

SAMSTAG / SPRING SEASON



**Karrabing  
Film  
Collective /  
Night Time Go**

## **NATURAL LANGUAGE /**

### **A conversation between Linda Yarrowin (Karrabing Film Collective) and Anna Zagala (Samstag Museum of Art)**

**Karrabing Film Collective (est. 2010)** Members: Cameron Bainamu, Gavin Bianamu, Sheree Bianamu, Telish Bianamu, Trevor Bianamu, Danielle Bigfoot, Kelvin Bigfoot, Rex Edmunds, Claudette Gordon, Ryan Gordon, Claude Holtze, Ethan Jorroch, Marcus Jorroch, Melissa Jorroch, Reggie Jorroch, Patsy Anne Jorroch, Daryl Lane, Lorraine Lane, Robyn Lane, Angelina Lewis, Cecilia Lewis, Marcia Lewis, Natasha Lewis, Elizabeth A. Povinelli, Quentin Shields, Aiden Sing, Kieran Sing, Shannon Sing, Rex Sing, Daphne Yarrowin, Linda Yarrowin, Roger Yarrowin and Sandra Yarrowin.

Composed of 30 intergenerational members, Karrabing Film Collective is an Indigenous media group based in Belyuen, Northern Territory. The collective includes New York-based anthropologist, activist and gender studies professor Elizabeth A. Povinelli, who has worked with the community since 1984.

The collective makes films that directly interrogate the conditions of inequality for Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, to retain connections to land and their Ancestors, and to foster community hope. Karrabing Film Collective members have made six films to date. Their project *Salt* was awarded the 2015 Visible Award, and *When the Dogs Talked* won the 2015 Cinema Nova Award Best Short Fiction Film at the Melbourne International Film Festival (MIFF). Their films have been shown internationally, including at the Berlinale Forum Expanded, Sydney Biennale, MIFF, Tate Modern, documenta-14, Contour Biennale and MoMA PS1.

*Night Time Go* (2017) depicts an alternative history of Australia's domestic experience of World War II. Combining archival newsreel footage with grainy, black-and-white re-enactments staged by Karrabing members, the film narrates the wartime experiences of Karrabing ancestors, inspired by a story told to Linda Yarrowin by her mother about the forcible relocation in 1943 of Aboriginal people to inland internment camps in anticipation of an imminent Japanese invasion. *Night Time Go* recounts their internment and escape.

Samstag Associate Curator **Anna Zagala** spoke with **Karrabing Film Collective** member **Linda Yarrowin**.

**Anna Zagala** Hi Linda, thanks for talking with me. I just thought I might start by asking you – where are you right now?

**Linda Yarrowin** I'm in my workplace, at a school where I work as an assistant teacher. It's up near Darwin, down here in the Northern Territory, in a small community.

**AZ** I was very interested to hear that the collective spans quite a wide geographical area – about 200 kilometres – and that its members are linked by relationships that are pretty complex. I was wondering if you could perhaps tell me a little bit about how the collective is organised, and how many members you have.

**LY** Well, there's about thirty of us. Yep, the collective has about thirty members, even the younger ones. And we just came up with an idea – this is what we wanna do, to move forward, teach our younger ones. We learn from our grandparents and ancestors what they've been taught. It's just generation to generation, passing it on.



**AZ** And how did you come up with the idea? We're going back in time now to 2010, so that's over ten years ago. How did that initial conversation come about?

**LY** Well, one day we was all sitting down. We was just sitting around a place called Bulgul, near the creek, fishing, and just one person came up with an idea. But back then we was like homeless. People have nowhere to sleep with our kids – sleeping in tents back during the wet season, through dry season, that three or four months. We couldn't find housing. It was a problem for us, housing, and lack of education for our kids. This is what we're gonna do. In a conversation [with New York-based Elizabeth A. Povinelli] we were talking that we need do something for ourselves and for our kids. Yeah. You know, to move on with their lives. So just one person came up and said, 'Can we do a film, a short film?' and 'How do we go about it?' We asked Elizabeth [Povinelli]. Yep. And we all came up there to try to film.

**AZ** And what was that – what was that first film that you made?

**LY** *When the Dogs Talked* (2014) talks about our homeless, and overcrowding in houses. Yep. That was the first bit of *Dogs Talked*.

**AZ** Amazing. I read something where a writer described your approach to filmmaking as 'dramatising the conditions in which the members live'. And that first film sounds like really setting the course for what you've been doing the last decade.

**LY** Yes. It's actually a true story, what we went through in life.

**AZ** And how do you decide on a subject and a project – how does that come about?

**LY** Just we all use just normal, normal acting, and, yeah, it's just normal talk. It's natural for us. Yeah. We don't ever write a script or anything.

**AZ** So it's all improvised?

**LY** Yeah. We all come up with it on the spot. It's just like, we all agree what we want to say. One person comes up with an idea and the steps where we want to take it. We say, 'Yeah, that's what we want to do', what we want to work through. Yeah, it's just all natural – natural acting, natural language, normal.

**AZ** You know, what I really love about your films even though the subject matter is serious, they are really joyful. They've got quite a loose and kind of a meandering...a little bit of an absurd quality to the films. There's a really great sense of humour to them as well.

**LY** Yeah. I'm glad that some people like recognise and you know what we went through?

**AZ** Yes. You can see that it's really hard – what you're describing is really hard. But there's real pleasure as well. Like, people seem to be enjoying what they're doing as they're doing it.

**LY** It's just enjoying it. Yeah, we all come together. We are one family but different clan groups. Yeah. Yeah.

**AZ** How do you arrange to meet to work on a project? Does that just happen naturally or do you arrange it ahead of time?



**LY** It's when she [Povinelli ] is here. Want we want to make, just click a finger, and it's done. Probably go bush, or sit around on the beach, discussing, get an iPhone, film, just film in three angles with iPhones.

**AZ** I noticed that you'll often work with different techniques, you know, like layering images on top of each other. How do you decide on that? Who decides on that?

**LY** For layering and colouring and all that? Yeah. She [Povinelli] takes it back to the people in New York. And she does the editing and sends it back to us. We go backwards and forwards.

**AZ** Got it. You have one editor and the rest of you work on filming and acting.

**LY** Yeah.

**AZ** Tell me, how did you come to make Night Time Go?

**LY** Well, to tell you, it's just my mum's story that, as she travelled during the World War I and II. That's a true-life story. She survived. She didn't want to stay in, you know, the community – it was bombing and all that, she might get scared that you might get killed. Yeah, our parents told her that we're gonna move back to our Country where we can be safe. So it's a long journey. They went by travelling by three, four, five, six hundred kilometres by feet. She didn't want to be near anybody, you know, where there was killing and hurting. It was so bad back in those days. But then again, she made her destination where she found herself safe with their parents. Yeah, it was just going through a rough time, going through patches and things just to survive through the bushland. And to survive, she probably went into one of the fields and stealing. Yep, tomato and tomato whatever they can eat, you know, just to survive. Yeah. Hmm. I really liked that one.

**AZ** It's really good.

**LY** Yeah.

**AZ** Yeah.

**LY** [Night Time Go] was more for her. She decided she didn't want to live in Darwin or close by in Belyuen. She decided she wanted to be safe. And not only that, she just wanted to be more free.



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