

Fremantle Arts Centre, Martumili Artists,
Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa and BHP Billiton present

We don't need a map

A Martu experience of the Western Desert

Fremantle Arts Centre

17 November 2012 – 20 January 2013

Bringing the desert to the city, *We don't need a map* is a major new exhibition celebrating the distinct and joyful visual language of the Martu and their connection to country. This expansive exhibition, taking place at Fremantle Arts Centre from November to January, provides a nuanced insight into Martu life and cultural practice, capturing the humour and spirit of the Martu people and providing an opportunity for urban audiences to immerse themselves in the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of desert life.

The Martu are the traditional owners of a vast area of the Western Desert, covering over 20 million hectares. *We don't need a map* is a celebratory statement that expresses their deeply embedded understanding of the Western Desert and the layered interpretations of the land. The artworks, artifacts and events of *We don't need a map* provide a multifaceted portrait of Martu life; from significant paintings documenting Martu culture, to illustrative snapshots of daily life – such as camel hunts and community football matches – painted by younger contemporary artists.

The painting component of the exhibition includes the spectacular 5x3m **Karlamilyi** painting by **Lily Long** and **Amy French**, a complex and layered work filled with information about journeys through country, ancestral beings, animals and plants, waterholes and other sites of significance connected to Amy and Lily's country. These large scale Martu works are highly sought after by international galleries and national collections. Alongside this, more than 30 paintings and drawings have been selected to explore the Martu's experience of the Western Desert, works that are experimental, contemporary and suffused with Martu experience. Works have been chosen to explore significant sites and themes such as the use of fire in land management practices.

Co-curator Gabrielle Sullivan from Martumili Artists said "it's exciting for Martumili to be working on a non commercial project where we have curatorial input, exhibiting artworks that are important to the artists, works that have been created to communicate the significance of their country, works that tell the story they want to share. The exhibition is providing awesome opportunities for Martu artists to work with significant contemporary Australian artists on film, installation and sound pieces; it's exciting to be moving beyond just paintings."

Co-curator Erin Coates from Fremantle Arts Centre said "it is a real privilege to work with the Martu on *We don't need a map* – a project that reflects the dynamic and diverse nature of Martu culture today. This exhibition focuses on stories, sites and themes that have been central to the Martu for millennia and are still very much a part of contemporary life in the Western Desert. The artworks reveal the Martu's connection to country as an unbroken force that is articulated through artmaking, land management and daily life. We have developed this project through a collaborative curatorial process and this will be evident in the lively and multilayered experience of Martu culture that we are bringing to Fremantle Arts Centre."

For more information regarding this Media Release please call

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We don't need a map has commissioned a number of new works that are the outcome of extensive collaborations between Martu and non-Martu artists. These collaborations bring Martu artistic skills and knowledge to a new community of non-Martu artists, while different artistic perspectives and techniques are brought back to the community and incorporated into the always growing and adaptive Martu practice. **The Phone Booth Project**, by Martu filmmaker **Curtis Taylor** and Melbourne visual artist **Lily Hibberd** is a multi-channel video installation which celebrates the robust, adaptable and colloquial aspects of daily life through the public phone booths central to communication between communities.

Curtis Taylor said "making this work is a new way for our people. I'm making this work to show the outside world how we live."

Yunkurra Billy Atkins animation sees **Martumili's** most senior artist's striking visual vocabulary - dramatic stories of cannibal babies, ancestral weaponry and dangerous country - brought to life by award-winning animator **Sohan Ariel Hayes**. Fresh from creating artwork for the London Olympics, internationally renowned multi-media artist **Lynette Wallworth** is working with the Martu to create an extraordinary new work.

Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ), a Martu controlled organisation based in Newman that seeks to build strong, sustainable communities based on Martu culture and knowledge, are providing land interpretation and mapping material for the exhibition. KJ Ranger teams combine traditional land management practices with contemporary environmental monitoring and management skills. KJ are working with the curatorial team to provide information on how the rangers interact with country, linking the knowledge embodied in the paintings with sites, species, stories and landforms. KJ will also contribute to the public program **Martu Mob at FAC**, as their rangers and Mankarr workers talk about caring for country.

"The senior Martu artists are looking forward to participating in a project with their children and grandchildren, many of whom are Martu Rangers with KJ. Jigalong artist Dadda Samson said how proud she is that her son is a ranger and her granddaughter is an artist, they will all be at the exhibition working together" Gabrielle Sullivan.

Co-curator Kathleen Sorensen said "for me to be here in the making of ***We don't need a map*** from the start and seeing this project grow is one of the best things I've done since working for Martumili. I am Martu and I also know how white fellas think, so I'm the one in the middle of both worlds. I believe Martu people just want a voice, and they use that voice through art to be heard and for it to be recognised that we live in the Western Desert."

The exhibition will also include a collection of **Martu cultural objects**, including wooden spears and finely wrought baskets. These objects show the blending of traditional skills with new materials and techniques explored by the Martu.

To celebrate the exhibition, FAC is growing a Pilbara garden at the entrance of the grounds. Working with Pilbara flora experts, ground staff have brought 22 tonnes of red Pilbara soil to FAC and begun propagating and seeding various species of Pilbara plants. The Pilbara garden will provide a direct experience of the colours and flora of the Western Desert.

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Jim Cathcart, Fremantle Arts Centre Director said “FAC is proud to be partner in this first-time collaboration between Martumili Arts and KJ, with substantial support from BHP. FAC will be alive with Martu people sharing their distinctive view of land and life from the Western Desert and the new works commissioned through indigenous and non indigenous artists working together might just point the way forward for Australian art”.

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