

## Barbara McGrady



### Introduction

Born 1950 in Mungindi, Australia

Gamilaroi/Gomeroi Murri Yinah

Artwork Title: *Nginyaningy Maran Yaliwaunga Ngaara-li (Our Ancestors Are Always Watching)*, 2020

Artwork Location: Art Gallery of New South Wales and Campbelltown Arts Centre

A Gamilaroi/Gomeroi Murri Yinah (woman) from North Western NSW and Southern Queensland, Barbara McGrady is a passionate advocate for telling the true stories of contemporary Aboriginal life, documenting her mobs' achievements, humanity and beauty through a unique lens.

As both an 'observer' and 'protagonist' in the ongoing conflict between Aboriginal culture, spiritual connection to country and Australian colonial sensibilities, McGrady clearly defines the implications of this disconnect in her work.

'For most of my life, I have documented the diversity of Aboriginal experiences: politics, sport, dance, song, community, family,' said McGrady.

'As a Gomeroi yinnar photographer, it has always been my responsibility to bring our stories into the public domain, to connect and engage audiences with images through a black lens.'

'*Nginyaningy Maran Yaliwaunga Ngaara-li (Our Ancestors Are Always Watching)* shifts my work into a new phase. It is an opportunity to delve into my archive, to curate my lifetime's work and re-present it as a kaleidoscopic compendium of Aboriginal contemporary history within a gallery setting. The work is a de/colonising intervention into traditional colonial archival spaces: the museum, the library, the art gallery. It is an immersive, multichannel audio-visual black takeover of the white cube: a 'blackout'. *Nginyaningy Maran Yaliwaunga Ngaara-li* provides an insight into what it means to be a First Nations person surviving and thriving in a colonial world.'

The dense, interconnected and expansive photographic archive of Barbara McGrady highlights the nature of her images as forces that not only document and witness, but participate across cultural realms, centring Indigenous histories and stories, and becoming tools for activism and shifting perceptions. The texts embedded within this installation are prose and words from McGrady's social media sites.

Barbara McGrady (with John Janson-Moore), *Nginyaningy Maran Yaliwaunga Ngaara-li (Our Ancestors Are Always Watching)*, 2020. Installation view for the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020), Campbelltown Arts Centre. Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney with generous support from the Australia Council for the Arts. Courtesy the artist. Photograph: Zan Wimberley.

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### Inquiry questions

- Look at the Barbara McGrady's images, what do you notice first?
- What people and objects are shown?
- What, if any, words do you see?
- Who do you think the audience is for these images?
- Why do you think Barbara McGrady focuses on documenting her own community?

### Creative learning activity

Become a curator. Create your own exhibition.

Select 10 photographs from local newspapers or family photographs that have significance to you, your family and your community.

Explain why you selected each one and the significance of the photograph.

Think about curatorial practices, such as groupings and themes displayed in your exhibition.

### Reflection

- What cultural, social and historical influences have you had in your life that have made you who you are today?
- Barbara McGrady's work captures moments in time that are important to her and her community. Can you think of an event within your community that you would want to photograph? What is the significance of that event on your own identity and history?

### Extension

- Think about the importance of the camera through history. How has the use of photojournalism changed your perspective of world events?
- We are currently living in unusual circumstances. Can you make your own newspaper article capturing one image of a phone or camera the best shows how your community have been impacted by COVID 19? Write an article explaining the photo and the impact of it on your daily life.

Share your images and words with us using the #NIRINathome tag on Instagram and Facebook.