

Sydney Opera House launches new Badu Gili sails projection bringing together First Nations artists from Australia and the Amazon

– New projection to light the Sydney Opera House's eastern Bennelong sails from 13 December, appearing six times every night from sunset –



Image: Image: Esme Timberly, Steven Russell, Marilyn Russell and Joseca Mokahehi Yanomami. *Badu Gili: Healing Spirit*, 2024. Sydney Opera House. Created in partnership between the Sydney Opera House, Biennale of Sydney and the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain. Animated by Vandal, soundscape by James Henry.

Sydney – 4 December 2024. The **Biennale of Sydney**, **Sydney Opera House** and **Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain** today announced a new chapter of the free, nightly First Nations sails lighting, ***Badu Gili***, will open to the public on **13 December**. ***Badu Gili: Healing Spirit*** will illuminate the world-famous sails with a dynamic projection displaying the works of celebrated First Nations artists, the late Bidjigal elder **Esme Timberly** and two of her children, **Marilyn Russell** and **Steven Russell**, and artist **Joseca Mokahehi Yanomami** of the Yanomami people. ***Badu Gili: Healing Spirit*** will appear on the Opera House's Eastern Bennelong sails six times a night from sunset.

The project marks the second year of a creative partnership between the **Sydney Opera House**, **Biennale of Sydney** and the **Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain**. The powerful projection of First Nations storytelling has been animated by **Vandal** with a soundscape by James Henry, bringing together Indigenous artists from Bidjigal (Australia) and Yanomami (the Amazon's largest Indigenous group) for the first time on Australia's most iconic canvas.

Inspired by shellwork crafted by Esme Timberly and Marilyn Russell, prints and weavings by Steven Russell,

and Joseca Mokahehi Yanomami's drawings of the spirits and landscapes of the remote Yanomami forest, the new six-minute digital animation explores rituals and the bonds of cultural and familial connection forged through art and storytelling.

As a tribute to the life and work of their mother, the chapter created by Marilyn Russell and Steven Russell is set against the backdrop of the ocean and within the universe of Esme's art. Featuring delicate shellwork and prints representing the enduring passage of artistic practice across generations, the projection explores the deep spiritual connection between a mother, her family and their Country.

Transitioning to the forests and rivers of the Yanomami, Joseca Mokahehi Yanomami's chapter depicts a shamanic curing ceremony, a ritual performed when community members fall ill. Illuminating the relationship between the metaphysical and natural worlds, good spirits are called upon to ward off bad. Offering a glimpse into Yanomami cosmology, Joseca Mokahehi Yanomami brings the Amazon alive with butterflies, jaguars and the songs of his people.

Badu Gili: Healing Spirit will launch to the public on 13 December with ***Badu Gili: LIVE*** – a night of live music, food and gathering to celebrate the first light of this exciting new chapter.

Artists Marilyn Russell and Steven Russell said: "As a family we are so proud and grateful for this opportunity to shine a spotlight on mum, known as Aunty Esme to the broader community. She taught us the beauty of our heritage and shared with us her incredible talent for shellwork. For us, *Badu Gili* represents the pinnacle of her artistic career and honours her strength, creativity, and the way she continues to inspire us every day. This project brings her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren pride and joy in our culture. We love mum deeply, and we are forever blessed to walk in her footsteps."

Artist Joseca Mokahehi Yanomami said: "I'm happy to be a part of *Badu Gili*, and excited to be coming to Australia to share my drawings and the stories of the Yanomami people. As Indigenous people we will look each other in the face, get to know one another and share this special work with the community."

Sydney Opera House Chief Customer Officer, Jade McKellar said: "We're excited to once again launch our nightly celebration of First Nations culture, *Badu Gili*, in our second year of partnership with the Biennale of Sydney and the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain. Since *Badu Gili*'s beginnings in 2017, we've welcomed over 650,000 visitors on-site and nearly 3 million online to enjoy this free cultural experience showcasing the work of artists from different corners of the globe, whose creations reflect a deep, generational connection to their respective lands."

Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain First Nations Curatorial Fellow, Tony Albert said: "As the inaugural Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain First Nations Curatorial Fellow, it is incredible to now be at the second iteration of *Badu Gili* presented in partnership with the Sydney Opera House and the Biennale of Sydney. *Healing Spirit* is a journey of connectivity and caring through culture. From the fresh water deep in the Amazon rainforest, to the crashing saltwater waves at La Perouse, we are all connected. I believe *Badu Gili* showcases the absolute best of Indigenous art in a growing movement recognising the way in which our stories, art and culture continue to resonate in the most impactful of ways."

CEO of Biennale of Sydney, Barbara Moore said: "*Badu Gili: Healing Spirit* is a celebration of family and cultural resilience. Through ancestral stories we honour the enduring bonds that shape our identities and connect us across generations, continents and cultures. The Biennale of Sydney is proud to support communities in sharing their knowledge and stories, partnering once again with the Sydney Opera House and the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain to illuminate shared humanity and the profound role of art in uniting diverse histories and traditions."

International Director of the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Hervé Chandès said: "The collaboration with the Biennale of Sydney and the Sydney Opera House extends the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain commitment to First Nations artists from all over the world and underscores the crucial role of listening to their voices as we navigate the challenges facing our planet. By discovering and embracing other forms of sensitivity and modes of understanding life, we become more conscious and in tune with the world in which we operate and carry our missions."

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Joseca Mokahehi Yanomami

Joseca Mokahehi Yanomami was born in 1971 in the Brazilian Amazon. Son of a shaman, Joseca shares the ancestral knowledge and cosmology of the Yanomami through his drawings – embodying the ancient times and multiple dimensions of the Yanomami land and forest. Shamanic rituals, which communicate between humans and the "xapiri" (spirits), are central themes in his work.

The Yanomami

The Yanomami are the largest isolated tribe in South America living in the Amazon rainforest between northern Brazil and southern Venezuela on land roughly the size of Victoria, Australia. The tribe has a population of approximately 30,000 people split between 200 – 250 villages. The Yanomami first came into sustained contact with outsiders in the 1940s. Since then, their land has been threatened by illegal gold mining and wellbeing threatened by disease.

Esme Timberly

Bidjigal elder and senior artist Esme Timberly is recognised for her decorative shelled models and objects that range from depictions of Sydney attractions to small slippers, frames and boxes. Continuing the shellwork tradition associated with the Aboriginal community of the south-eastern Sydney suburb of La Perouse, Timberly's works embody an enduring connection to Country, linking a long-established craft to the changing geography and cultural reality of contemporary Sydney.

Marilyn Russell

Continuing an artistic and family tradition Marilyn Russell's shellworks are a testament to the legacy of her mother, Esme Timberly, as well as that of the Bidjigal people. Living and working in La Perouse Marilyn learnt shellwork from her mother Esme, who learnt from her mother Queen Emma Timberly before that. Marilyn's work, which is both a connection to the past as well as a process of healing, is held in multiple gallery collections including the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney.

Steven Russell

Steven Russell, a Bidjigal, Dharawal and Wadi Wadi drawer, painter and weaver, was born at La Perouse Mission on the shores of Kamay (Botany Bay), Sydney. The son of Bidjigal elder and senior artist Esme

Timbery, Steven's work is deeply connected to Country and is held in multiple gallery collections including the Wollongong Art Gallery. Along with his wife Phyllis Stewart, and their daughter Kristine, Steven is a founding member of the Jungah Weavers, a Master Weaver collective based out of Gerringong, NSW.

Sydney Opera House

The Sydney Opera House is the symbol of modern Australia. It is one of the world's busiest performing arts centres, the nation's premier tourism destination and an architectural masterpiece of the 20th century. A global beacon for creativity, it is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List and its social value has been estimated by Deloitte at \$11.4 billion. Its broad and diverse programming attracts audiences in person and online, with more than 16 million people attending performances and tours over the past decade. In its ambition to be Everyone's House, the Opera House continues to evolve alongside the community it was built to serve.

Biennale of Sydney

The Biennale of Sydney is a leading international contemporary art event. It plays an indispensable role in Australia's engagement with the world, and a meaningful role in the life of the nation. For 50 years, the Biennale has been a unifying force in the Australian arts sector, embedding boldly creative art exhibitions and experiences in the everyday life of Sydney and putting the artistic excellence of Australia front and centre on the world stage. The Biennale of Sydney has commissioned and presented exceptional works of art by more than 2400 artists from more than 130 countries and territories. The Biennale of Sydney is committed to free access for all.

Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain

The Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain is a private cultural institution whose mission is to promote all fields of contemporary artistic creation to the international public through a program of temporary exhibitions, live performances, and conversations. Created in 1984 by the Maison Cartier, the institution is exhibiting in Paris in a building designed by the architect Jean Nouvel.

The Fondation Cartier's singular artistic program explores a wide array of creative fields from visual and performing arts to architecture, design, fashion, philosophy, and the sciences. For nearly four decades, the Fondation Cartier has been instrumental in revealing the talent of some of the greatest contemporary artists and has established its museum spaces as a platform where artists and scientists can meet and create projects to address major issues of today's world. Its collection consists of nearly 4,500 works from a rich and multidisciplinary program. It is a testament to the relationships forged with more than 500 artists originating from all over the globe.

As part of its ongoing observation of the relationship between human beings and nature, the Fondation Cartier has produced collective projects (exhibitions, individual works of art, publications, performances, and public talks) approaching contemporary environmental issues, such as climate change, biodiversity and deforestation. The Fondation Cartier also built a long-term relationship with contemporary artists from Indigenous communities living in Brazil, Paraguay, Venezuela or Australia, and bear witness to the multiplicity of Indigenous languages and cultures. The Fondation Cartier travels the world, partnering with major art institutions and engaging new audiences to discover the works of contemporary artists, and be challenged by their perspectives. Find out more here: www.fondationcartier.com/