

nivus  
23rd biennale of sydney  
12.03–13.06.22

50 years  
of  
Words

MAJOR GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



PRINCIPAL PATRON



PRINCIPAL PARTNER



Clare Milledge\_The Jayapura Room & Thurible Mother Clare Milledge, The Jayapura Room & Thurible Mother, 2016. Installation view for Dämmer Schlaf at Artspace, Sydney. Supported by Artspace and Australia Council for the Arts. Courtesy Clare Milledge and STATION, Australia. Photograph: Zan Wimberley.

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# Introduction

This archival resource has been created to help learners and educators engage with distinct art making methods that are integral to the 23rd Biennale of Sydney, rīvus and across our 50-year history of delivering cutting-edge exhibitions in Australia. It is part of a larger project Liquid Languages that features participant videos, active exercises and archival PowerPoints that encourages learners to engage deeply with their local context and to map the water stories of their local environments.

50-years of Words charts the shifts and developments in approaches to art making across time, geography and space and aims to expand students’ understanding of what Words can be. The resource also demonstrate to learners and educators the diverse ways themes such as Found Materials, Sound, Mapping, Words and New Materials have been dealt with by artists and creative practitioners and intends to inspire new methods of making and reflection in formal and informal classrooms.

50-years of Words is available for free download on the Biennale of Sydney’s website, and may be used to support a school visit to the exhibition, as a stand-alone tool or in learners and educators participation in our larger education project Liquid Languages. Educators are encouraged to adapt questions, focused artists and supporting activities to suit the interests and needs of the learner and to integrate this resource into other areas of study.

# Why do 'Words' hold power?

Things to consider

# 9th Biennale of Sydney (1992-93)

## Richard Bell

Born 1953 in Charleville, Australia

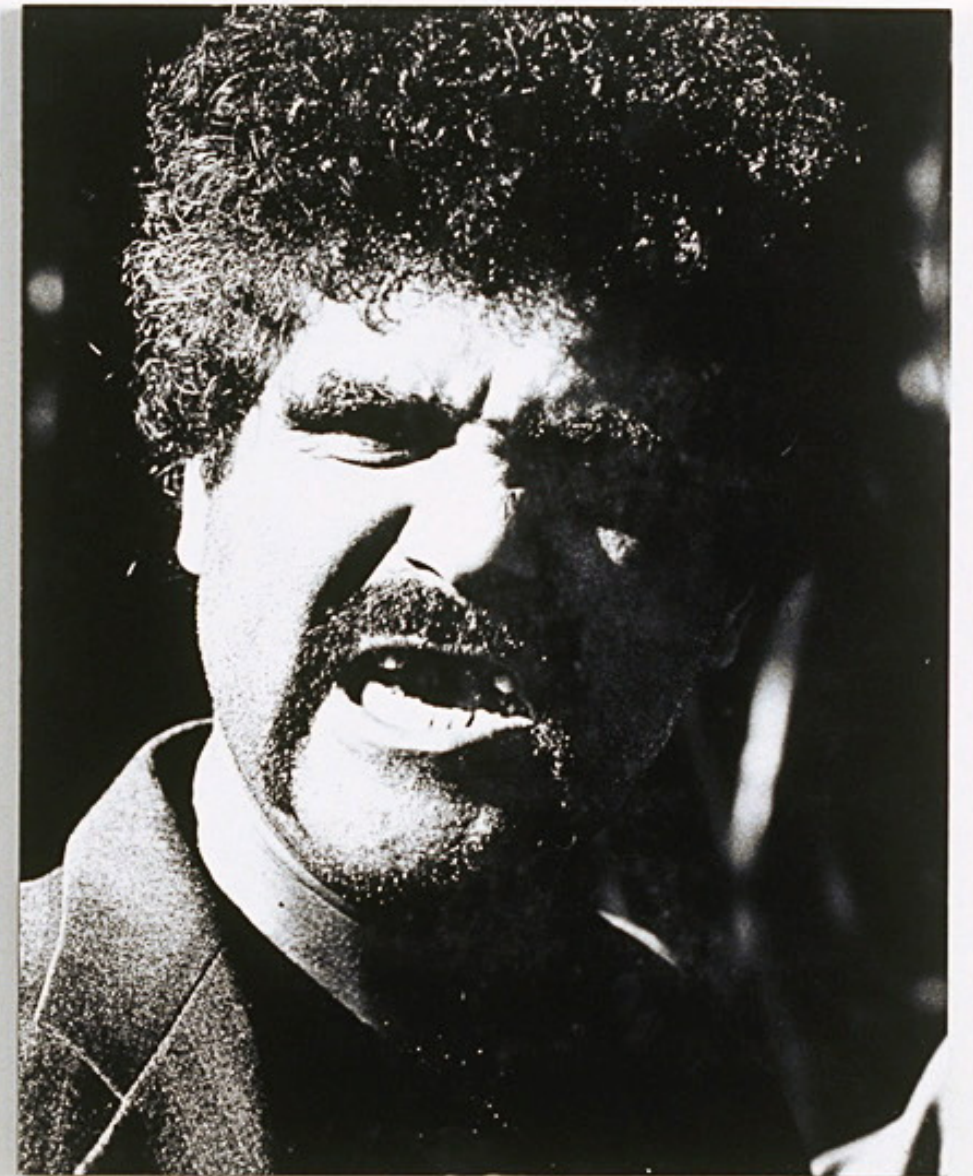
Lives and works in Brisbane, Australia

An activist and artist, Bell works across video, painting, installation and text to pose provocative, complex and humorous challenges to our preconceived ideas of Aboriginal art, as well as addressing contemporary debates around identity, place and politics. In *Pigeonholes*, Bell portrays himself in six repeated images as an “angry black man” in an effort to challenge the negative stereotype associated with Aboriginal men. With missing teeth, an afro, and a belligerent expression, he aligns current clichés for Aboriginal men with each self-portrait, allowing the viewer to experience what it feels like to be categorised derogatorily.

Richard Bell, *Pigeonholes*, 1992, 13 photographic panels on hardboard, 76 x 292 cm. Installation view of the 9th Biennale of Sydney (1992-1993) at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

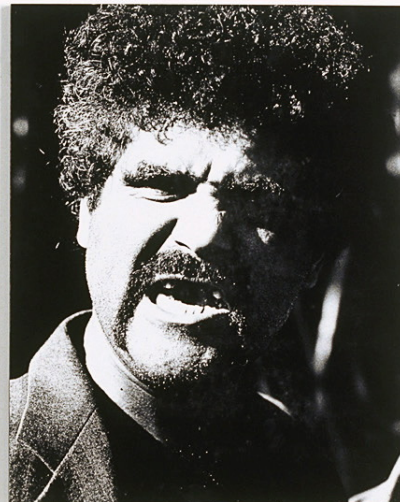
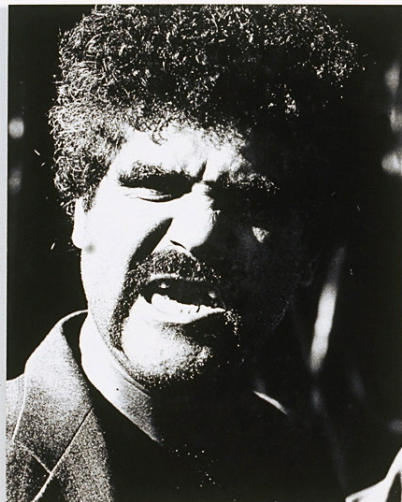
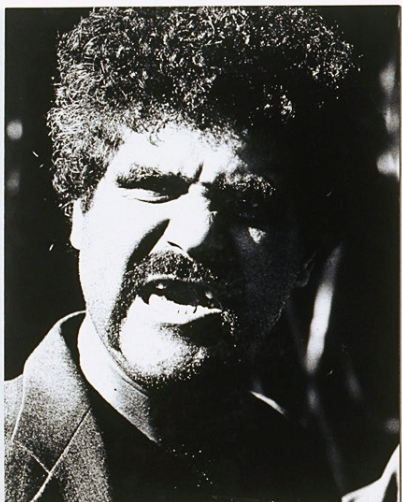
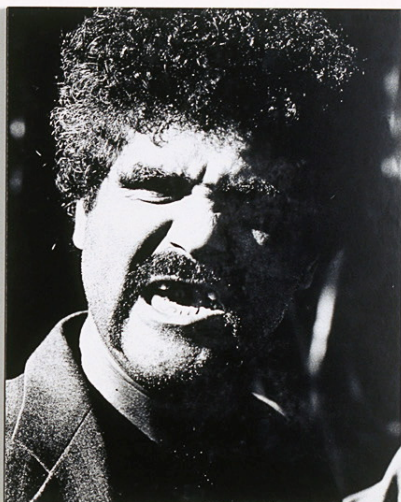
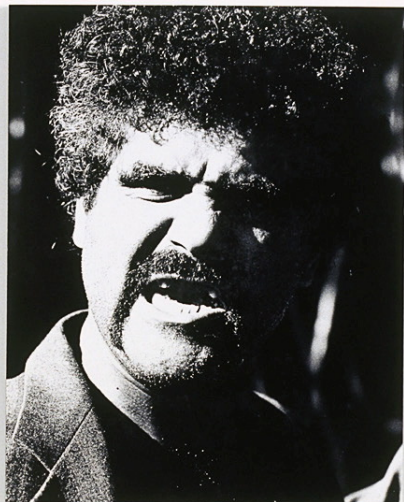
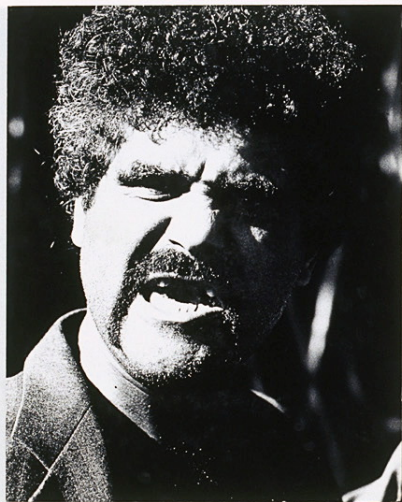
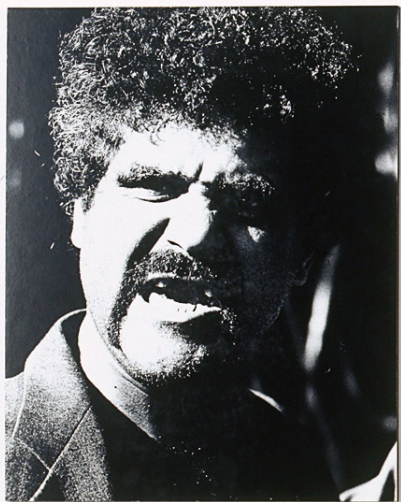


**TAILOR**



**TROUBLE  
MAKER**





**DRINKER**

**TAILOR**

**SOLD YER**

**FAILURE**

**BUTCHER**

**BAKER**

**TROUBLE  
MAKER**

Richard Bell, *Pigeonholes*, 1992, 13 photographic panels on hardboard, 76 x 292 cm. Installation view of the 9th Biennale of Sydney (1992-1993) at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.



# 16th Biennale of Sydney (2008)

## Bruce Nauman

Born 1941 in Fort Wayne, USA

Lives and works in Galisteo, USA

Bruce Nauman studied mathematics, music and art, and has engaged in philosophy and the study of language. Since the mid-1960s, his highly experimental artworks have posed questions about how we experience the world, and how meaning is constructed through understanding experience. Nauman has created a body of work that extends from painting to photography, from sculpture to video, from performance to the creation of installations and environments. He has constantly analysed paradox, the meaning of art, and the gap that it reveals between theory and practice, knowledge and experience. Presented in the Biennale is one of his most important works, a neon spiral made in 1967 that reads, 'The true artist helps the world by revealing mystic truths'.



Bruce Nauman, The true artist helps he world by revealing mystic truths, 1967, neon work. Installation view of the 16th Biennale of Sydney (2008) at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Photograph: Jenni Carter





**Bruce Nauman**  
The true artist helps the world  
by revealing mystic truths  
1967  
Neon  
The true artist helps the world  
by revealing mystic truths  
1967  
Neon  
The true artist helps the world  
by revealing mystic truths  
1967  
Neon

Bruce Nauman, The true artist helps he world by revealing mystic truths, 1967, neon work. Installation view of the 16th Biennale of Sydney (2008) at the Art Gallery of New South Wales. Photograph: Jenni Carter



What are some of the  
different ways  
‘Words’ are shared  
with others?

Things to consider



# 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020)

## Iltja Ntjarra (Many Hands) Art Centre

Founded in 2004 in Mparntwe, Australia

Iltja Ntjarra (Many Hands) Art Centre is a not-for-profit art centre, proudly Aboriginal owned and directed. The centre has a special focus on supporting the 'Hermannsburg School'-style watercolour artists, who continue to paint in the tradition of their grandfather and relative, Albert Namatjira, arguably one of Australia's most famous artists of the 20th century. Fourteen artists from Iltja Ntjarra (Many Hands) Art Centre are being shown across multiple venues for the Biennale of Sydney, tracing stories of Country as well as struggles with housing and displacement. For the project *Homeless on my homeland*, beautiful landscapes have been painted onto 'dollar shop' bags, a potent material symbol of life on the move. These works explore the enduring connection to Country, as well as continued cycles of dispossession, while powerfully asserting messages of self-determination to the many who have no connection or understanding of these urgent messages.



Iltja Ntjarra / Many Hands Art Centre, *Homeless on my homeland*, 2018-19. Installation view of the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020), at Carriageworks. Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney with generous assistance from Australia Council for the Arts and Fondation Opale. Photograph: Alex Robinson.





Ittja Ntjarra / Many Hands Art Centre, *Homeless on my homeland*, 2018-19. Installation view of the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020), at Cockatoo Island. Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney with generous assistance from Australia Council for the Arts and Fondation Opale. Photograph: Alex Robinson.



# 21st Biennale of Sydney (2018)

Ciara Phillips

Born 1976 in Ottawa, Canada

Lives and works in Glasgow, Scotland

Influenced by the historical uses of the print and printmaking in political and social activism, as well as the often collaborative physical process of production, Ciara Phillips examines the capacity of printmaking to unite people in the pursuit of a purpose or idea. With her project *Workshop*, Phillips created a print studio within the walls of the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, which interrupted the conventional space of the public art institution, where the audience expects to see a work of art in a state of completion rather than production. Using printmaking as a mediating tool, Phillips develops relationships with local Sydney community groups through dialogue and making, not simply public engagement.



Ciara Phillips, *Workshop*, 2010–ongoing, installation and print studio. Installation view of the 21st Biennale of Sydney (2018) at the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia. Courtesy the artist. Photograph: Document Photography



How are ‘Words’  
political?  
What can they  
achieve as political  
actions?

Things to consider



# 23rd Biennale of Sydney (2022)

Clare Milledge

Born 1977 in Sydney, Australia

Lives in Bundjalung Country (Broken Head, Australia) on the lands of the Arakwal people, and the Eora Nation (Paddington, Australia) on the lands of the Bidjigal and Gadigal people

Clare Milledge's work re-examines contemporary environments with a focus on our engagement with ecology through art, in particular through the use of the historical figure of the artist-shaman. Working with fieldwork as her primary methodology she collects, re-organises, transforms and re-presents recordings, information and material gathered on ecological surveys and site visits. Her work *I am a wizard: who but I sets the cool head aflame with smoke* (2018) is based on an Irish myth about the figure Amergin – a druid and bard who sings an incantation to defeat a magical storm.



Clare Milledge, *I am a wizard: who but I sets the cool head aflame with smoke* Clare Milledge, *I am a wizard: who but I sets the cool head aflame with smoke?* 2018. Courtesy Clare Milledge and STATION, Australia. Photograph: Jessica Maurer





Clare Milledge\_The Jayapura Room & Thurable Mother Clare Milledge, The Jayapura Room & Thurable Mother, 2016. Installation view for Dämmer Schlaf at Artspace, Sydney. Supported by Artspace and Australia Council for the Arts. Courtesy Clare Milledge and STATION, Australia. Photograph: Zan Wimberley.



What occurs when  
‘Words’ hold a  
double meaning?

Bark/Match/Tense/Fair/Lead/Lie/  
Project/Fine/Object/Mine/Park/  
Right/Type/Bow/Season

Things to consider

# Activity | Watery Words and Slippery Meanings

This activity encourages you to reflect upon what words can communicate and how meaning is made.

1. Photograph five things around you.

2. Select five watery words from the list below and pair one word with one photograph:

*Liquidity; Mineral; Current; Trickle; Abyss; Overflowing; Muddy; Salty; Upstream; Stagnant; Undulating; Ebb; Flow; Shallow; Icy; Steamy; Flavoured; Sparkling; Droplet; Hydrating.*

3. Forming groups of no more than four people, share your combinations with your peers and discuss the following:

- Were you able to be objective when pairing your image with the word from the list, or were you already seeking connections?
- How do we *read* these photographs without the paired word?
- How do we *read* these word without the paired photographs?
- How do we *read* the combination of these words with these photographs? And how has the meaning shifted and changed through the connections?
- What does this new combination make you think and feel? How it challenge your understanding of how meaning in the world is created