

28.02.23

Re. Letter of Support – Australia Council for the Arts Funding

To the Assessors,

I am delighted to write in support of this project. As an artist the opportunity to exchange deeply with the complex and exemplary work that Arts & Cultural Exchange (ACE) produces is incredibly relevant and inspiring. This organisation works and delivers First Nations programs that encourages artists to learn and collaborate with Traditional Owners and diverse communities of Western Sydney.

This residency presents an opportunity for me to engage deeply with the ACE community and to create exciting new works. Spending 4 weeks at ACE across a 12 month period will allow for deep connections between people and Country, promising responsive and engaged outcomes that reflect the vibrancy of Parramatta. I am excited to share my practice and skill set, and in turn have my practice strengthened through the residency. I have previously connected with ACE and the Dharug Knowledge Holders their programs employ most recently through the project Nura: Deep Listening in partnership with Cement Fondu. Through these connections and conversations, particularly with Aunty Julie Clarke-Jones (Webb), I have learnt more about Dharug stories and histories. This is something I would be particularly excited to continue to engage with in an exchange context.

Working with other artists and collaborators is truly the most nourishing and generative part of working with the arts, and I believe that being able to engage with people at different stages within their artistic journey is a critical experience for artists. I am eager to spend time with the Still Growing youth participants and the Dharug Knowledge Holders at ACE. As a proud Baakindji woman, I am humbled and eager for the opportunity to spend time on Dharug Country with Traditional Owners. My practice is centred around intergenerational stories in contemporary Aboriginal affairs and political discourses – with a focus on telling women’s narratives. As such, I am deeply inspired by the considered First Nations programs that connect to local histories and contemporary experiences that ACE produces. I look forward to spending time with ACE’s people and programs, and developing work in that uniquely rich context.

I offer my support for this exciting project and look forward to working with ACE throughout the exchange program.

Kind Regards,



Maddison Gibbs

1.3.23

01.03.23

Re. Letter of Support – Australia Council for the Arts Funding

To the Assessors,

I am thrilled to write in support of this project. I am a Kombumerri (saltwater) man who identifies as bisexual/pansexual, working at the intersection of queer club culture and connection with Country (I perform under the title 'sallvage'). My practice uses field recordings from Country to make experimental electronic music performed with movement influenced by vogue/ballroom dance traditions. I have connected with ACE First Nations producer Hannah Donnelly on a number of projects including a works-in-progress series for Liveworks Festival of Experimental Art. Recent highlights of my resume including creating the music for the 9pm City of Sydney NYE fireworks, as part of the *Calling Country* program. As an artist the opportunity to exchange deeply with the work that Arts & Cultural Exchange (ACE) produces is incredibly relevant. This organisation works and delivers First Nations programs that encourages artists to learn and collaborate with Traditional Owners and diverse communities of Western Sydney.

This residency is structured so that it works around my schedule and across a 12 month period to create space for deep connections between people and Country, promising responsive and engaged outcomes that can only be explored through making long-term connections and allowing the time to listen. I am excited to share my practice and skill set, and in turn have my practice strengthened through the residency. I have previously connected with some of the members of the ACE Dharug Knowledge Holders Group, particularly with Aunty Julie Clarke-Jones (Webb), through the project *Nura: Deep Listening* in partnership with Cement Fondu. This conversation about Country with custodians in Western Sydney is something I am excited to continue iteratively in this residency.

I am also looking forward to sharing my skills and spending time with the Still Growing First Nations Youth Collective participants. Working with young people in safe spaces and teaching them about relationships to sound and Country will be a deeply rewarding experience. I am eager to be part of the ACE First Nations programs that connect to local histories and contemporary experiences that ACE produces. I look forward to spending time with ACE's people and programs, and developing work in that uniquely rich context.

I offer my support for this exciting project and look forward to working with ACE throughout the Artist-in-Residence exchange program.

Kind Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rowan Savage', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Rowan Savage

Nura: Deep Listening

15 October 2022 - 3 December 2022

Artists, Maddison Gibbs, Sallvage (Rowan Savage)
Project Space, Tiarna Herczeg



Maddison Gibbs, *The Host*, artwork mock up, 2022. Commissioned by Cement Fondu.

Curated by Dennis Golding, *Nura: Deep Listening* is a First Nations led exhibition grounded in practices of 'deep listening'. The exhibition focuses on the vital role of Indigenous storytelling and listening to Country.

Reflecting the knowledge shared in conversations led by Dharug Elder Aunty Julie Clarke-Jones (Webb), the exhibition presents new commissions in sound and sculptural installation by First Nations artists Sallvage (Rowan Savage) and Maddison Gibbs. Through creative processes that respectfully hear, record and share the stories and sounds of Nura (Country), the artists have co-created an immersive exhibition that invites meditation on the care of culture and Country and the urgency of deep listening.

Located throughout the gallery, Sallvage has created *Janyang/Gawal (in my tongue)*, a complexly layered sound installation derived from field recordings. The work transforms the space into an uncanny exploration of how Country is mediated through technology in an age in which sound is incorrectly understood to be 'placeless'. Field recordings that the artist has faithfully reproduced from the natural world aurally blend with mutant distortions to create a sonic landscape. It also incorporates Dharawal Language recorded in collaboration between the artist and the Gujaga Foundation. Enveloping its audience, *Janyang/Gawal (in my tongue)* enacts and speaks to the ways in which the tools of a colonising society can be re-purposed to recreate connection in the face of alienation.

For *Nura*, Maddison Gibbs has created *The host*, a collection of spirit-like sculptures made from the collected dead branches of the Mistletoe tree. The host explores Aboriginal people's perspective of hosting a forced colonial nexus. The lifecycle of the mistletoe tree symbolises the colonial overtaking,

resulting in a mutational cohabitation for survival. Aboriginal people believe the mistletoe is a direct connection to the afterlife. The spirits sit in the tree until it flowers, and then, when the winds and fire come, the spirits get taken out to sea.

Drowned in red light, The host reflects the attempted destruction of Aboriginal culture and landscapes. The angry female protector spirits remember. Shadows, whispers of what once was, what is, and what will come next.

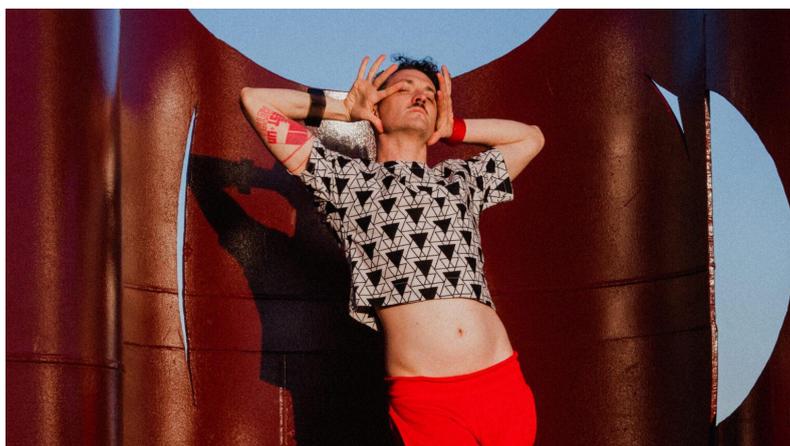
This project was initiated in dialogue and partnership with A.C.E and we wish to express gratitude to their team: Anne Loxely, Hannah Donnelly, Serene Yunupingu and Akala Newman. We acknowledge and thank the First Nations individuals who engaged generously in conversations around Nura (Country): Dharug knowledge holder Aunty Julie Clarke-Jones (Webb), Shanaya Donovan, Jumikah Donovan, Gerald Spence and Drew Walker.

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<https://cementfondu.org/nura/>

Kombumerri Man Rowan Savage on his song anthology connecting anticolonialism, country and culture

December 14th 2022
Sumaiya Chowdhure



ROWAN SAVAGE :: ON RACE MATTERS

A gratifying practice of deep listening combined with intensive labour creates the unique musical world of Rowan Savage. From Kombumerri Country located in Southeast Queensland, Rowan explores experimentalism, Indigenous Futurisms and queer club music through his work as a sound artist, DJ and performer. This week Rowan spoke with Race Matters on the sensory engineering of Deep Listening, his latest album and the recently-concluded exhibition Nura: Deep Listening at Cement Fondu.

Earlier this year, under the moniker sallvage, Rowan released his multilayered album *Deep Gecko Energy*, which explores musical textures of rhythm, sludge, bass and dub. The album explores themes of Country and culture across five tracks. Through *Deep Gecko Energy*, listeners are sonically shifted into an odyssey of energy and deep spiritualism that is a product of intense soundscaping by Rowan.

“I’ll take field recordings of my country, Kombumerri country, clean them up, turn them into usable sounds in a club context, making a kick or a bass line out of something like the sound of a stick hitting a tree and bring everything together.”

For Rowan, the practice of using field recordings and Deep Listening as a process for art curation goes beyond just sound-making. They’re an essential means to forge a relationship with Country and culture. The ongoing and violent legacy of colonialism has impacted the erasure of First Nations cultural production and for it to be removed from its context. Rowan spoke to this in his conversation with Race Matters.

“A lot of our culture and traditions have been smashed by colonialism and are therefore not as available as they otherwise would be. I was always a sound person and the practice of taking field recordings was really about Deep Listening for me and recreating those relationships with Country and to provide value to this foundation. These are sounds that I actually hear every day where I live and it’s a privilege to have the permission from traditional owners to work with these sounds.”

With the intentions of strong fidelity in his work, Rowan attempts to restore Indigenous storytelling in an anti colonial context through interweaving natural sounds into his experimental style of music.

In some ways, the creative process that brought the album to life has allowed for a sense of departure from overstimulation. In its place are Rowan’s intuitive escapades and meaningful experiences through sound making.

“Where I live there’s birds, cockatoos, lorikeets, and kookaburras that I hear just outside my window and sometimes when I’m working on my music, I can’t tell if the sounds are coming from the birds in my recordings or birds outside my window. It’s really attuned me to not only what’s going on when I’m on my Country but also to my general experience of how it is to be in the world as well.”

Music producers are often challenged to know when to say “stop”; resisting the urge to revisit and rework their masterpiece. Rowan often replicates any memorable sounds that he likes in his music by pulling them out and transforming them into various contexts so listeners can be a part of an ongoing world of familiar sounds and textures rather than just one discreet piece.

Just last week, Rowan’s oeuvre titled “*Janyang/ Gawal (in my tongue)*” was on exhibit at Cement Fondu alongside work by Barkindinji artist Maddison Gibbs as part of Nura: Deep Listening, a First Nations led art curation. The exhibition was a culmination of distinctive practices of art, faithful hearing, recording and listening to create a truly inviting experience on the care of Country and culture. The process of curation, included intensive work of respectful sound gatherings from Dharawal language recorded in collaboration between Rowan and the Gujaga Foundation, storytelling, knowledge and conversations led by Dharug Elder Aunty Julie Clarke – Jones (Webb). The idea behind this spatial practise at the gallery was to use natural materials to create an unexpected experience for the audience and nurture their curiosity, Rowan shared.

“We both brought this idea of using natural material which was then mutated in some way. When you look at Maddie’s work, you can see these spirits that she’s created from wood. And with my work, I like for the original source of the sound to still be apparent, so I don’t want it to be edited so much that it sounds like it could have come out of a synthesizer, but I also want it to sound a little mutated, uncanny, or robotic, which is about having the Indigenous futurisms approach.”

As a First Nations artist, Rowan is consciously attempting to navigate a greater space for Bla(c)k artists in the sound-making scene, but this becomes a challenge when people in the industry can, at times,

feel tokenistic.

“People want you to because they want a First Nations artist for the purpose of diversity, but then they have an idea in their head of what they want but you may not fit that in where you are coming from as an artist.”

Leading sounds and melodies into unexpected directions through his work, Rowan’s sensory output into the modern world vibrates the vital restoration of Indigenous art, storytelling, Country and culture.

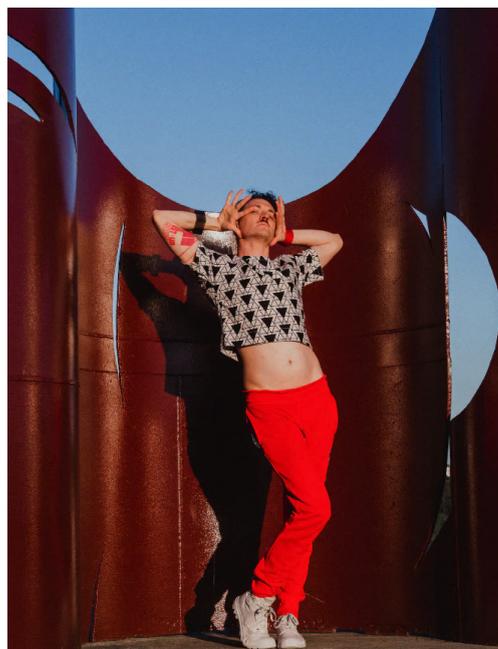
Listen to Rowan’s latest album *Deep Gecko Energy* via Powertrip records, and look forward to his new track Gaguru Revenant on the New Weird Australia compilation *Fragile States*, out now. You can check out their chat on Race Matters up top!

<https://fbiradio.com/rowan-savage-race-matters-interview/>

Indigenous themed Calling Country fireworks to usher in Sydney’s NYE Celebrations

Bertrand Tungandame

27 December 2022



Kicking off at 9 P M on NYE, the Indigenous themed Calling Country fireworks will welcome everyone to Gadigal Land ushering in the City of Sydney’s NYE celebrations. The display will be set to a unique soundtrack by proud Kombumerri man Rowan Savage.

Calling Country is a family friendly display featuring projections on the Sydney Harbour Bridge pylons celebrating the local histories and contemporary experiences of Indigenous storytellers through art, song, sound, and dance.

The event is set to a unique soundtrack by Kumbumerri man Rowan Savage borrowing from Indigenous cultures.

Rowan Savage (photo credit Kayru Creative)

Rowan Savage says the Calling Country event featuring his soundtrack will kick-start NYE celebrations exactly the way First Nations people would have done in the precolonial era by slowing down and listening to spaces around them (sky, sea, and land) with respect.

“It is really nice to be able to contribute to this event. I use field sounds in my music. You’ll hear sounds of the natural environment in Australia, the roar of the ocean, the drops of water in caves, the ocean, animals, the kookaburra, sounds of sticks and stones,” Rowan savage says.

Calling Country aims to draw inspiration from sky, land and sea while paying homage to the knowledge and resilience of Indigenous peoples who care for Country.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/language/nitv-radio/en/podcast-episode/indigenous-themed-calling-country-fireworks-will-usher-in-the-sydneys-nye-celebrations/m3mmrub7r>

DEEP GECKO ENERGY - sallvage

<https://soundcloud.com/powertripclub/sets/deep-gecko-energy>

DEEP GECKO ENERGY is the first label release for DJ, producer and dancer Rowan Savage. Having cut his teeth in Warrang's ballroom scenes - as both a dancer, DJ and producer under the name Guy Ruin - Savage's practice takes its starting point within queer ballroom culture and the celebration of queer Indigeneity. His work has been featured at Soft Centre, Essential Tremors (curated by Angus Andrew of Liars), Carriage Works LiveDreams and Midsumma Festival.

Under a new moniker, sallvage, queer Indigeneity becomes launched into space, and an offering to the burgeoning field of Indigenous futurism is made. Created from field recordings taken on his Country, Kombumerri Country (located in Southeast so-called Queensland), Savage's music channels his relationship to Country within the esoteric landscape of club music. Sludgy, dubby, bass-y and rhythmic - Deep Gecko Energy is a release that crawls under the skin. Across each of the five tracks - ranging from hard hitting dancefloor bangers to the more subtle rhythms of bass music - the listener is immersed within a constantly shifting field of textures, dynamics, and grit that at once reaches forward into new sonic territories while harnessing a deeply familiar fundamental energy from within.

Released by: Powertrip

Release date: 16 May 2022

Maddison Gibbs Gunu Baakandji

Boomalli Aboriginal Artists Co-operative

Both artist and activist, Maddison Gibbs' practice examines dual histories - focusing on stories of past and present Aboriginal societies and spirit. A multidisciplinary artist, Gibbs works across a wide spectrum of cultural praxis, utilising many methods and ideologies. Current thematics include intergenerational stories of contemporary Aboriginal affairs - with a focus on telling women's narratives.

Maddison Gibbs' work is polarising, offering up culturally feminine intuitive visual poetics which at times starkly contrast with her art activism at the barricades. The dual sensitivities of caring for a country and fighting injustice is an interesting tension and one that is explored throughout Gibbs' practice.

"My artworks are based on my culture, people and surroundings, they tell stories of past and present by using contemporary methods and ideologies. My works include political statements and educational information regarding Aboriginal issues, a subject which I am extremely passionate about. I use different mediums for my works including drawing, ceramics, printmaking and animation."

Having previously studied Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts at Eora College in Sydney, Maddison Gibbs recently completed a Bachelor of Animation at the University of Technology Sydney.

An emerging artist whose practice has recently begun to garner significant attention, Maddison Gibbs' artworks have been included as part of VIVID Festival, Sydney Fringe Festival, Hobiennale at Moonah Arts Centre in Tasmania and the 2020 Bankstown Biennale. Her work was also included in group exhibitions *Here I am* at Ambush Gallery (2020) and *No Show* at Carriageworks (2021). Recent artist residencies include the Inner West Council EDGE Greenway Residency (2021), the Cementa21 First Nations Residency (2021), and the Australian Antarctic Division Residency (2019).

Working regularly on a multitude of public art murals, Maddison Gibbs also worked on the restoration of the 40,000 years mural at the Block, Redfern, and was recently commissioned to create a large-scale public artwork for the new Eveleigh Precinct in Sydney. In 2019 she was the recipient of the Australian Museum's prestigious Young Indigenous Artist Fellowship and she has also been awarded the Rotary Club of Sydney Soukup Animation Grant and the Bob Morgan International Scholarship.

Most recently in 2022, Gibbs' has exhibited as part of: *Where shadows meet*, a group show at Casula Powerhouse; *The Dingo Project*, a group exhibition at Ngununggula in the Southern Highlands; and as part of Cementa Festival. She has also been a finalist in the Blacktown Arts Prize (2021) and has completed numerous public art commissions. Upcoming projects and exhibitions include: *Ngayirr Ngurambang: Sacred Country* at Mudgee Regional Gallery; *Nura - Deep listening to country* at Cement Fondu *Undercurrents* at Penrith Regional Art Gallery and *Dyrubbin* at Hawkesbury Regional Art Gallery.

<https://www.boomalli.com.au/maddison-gibbs/>

Maddison Gibbs **Landscapes, and Whispers 2022**

Statement:

My artworks are based on my culture, people and surroundings, they tell stories of past and present by using contemporary methods and ideologies. My works include political statements and educational information regarding Aboriginal issues, a subject which I am extremely passionate about. I use different mediums for my works including drawing, ceramics, printmaking and animation.



LANDSCAPES AND WHISPERS, CEMENTA 22 PHOTO IAN HOBBS

Materials | installation mixed media

Location | [Combamalong Studios](#) [Rylstone Common](#)

Bio:

Maddison Gibbs is a proud Barkindji woman who grew up in Dubbo, NSW. She currently lives and works between Sydney and Kandos, NSW. Both artist and activist, Maddison Gibbs practice examines dual histories – focusing on stories of past and present Aboriginal societies and spirit. A multidisciplinary artist, Gibbs works across a wide spectrum of cultural praxis, utilising many methods and ideologies. A current thematic of Gibbs' work focuses on the intergenerational stories of contemporary Aboriginal affairs – with a focus on telling women's narratives.

“LANDSCAPES, AND WHISPERS” 2022

‘Landscapes’ (Rylstone Common) is a site-responsive work that considers invisible layers that exist within Australia’s landscapes, to activate seemingly hidden sites including dual histories and dual perspectives across times, marking 200 years since colonisation. In ‘Whispers’ (Combamalong Studios) spirits dance in the sheoaks, whispering songs of Country and stories of the constellations and the knowledge they hold when caring for Country. ‘Whispers’ is paying respects to our ancestors and continuing contemporary ceremonies.



LANDSCAPES AND WHISPERS, CEMENTA 22 PHOTO IAN HOBBS

<https://cementa.com.au/artist/maddison-gibbs>

Maddison Gibbs - “Caring for Country”

December 2021



Maddison Gibbs is a proud Barkindji woman who grew up in Dubbo, and currently lives and works between Sydney and Kandos. A multidisciplinary artist and activist, Maddison's work examines dual histories – focusing on stories of past and present Aboriginal societies and spirit. Maddison's work explores a spectrum of cultural practices, using many methods and ideologies.

Maddison's work can be polarising, offering up culturally feminine intuitive visual poetics which at times starkly contrast with her art activism. The dual sensitivities of caring for a Country and fighting injustice is an interesting tension and one that is explored throughout Maddison's practice.

“My artworks are based on my culture, people and surroundings, they tell stories of past and present by using contemporary methods and ideologies. My works include political statements and educational information regarding Aboriginal issues, a subject which I am extremely passionate about. I use different mediums for my works including drawing, ceramics, printmaking and animation.”

Maddison's artworks have been included as part of Vivid Festival, Sydney Fringe Festival, Hobiennale at Moonah Arts Centre in Tasmania and the 2020 Bankstown Biennale. Maddison also worked on the restoration of the 40,000 years mural at The Block, Redfern, and was recently commissioned to create a large-scale public artwork for the new Eveleigh Precinct in Sydney. Recent artist residencies include the Inner West Council EDGE greenway residency (2021), the Cementa21 first nations residency (2021), and the Australian Antarctic division residency (2019).

In 2019 Maddison was the recipient of the Australian Museum's prestigious Young Indigenous Artist Fellowship, and she has also been awarded the Rotary Club of Sydney Soukup Animation Grant and the Bob Morgan International Scholarship.

Maddison Gibbs was a finalist in the 2021 Wyndham Prize and the 2021 Hidden Rookwood Sculpture Prize, Blacktown art prize 2021 and won the inaugural Yapang emerging art prize (Lake Macquarie gallery) 2021.

About the artwork - Caring for Country

This artwork features Aboriginal foods, medicines and flora, using sketches created on Darug/Dharug Country. The contemporary, bright and bold imagery references the spirits of past and present ancestors and local traditional practices. The colours are inspired by the spring flowers and the once in a lifetime pink flannel flowers on Darug/Dharug Country.

Sydney Metro Northwest Places public art program thematic framework

This artwork lies in the idea of The Network – represented by the interconnected values and relationships we develop with people, places and the environment – and the human and environment sub-theme.



<https://metronorthwestplaces.landcom.com.au/placemaking-and-events/public-art/maddison-gibbs/>