from central Australia, whose customary lands are to the north of Alice Springs where he has lived the majority of his life. A filmmaker of singularly distinctive vision, his first feature film *Samson and Delilah* (2009) took the national and international film world by storm, winning numerous awards including the Caméra d'Or at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival. His work continues to challenge, confront and seduce Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences with its visceral depiction of damaged young romance in truly dysfunctional settings of time and place.

*'When I grow up I want to be just like Jesus.'*

Warwick Thornton, aged 6

"As Indigenous people we need more doctors, and more lawyers and more teachers, and more surgeons, and more truck drivers and more librarians and more politicians. All of that, but we need more storytellers."

Warwick Thornton, talks to *Film In Japan*: <http://filminjapan.blogspot.com/2010/09/samson-and-delilah-interview-and.html>

### Work

*Stranded*, 2011, 3D digital video, sound, 11:06 minutes

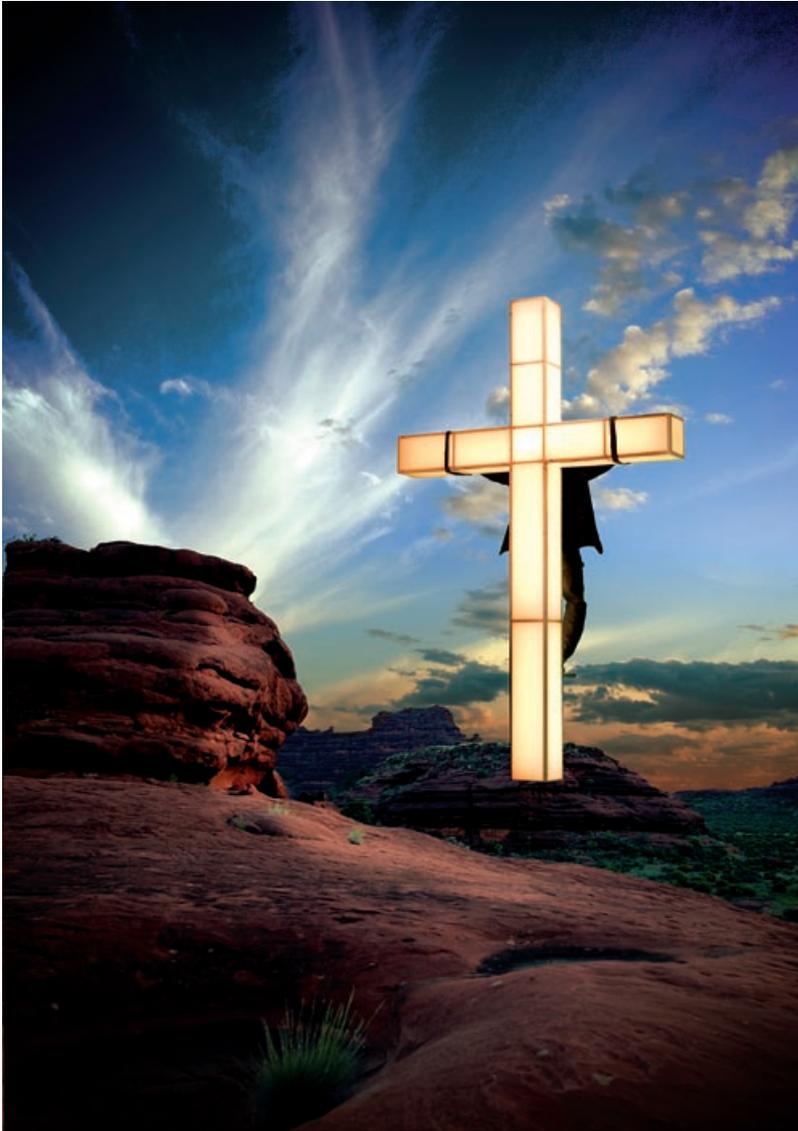
courtesy the artist, produced by Scarlett Pictures with the kind support of AFTRS, Panavision Australia and Definition Films, commissioned by Adelaide Film Festival Investment Fund 2011

"Thornton's figure revolves in space above a mirrored waterhole in the brilliant harshness of the broken heartland, heightened by the unnerving sounds of wide open spaces – the chirruping of native birds, the ubiquitous blowfly buzz, the *whoomp*-ing sensation of windmill... or wind turbine? Dream(ing) or nightmare, or both?"

Brenda L Croft, statement about *Stranded* from the exhibition catalogue essay

### Framing questions and research

- The 'Black Jesus' is a tradition within the Christian church in different parts of the world. Research this and analyse *Stranded* from this perspective.
- When asked to give a statement accompanying this work the artist provided, "When I grow up I want to be just like Jesus. Warwick Thornton, aged 6." Does this statement influence your response to the work in any way?
- Consider Thornton's appropriation of Christian iconography (crucified Christ) to explore or expose the consequences of religious colonisation.
- Why do you think Thornton has placed himself (and not Christ) on the cross?
- One interpretation suggests that the artist (as Christ) is tired of being on the cross and wants to get down. What do you make of this idea?
- Do you think the artist wants us to think that he is being Christ? Or do you think that he is asking us to think about the symbolism of Christ being on the cross and how this might apply to the artist or the community at large?
- Who is the audience for this work?
- In Christian belief the cross signifies sacrifice. Does this influence your interpretation of this work (i.e. what it might be 'saying') in any way?
- Cinematic versions of the life and death of Jesus have often divided audiences in terms of the style of depiction (too realistic or too idealised). As a member of the audience for *Stranded*, what are your feelings on this?
- Setting the action within a central Australian (MacDonnell Ranges) location may be a deliberate strategy to reference the art and life of another prominent Aboriginal artist, Albert Namatjira. Research some background on Namatjira and reconsider *Stranded* from this perspective.



Warwick THORNTON, *Stranded*, 2011  
film still, commissioned by Adelaide Film Festival Investment Fund 2011, © the artist

- Albert Namatjira was the subject of a lino-cut by the Australian artist Noel Counihan (*Albert Namatjira*, 1959). The work depicted Namatjira, crucified and set above a Christian church. Research the origins and context of this work (the National Gallery of Victoria site has an image and commentary) and consider if it relates in any way to *Stranded*.
- Does the visual setting (inland valley and rocky escarpments) influence the way you 'read' this work? Why didn't the artist (for example) use an indoors or church setting?
- Do you think the title *Stranded* offers some clue to the artist's intentions?
- The title for *Stranded* was taken from the music track '(I'm) Stranded' by Australian punk band The Saints. The lyrics (available online) include the words, 'Livin' in a world insane / they cut out some heart & some brain / 'been filling it up with dirt / do you know how much it hurts'.

### 3 Exploring the exhibition: Themes

Exploring the exhibition extends beyond looking at individual artist's work to identifying and considering relationships between various works in the exhibition. An effective way to do this is to see *Stop(the)Gap* as an exhibition consisting of groups of works that have things in common or, intentionally or otherwise, have things to say to each other. This kind of dialogue is conventionally described as themes.

#### Theme 1: Symbolism and ritual

The use of symbols to represent and communicate knowledge, belief and feelings is evident in many *Gap* works.

##### Consider

- The performance in Belmore's video (*The Named and the Unnamed*) incorporates or makes references to a number of rituals used in a diversity of cultural ceremonies.
- The symbolism of gesture in Belmore's performance.
- The hand gestures incorporated into the singer's performance in Reihana's *Te Po O Matariki*.
- What can you find out about the use of rattles in traditional ceremonies (as seen in Claxton's *Rattle*)?
- The historic Iroquois *wampum* belt is used as the basis for Michelson's two rows of moving panoramas (*TwoRow II*). The rows in the belt symbolised the parallel paths of an Iroquois canoe and a European ship.

#### Theme 2: Country/Land

Referencing country and land, its significance and meaning is integral to a number of *Gap* works.

##### Consider

- The parallel histories of a specific area of land as referenced in Michelson's *TwoRow II*. The featured river is the Grand, which divides Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve, of which Michelson is a member, and non-Native townships in southern Ontario.
- The juxtaposition of the crucified figure of the artist and a specific Centralian landscape in Thornton's *Stranded*. Thornton is a Kaytej man from central Australia, whose customary lands are to the north of Alice Springs where he has lived the majority of his life. The choice of location is partly determined by its clear association with the paintings of Albert Namatjira.
- *This Is Not Dying* (2010) offers insights into daily life around the Nova Paul's *marae* (communal or sacred place), Maungarongo, near Whangarei, the northern-most city on the North Island of Aotearoa.
- Reihana describes *Groundswell* as "an 'up close' investigation of Ngawha Springs in Tai Tokerau, North Island, a site near my fathers tribal lands." She also comments, "The healing mineral springs of Ngawha Springs are an important *taonga* [treasure], and a place I've visited many times."

#### Theme 3: Shared history

Croft states that "Indigenous communities around the globe share colonial histories relating to dispossession, injustice, inequity and misrepresentation." Such issues are addressed in a number of *Gap* works within a context of revealing lessons and truths from the past as well as exploring the possibility of creating new historical narratives which include Indigenous perspectives.

##### Consider

- Reihana's focus on *Matariki* as a unifying symbol for people, within Aotearoa/New Zealand and elsewhere.
- The entwined and at the same time separate stories incorporated within Michelson's *TwoRow II*.
- The implications of a shared/imposed Christian heritage underlying Thornton's *Stranded*.

#### Theme 4: Parallel and divergent history

History provides a backdrop to much of the work in *Stop(the)Gap*. From the perspective of *Gap* artists and other Indigenous artists, colonial-period values and attitudes are embedded in the mindset and systems of broader contemporary societies. Much of this they believe is based on a flawed understanding of history, particularly in relation to 'contact history' (records of initial and settlement period contact between Indigenous communities and colonists/colonial administration). Strategies used by Indigenous artists in addressing such concerns have included; 'unpacking' historical events to allow them to be seen from different perspectives, focussing on the life and experiences of individuals and re-presenting history as an overlay of different (and sometimes divergent) accounts.

#### Consider

- Michelson's representation of history using the river as metaphor and historical 'dividing line' between cultures.
- Belmore's 'underbelly' narrative of life for particular women in contemporary Vancouver contrasting with the perceived indifference of authorities and the power imbalances in a 'man's world'.
- Thornton's appropriation of Christian iconography (crucified Christ) to explore or expose the consequences of religious colonisation.

#### Theme 5: History of others

The underlying premise of all the works in *Stop(the)Gap* is that, in varying degrees, Indigenous peoples continue to be impacted on by processes and historical events associated with colonisation. In addressing this some artists revisit history in order to critique 'official' narratives or to raise awareness of or include Indigenous histories and perspectives within these narratives. Underlying this is the desire to break down conventional and exclusive views of the history of colonised countries as essentially European, with the history of 'others' (pre-European) tacked on, often as an afterthought. The historical model suggested by the focus of a number of *Gap* works is an overlay of parallel, sometimes entwined or overlapping histories and shared futures.

Exploring this theme does require a commitment to find out more about the history and culture of other Indigenous groups. This exhibition offers opportunities through a number of individual artist research suggestions in this Education Resource.

#### Theme 6: Voices

Indigenous societies across the world continue to deal with issues related to a loss or silencing of voices. In real terms this may be the gradual loss of oral traditions which traditionally provided communities with a sense of history and place. The pre-European history of 'First Peoples' is often erased from (or discounted within) conventional historical accounts of colonisation and ongoing settlement. Within contemporary societies the presence, perspectives and voices of minority Indigenous communities are often hidden or silenced.

#### Consider

- Belmore calling out the actual names of women in *The Named and the Unnamed* performance.
- Six Nations elders in Michelson's *TwoRow II* sharing their perspectives on the impact of European settlement.
- Thornton declaring a personal perspective on religious belief in *Stranded*.
- Paul inviting the viewer into her domestic world.

### 3 Exploring the exhibition: Themes

#### Theme 7: Powerful art

Much art in the European modern tradition is conventionally accepted and read as expressions of individual realisations and feelings. The works in *Stop(the)Gap* generally contradict this model of art by addressing communal (as opposed to individual) issues and themes and using symbols and other traditional arts forms which re-affirm the role of the arts as powerful systems for retaining and consigning knowledge and belief. A key strategy involves multi-arts formats, with the viewer being drawn into and immersed in the work through the power of images, sound and movement.

#### Consider

- The intention of Claxton in *Rattle* (“to bring spirit into the gallery space”).
- The insistent visuals and audio rhythms in *Rattle* designed to impact on the viewer’s senses.
- The repeated, ritualised gestures in Belmore’s *The Named and the Unnamed* performance.
- The visual demands placed on the viewer watching Michelson’s *TwoRow II*.
- The hypnotic pattern animations in Reihana’s *Te Po O Matariki*.
- The 3D intrusion into viewer space and the sensory confrontations in Thornton’s *Stranded*.
- The sensory ‘build’ of imagery in Reihana’s multi-screen *Groundswell*.

#### Theme 8: Tradition and change

A feature of a number of *Gap* works is the way artists draw on and use traditions but also adapt them within a moving image environment.

#### Consider

- The traditional weaving patterns incorporated into Reihana’s *Te Po O Matariki*.
- The subtle referencing of the *wampum* belt designs and symbolism in Michelson’s *TwoRow II*.
- The use of layered and counterposed stories in *TwoRow II* referencing conventions of oral traditions.
- The visual time coding in Thornton’s *Stranded* (setting a 2000 year old religious symbol against a millennia-old landscape).
- Thornton’s referencing of the ‘Black Jesus’ tradition within the Christian church.
- The *marae* as an ongoing tradition within contemporary Māori society (see Paul’s *This Is Not Dying* and Reihana’s *Te Po O Matariki*).
- The use of contemporary moving image technologies to re-interpret history and culture and communicate with different audiences.

## 4 For teachers

### Planning a successful group visit to *Stop(the)Gap*

If planning to bring a school group to this exhibition – book now. Bookings are required to guarantee scheduled entry to the exhibition.

To book: Tel 08 8302 0870  
samstagmuseum@unisa.edu.au

All bookings will be confirmed with the supervising teacher by telephone or email.

### Year Level

This Education Resource is designed to be used by secondary to senior secondary visual art teachers and students.

### Pre-exhibition

#### Background briefing

- Inform the students about the origins and content of the exhibition.
- Refer to the Curatorial Frameworks section in this Resource.
- Download the *Stop(the)Gap* catalogue (and essay) from the Samstag Art Museum website: <http://www.unisa.edu.au/samstagmuseum/exhibitions/2011/docs/SMASTGCatalogue.PDF>
- Visit selected *Gap* artists' websites
- Introduce and discuss meaning, concepts and issues related to key terminology including:
- Indigenous, traditional, authentic, colonial, post-colonial, globalisation.
- Encourage students to do some background research on Māori art and culture and North American First Nations/Native American art and culture.

Note: Warwick Thornton's *Stranded* does incorporate a central image of the artist (digitally) crucified. The iconography and compelling 3D realism of this work may be confronting to some students. Contextualised engagement and pre/post analysis will benefit from discussion related to such aspects as: the image of the suffering Christ in Christian art, the 'Black Jesus' tradition in post-colonial cultures, Christian and Aboriginal belief systems, what constitutes 'blasphemy' in modern secular society, art as shock and the life and work of Albert Namatjira. Viewing Thornton's feature film *Samson and Delilah* will provide additional context.

### In the exhibition

On arrival your group will be met and welcomed by a member of the Samstag Art Museum staff. This may be the best time to distribute prepared activity sheets or the 'Get Started' research activities included in this Education Resource.

Before groups disperse remind students of the usual gallery viewing protocols (such as being aware of others using the space) and to stress the nature of viewing this kind of exhibition which will require students to spend quality, reflective time with works, immersing themselves within viewing experiences of up to 15 minutes or more.

This session will involve students being involved in some group and individual analysis and response. Scribing is optional but will be useful for on-site reporting and post-visit research.

A suggestion is that students in this session try two things: engage with the work of an individual artist and with one of the exhibition's themes.

For this to happen it would be useful if students had access to the *Stop(the)Gap* Education Resource prior to visiting the exhibition. This could allow students to make thematic selections before arrival.

### Viewing

The exhibition occupies both floors of the Samstag Art Museum. The six viewing areas vary in size and the room presenting Warwick Thornton's video is restricted in viewing numbers to around 10 students.

Plan to divide a class into different viewing groups (around 5 to 6 per group)

## 4 For teachers

The video projections vary in length. For running times see the 'List of Works' in section 8 of this Resource. Most run for around 15 minutes or less. One exception is Belmore's *The Named and the Unnamed* which runs around 35 minutes. This suggests that individual groups (if allowing around 60 minutes for the entire visit) may only access this video for around 10 – 15 minutes. The positive to this is that the entire video performance can be viewed on the artist's website.

### Post visit

Post exhibition options primarily consist of sharing and analysing the information gathered during the exhibition visit. This information might be:

- Information gathered on-site
- Individual opinions (shared)
- Different task or theme groups reporting findings

## 5 Get started

### In-exhibition engagement activities

The following tasks are designed to support/initiate structured viewing and engagement for students in the exhibition. They can be undertaken in any order and are suitable for individual and small group work. Implicit in some tasks is the idea that students or groups will report findings and discuss works with others.

Scribing is not necessary to undertake these activities but some of these tasks could involve scribing to support on-going post visit work.

### Think about

- When you find yourself wanting to look at some works in particular do you think it is because the image or subject is interesting or is it because of the artist's technique or way of interpreting the subject?
- Is there a particular work in this exhibition that contains or is saying things that you agree with or disagree with strongly? Talk to someone else in your group about your response.
- Is there a particular work in this exhibition which raises more questions than any other work?
- What kinds of questions does this work raise? Compare and discuss your findings with others.

### First and last impressions

- What did you think about when you first came into the exhibition and looked around?
- Was there any work in particular you wanted to return to and look at again?
- Any reasons for this?
- Is there a work in this exhibition that you think you will find hard to forget? Why?
- Before leaving check out the exhibition one more time to see if there's an idea or technique in a work that you could try when you get back to school.
- Easy?
- Which work do you think was the easiest and which work was the hardest to make – and why?

### Analysis and response (individual work/s)

Choose any work that attracts your attention and apply any or all of the following questions:

- Are the visual qualities of this work appealing in any way?
- Would this idea have been better expressed in a different way?

## 5 Get started

- Can you see any kind of connection between this kind of art and others you know about?
- What do you think this work is about or might be saying?
- Has this given you an idea for something you could make as part of your art studies?
- Select one work that appeals in some way and tell someone else your reasons for your selection.

### Analysis and response (the exhibition)

Write a review of the exhibition which explores the links or relationships between the works.

- Choose one of the themes suggested in this Education Resource and review the exhibition from this perspective.
- Are there other themes (not identified in this Resource) which could apply to this selection of work?
- Compare two or more works which appear to be exploring similar ideas in different ways.

### Indigenous perspectives

Is there a particular work (or number of works) in this exhibition which has provided new information or altered your understanding of how individual (or communities of) Indigenous artists perceive the world? Discuss your selection and opinions with others.

## 6 Further research

### Curatorial frameworks

The catalogue for *Stop(the)Gap* contains an introductory essay, 'Sell-abrasion of our nations' by the exhibition's curator Brenda L Croft. In this essay Croft introduces each of the artists and their works in the context of issues which continue to impact on Indigenous artists and people within Australia and elsewhere.

The essay first paints a picture of what it feels like to be in the ambiguous position of being an 'insider/outsider' or marginalised within one's own country. To do this the curator reflects on the meaning and rituals of Australia Day, 26 January, which celebrates the colonisation of Australia on this day in 1788.

"Rites of passage. Driving slowly down the coastal esplanade, parallel to a glorious stretch of seaside in Adelaide's north-west, on a classical antipodean summer's day, I am gripped with a sense of unease and rising irritation. It's the country's biggest public holiday: Australia Day, 26 January, 2011.

Say it loud, say it proud, bung another snag on the barbie, skol another beer, bowl another ball at the stumps. HOWZAT! Everywhere I turn, my eyeballs are beset by the colours of *another* country – the red, the white, and the *true* blue. Flags are flying from every second car, cruisin' for a nationalistic bruising, embroidered on hats, printed on bikinis, shirts and swimmers, in temporary tattoos adorning the faces and arms of young and old, snapping breezily from public and private flagpoles (since when did people start planting flagpoles in their front yards?). The faces are overwhelmingly white, their gait relaxed and confident. The expectation is that all of us are willing to be co-opted into this annual back-slapping, colonial, self-righteous ritual."

Croft's perspective on such "back-slapping, colonial, self-righteous" rituals and celebrations is that they promote a particular kind of nationalism which usually excludes Indigenous people and Australia's Indigenous histories and cultural identities. It also perpetuates attitudes and cultural values which have been embedded within Australian society since the initial colonisation of Australia in the late 18th century. From such kinds of observations the curator believes that many Australians are "relaxed and confident" in their sense of 'Australianess' but fail to appreciate that such feelings about a specific cultural identity are not shared by other (particularly Indigenous) Australians.

## 6 Further research

### Stop(the)Gap

Croft comments about the title:

“So, why the title of this international Indigenous exhibition project: *Stop(the)Gap: International Indigenous art in motion*? *Stop(the)Gap* reflects on the role of vernacular such as ‘stop the gap/ mind the gap/close the gap’ and its specific reference to contemporaneous Indigenous culture and politics; part of the general lexicon, the phrase is wielded about as political rhetoric and commonly misconstrued.”

The title of this exhibition is derived for this idea of a kind of ‘gap’ existing and perpetuated between Indigenous and other Australians. In the context of this exhibition this term ‘gap’ can have a number of different interpretations. It can refer to a misalignment or slippage of cultural viewpoints, a void or something missing in an historical narrative, or a perceived inequality which needs to be addressed. The curator illustrates this last point by referring to a recent political event.

“On 2 July 2009, the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, issued a press release outlining the Federal Government’s rhetorical objective of ‘closing the gap’ of inequity that has been ever-widening between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Australia since the first impact of colonisation in the late 18th century. This initiative was developed to build upon the former conservative government’s 2007 parting ‘gift’ to Indigenous people in remote Top End communities: the *Northern Territory Emergency Response*, otherwise known as ‘The Intervention’.”

Such an example is a reminder that the title for the exhibition has been chosen quite deliberately. It is double-edged or ambiguous. ‘Stop the Gap’ reads as an injunction to do something to improve things. But ‘Stop(the)Gap’ has a different meaning. If ‘(the)’ is silent or omitted, as implied by (), ‘Stop Gap’ suggests something makeshift, perhaps a temporary measure which doesn’t change the basic situation or solve the real problem.

Some of the art highlights or is a response to the idea that there is a gap in the general community’s knowledge or understanding of Indigenous people’s world views, perspectives or needs. Some works explore the consequences of maintaining gaps. Some express beliefs or celebrate the fact that gaps are inevitable, necessary and positive within a society which values cultural diversity. An extension of this idea is that traditional cultural values and world views are in conflict with (and therefore should maintain a ‘gap’ from) societies whose origins and enduring values and world views are based on colonial attitudes, systems and generally unchallenged assumptions about Indigenous people. In this regard, ‘keeping the gap’ can be seen as an act of resistance and a strategy for cultural survival.

‘Stop(the)Gap’ can also be taken as a reminder to people who view this exhibition to be prepared to question their own assumptions about cultural identity and become more aware of how things such as language and mainstream cultural values shape these assumptions.

### Audience

Regarding the audience for *Stop(the)Gap* Croft comments:

“From a curatorial perspective this project has several audiences. Local and wider Indigenous communities (within Australia and elsewhere) is a priority. I also hope that it will ‘speak’ in particular to young people, students on campus at UniSA and to general audiences. What I hope people will take away from viewing this exhibition is a sense of intrigue, an open mind about what each artist may intend and an interest in seeing more work.”

### Selection of artists

As curator Croft had the challenge of selecting works from a broad field of possibilities and from different parts of the world. In this process she was mindful of avoiding a conventional model (as she observes in operation in many international biennials and the like) which involves the lone curator as a roving ‘collector’ of name or ‘rising art-star’ artists gaining notice for being in major biennials and arts festivals. As an Indigenous curator, in particular, Croft did not want to act or be seen to be acting in a similar way, selecting artists simply because they “ticked all the right boxes”. For this reason she adopted a collaborative approach and sought the advice and contribution of a number of Indigenous curatorial advisors; Kathleen Ash-Milby (Navajo, USA), Associate Curator at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, New York; David Garneau (Métis, Canada), Associate Professor of Painting,

Drawing and Theory, University of Regina, Canada; and Megan Tamati-Quennell (Māori: Te Atiawa, Ngāi Tahu, Ngāti Mutunga, Kati Mamoe people, Aotearoa/New Zealand), Curator of Contemporary Māori and Indigenous Art, Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa.

### Selection of works

The works were selected, not only on individual content and approach to using moving image technologies and options, but also their capacity to set up a dialogue with audiences and with each other. Croft did not see this necessarily as a seamless affair. Some works may balance or complement but others may be perceived as provoking and confronting each other.

### Context and audience

There are many concepts and terminologies associated with this project which address global issues to do with cultural survival, solidarity, self determination, resistance, alternative world views and shared histories. 'On trial' is the capacity of artists to address such issues in ways which communicate beyond immediate communities to wider society. In this process could there be a risk that a local issue, situation or narrative can be 'lost in translation'? Or regarded by other audiences (be they Indigenous or otherwise) as 'exotic other'? Croft accepts that there are challenges, both in establishing a new curatorial model and in positioning the work of individual Indigenous artists within wider community contexts.

One of the key contexts in which some of this work is being made appears to be that of a process of attempted decolonisation. Linked to this is what Jolene Pickard refers to as the way "conditions of dispossession are normalized in an age of globalization." This adds a complex dimension to the practice of many Indigenous artists and the work of curators like Croft who produce exhibitions which invite audiences to reflect on what's happening in the 'real world'. It may mean for example dealing with artists who are critiquing from *within* while using visual symbols and systems appropriated from a 'continuously colonial' *without*.

As a result such works are often layered, coded and simultaneously address Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences. Croft comments, "We exist in these worlds, we must and do use the tools – language, media, etc. that are available to us, why shouldn't we? These are the weapons at hand if you like, the means with which to make our standpoints, voice our concerns, speak back and out and to each other first and foremost and then to the broader public, who often do not understand and maybe never will. I see plenty of work by non-Indigenous artists that has no context for me, and sometimes I am intrigued and want to know more, and sometimes I don't."

### Moving image

From Croft's perspective *Stop(the)Gap* carries a message about Indigenous artists using moving image technologies which contradicts stereotypical ideas about what constitutes 'traditional', 'authentic' and 'Indigenous' art. But she adds, "It's not as simplistic as this. I am always interested in moving beyond the 'usual suspects', the expectations of audiences, and providing challenges, fun, humour and brevity."

She is conscious of emerging national and international trends in the use of moving image technologies within Indigenous art practice and of the need to keep producing projects like *Stop(the)Gap* to keep up with the pace of developments. A second component of the project titled *Mind(the)Gap*, including the work of artists from Australia, Aotearoa/New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America, will be presented at other venues (in Adelaide) in November 2011.

## 7 Artist biographies

### Rebecca Belmore

Born in Upsala, Ontario of Anishinaabe-Canadian heritage, Rebecca Belmore is an artist currently living in Vancouver, British Columbia. She attended the Ontario College of Art and Design in Toronto and is internationally recognised for her performance and installation art. Since 1987, her multi-disciplinary work has addressed history, place and identity through the media of sculpture, installation, video and performance. Belmore was Canada's official representative at the 2005 Venice Biennale. Her work has appeared in numerous exhibitions both nationally and internationally including two solo touring exhibitions, *The Named and the Unnamed*, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, Vancouver (2002); and *33 Pieces*, Blackwood Gallery, University of Toronto at Mississauga (2001). Her group exhibitions include, *Houseguests*, Art Gallery of Ontario (2001); *Longing and Belonging: From the Faraway Nearby*, SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico (1995); *Land, Spirit, Power*, National Gallery of Canada (1992); and *Creation or Death: We Will Win*, at the Havana Biennial, Havana, Cuba (1991).

### Dana Claxton

Dana Claxton is from the Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux nation, and her family reserve is Wood Mountain, Canada. Claxton is an interdisciplinary artist whose work includes film and video, installation, performance and photography. Her work is held in public collections, including the Vancouver Art Gallery, Winnipeg Art Gallery and the Art Bank of Canada. Her work has been screened internationally, including the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Walker Art Centre, Minneapolis and the 2010 Biennale of Sydney. Her work has been screened at Sundance Festival and Microwave in Hong Kong.

She has taught at the Indigenous Media Arts Group and Emily Carr Institute of Art + Design in Vancouver and she was the 2003 Global Television Chair at the University of Regina in the School of Journalism where she taught Television and Radio broadcasting from the perspective of critical thinking and experimentation with sound and images. Dana was awarded the prestigious VIVA Award from the Doris and Jack Shadbolt Foundation and in 2007 became an Eiteljorg Fellow sponsored by the Ford Foundation. She is an active member in the arts community and has participated in panel discussions, juries, curatorial projects, advisory committees, mentoring youth and young artists.

### Alan Michelson

Alan Michelson is a New York City-based Mohawk member of Six Nations of the Grand River (Haudenosaunee of Iroquois). His works address place, memory, and the North American landscape in profound, poetic, multimedia installations. His work has been exhibited nationally and internationally in a variety of venues including the Whitney Museum of American Art and the New Museum, and was featured in a solo exhibition at the Smithsonian Institution National Museum of the American Indian in New York. Michelson recently completed *Third Bank of the River* (2009), a 5'9" X 40'9" panoramic art glass window commissioned by the US General Services Administration Art in Architecture for the new US Land Port of Entry in Massena, New York, Smith-Miller + Hawkinson, Architects. He has received numerous awards, including a National Endowment for the Arts Visual Artists Fellowship, and his work is in the permanent collections of several institutions, including the National Gallery of Canada and the Smithsonian Institution. Michelson teaches at the Rhode Island School of Design.

### **Nova Paul**

Nova Paul is an Aotearoa/New Zealand filmmaker of Te Uri Ro Roi and Te Parawhau/Ngā Puhī descent. Her filmmaking practice utilises the optical printing process of three-colour separation, an early cinematic technique. Her first film to pioneer this was *Pink and White Terraces* (2006). It premiered at the Telecom New Zealand International Film Festival, Auckland, New Zealand, 2006. It has since screened both nationally and internationally including Project Space, Melbourne (2008); *Telecom Prospect 2007: New Art New Zealand*; was selected by City Gallery Wellington as part of the Art in the Auditorium Programme; and screened at Whitechapel Gallery (UK), Ballroom Marfa (USA), Fundación Proa (Argentina), GAMeC – Galleria d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea (Italy), Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter (Norway), and The Institute for the Readjustment of Clocks at the Koç Foundation (Turkey) in 2009–2010. Solo exhibitions include New Zealand Film Archive (2001, 2008), Gow Langsford Gallery (2007), Ramp Gallery, Hamilton, (2002). Other group exhibitions include *Martini Shot: New Artists Show*, Artspace, Auckland (2007), *The Buzzing Confusion of Things*, St Paul Street Gallery, Auckland (2008) and *Hetero Utopia: Mapping the Urban Terrain*, Bandung, Indonesia, (2006).

In 2010 she completed *This Is Not Dying*, a 16 mm experimental film that was screened in the New Zealand International Film Festival, (Auckland and Wellington), International Film Festival Rotterdam (2011), and exhibited at City Gallery Wellington (2010). She is currently a Senior Lecturer at AUT University teaching art theory and moving image in the Visual Arts Department.

### **Lisa Reihana**

Lisa Reihana, of Ngā Puhī: Ngāti Hine and Ngāi Tu descent, is one of Aotearoa/New Zealand's most renowned contemporary artists. Her practice is wide-ranging and includes video, photography, sculpture and fashion. Her work comments on gender politics, cultural agency and museological interventions as seen in the video installation *he tautoko* in Pasifika Styles, at Cambridge Museum, UK. Reihana completed a major commission *Mai te aroha, ko te aroha* for Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington. A development of this work is included in *Te Po O Matariki* (2010) where Whirimako Black performs a *karanga*. *Groundswell* was made for *New Work* at the Adam Gallery, Wellington.

Reihana's exhibition history includes the Auckland Triennial, 2004; the Asia Pacific Triennial 1996 and 2003; *Paradise Now?*, Asia Society Museum, New York, 2004; the Noumea Biennale, 2002; the Sydney Biennale, 2000; *Close Encounters: The next 500*, Winnipeg Canada, 2011. Reihana was nominated for the prestigious Walters Prize, 2008.

Lisa is represented by ARTPROJECTS, New Zealand

### **Warwick Thornton**

Warwick Thornton is a Kaytej man from central Australia, whose customary lands are to the north of Alice Springs where he has lived the majority of his life. A filmmaker of singularly distinctive vision, his first feature *Samson and Delilah* (2009) took the national and international film world by storm, winning numerous awards including the Caméra d'Or at the 2009 Cannes Film Festival and continuing to challenge, confront and seduce audiences, Indigenous and non-Indigenous with its visceral depiction of damaged young romance in truly dysfunctional settings of time and place.

## 8 List of works

### Rebecca BELMORE

born 1960, Upsala, Ontario, Canada  
Anishinaabe-Canadian

*The Named and the Unnamed*, 2002

video installation, 38:25 minutes

Collection of the Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery, The University of British Columbia

Purchased with the financial support of the Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition

Assistance Program and the Morris and Helen Belkin Foundation, 2005

### Dana CLAXTON

born 1959, Yorkton, Saskatchewan, Canada  
Hunkpapa, Lakota Sioux

*Rattle*, 2003

four channel digital video installation, sound, 11:25 minutes

courtesy the artist

### Alan MICHELSON

born 1953, Buffalo, New York, USA  
Six Nations Mohawk Turtle Clan

*TwoRow II*, 2005

four channel digital video installation, sound, 13:05 minutes

National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Purchased 2006

### Nova PAUL

born 1973, Aotearoa/New Zealand  
Te Uri Ro Roi and Te Parawhau/Ngā Puhi tribe

*This Is Not Dying*, 2010

16mm film (digital transfer), sound, 20:00 minutes

courtesy the artist

### Lisa REIHANA

born 1964, Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand  
Ngā Puhi: Ngāti Hine, Ngāi Tu tribe

*Groundswell*, 2002

eight channel digital video installation, sound, 30:00 minutes

courtesy the artist and ARTPROJECTS, New Zealand

*Te Po O Matariki*, 2010

video, 13:30 minutes

courtesy the artist and ARTPROJECTS, New Zealand

### Warwick THORNTON

born 1970, Alice Springs, Australia  
Kaytej language group

*Stranded*, 2011

3D digital video, sound, 11:06 minutes

producer: Fiona Pakes; editor: David Gross; production designer: Sam Wilde;

sound designer: Liam Egan; digital colourist: Trish Cahill; composer: Ben Blick-Hodge;

stills compositing and grade: Jeremy Saunders courtesy the artist, produced by

Scarlett Pictures with the kind support of AFTRS, Panavision Australia and Definition Films

commissioned by Adelaide Film Festival Investment Fund 2011