



BARANGAROO NGANGAMAY GENEVIEVE GRIEVES & AMANDA JANE REYNOLDS (AUGMENTED REALITY)

The images facing can be used with the Barangaroo Ngangamay app.

The name Barangaroo has become common parlance among Sydneysiders and visitors who regularly enjoy the spectacular Barangaroo Reserve and the new retail and dining precinct. But what of the proud Cammeraygal woman Barangaroo, after whom this culturally-significant area is named?

This strong and influential warrior woman provided the inspiration for Barangaroo's first Artistic Associates, renowned Aboriginal multi-media artists and curators Amanda Jane Reynolds and Genevieve Grieves.

Reynolds and Grieves were appointed as the inaugural Artistic Associates by the Barangaroo Delivery Authority to collaborate on a multi-disciplinary program that celebrates the history and culture of the local area and its peoples.



GENEVIEVE GRIEVES
Artist/ Curator



AMANDA JANE REYNOLDS

Artist/ Curator

Genevieve Grieves belongs to the Worimi nation of the NSW mid-north coast. She wears various hats including film-maker, educator, curator and oral historian. In 2010 she wrote and directed the award-winning documentary Lani's Story for SBS about a young Aboriginal woman's journey from victim to survivor; while her engaging five-channel video Picturing the Old People was exhibited in Australia and abroad and is held in collections with the Art Gallery of NSW and the Queensland Gallery of Modern Art. Her video installation Remember, commemorating the lives lost in the horrific 1816 Appin massacre, forms part of With Secrecy and Despatch, an exhibition which opened at the Campbelltown Arts Centre in April 2016.

Amanda Jane Reynolds carries family heritage from Australia and other parts of the world, including Aboriginal (Karingai), African (US), Silesian and many British and Irish convicts. Reynolds is a respected curator, cultural consultant and editor who runs the organisation Stella Stories, specialising in collaborations with communities, museums, galleries and heritage sites to produce stories, exhibitions, multimedia exhibitions and cultural programs. She has worked with the Australian Museum, National Museum of Australia and the National Film and Sound Archive, among many others.

INTERVIEW

Josh Harle: Amanda, Thanks, for talking to us about vours and Genevieve's Barangaroo Ngangamay work. One reason I find this Barangaroo Ngangamay so interesting is that having spent time researching virtual reality and augmented reality, AR games like Pokemon Go have this problematic power dynamic, where one corporation somewhere in the world can just suddenly dictate the meaning of all spaces without having consulted or visited or anything. They just press a button to launch and suddenly all of these meanings are retrofitted and applied to the world.

In general, I think augmented reality projects have got a problematic politics to them, with the exception of projects like yours where it's about reclaiming space and bringing a history to the fore, that is located at that site that might not be visible to the outside observer. You can bring that back and illustrate for people who are visiting the site.

Can you give just a general background to yourself and Genevieve, and the project?

Amanda Jane Reynolds: Genevieve Grieves is a Worimi woman and she's a very talented curator, artist, filmmaker and oral historian. She's a very big-hearted, beautiful woman whose really committed community and community empowerment and collaboration. Gen and I worked together on First Peoples at Bunjilaka. I'm Amanda Jane Reynolds, I'm Guringai and I also have convicts, so I'm both invader and invaded, right there in Sydney, on the other side of the harbour. I'm a curator, a possum cloak maker and I work in multimedia.

actually felt a strong calling from Barangaroo to come to this project many months before the artistic associate's opportunity was advertised. I had talked to Genevieve about some of the things that were coming up and this desire to continue and honour the women's business. Of course, there were many other women all feeling the same thing, wanting to do more, to come together. Then the artistic associate came up, so it was one of those things that resonated at the right time. We felt a strong calling as did other women we connected with that we wanted to do something for the Ancestor, Barangaroo, not necessarily a biography because that wasn't what the message was, but an honouring of the strength of Aboriginal women through the generations.

Our collaboration is a pledge and a commitment to continue women's business and to continue coming together and to continue holding that place and that space right there in Sydney into the future. To step up and to do our jobs, and these are our jobs, to ensure that future generations will have that presence. We're also very conscious that most people know Barangaroo for the new development and the suburb now, so there's a duty for us to ensure that Barangaroo is remembered as a woman, a very powerful, inspiring, strong, beautiful



woman who was right there at the time of the invasion of Sydney and the changes she went through in her life were extensive and traumatic.

She lost her children, she lost her husband, she was there when Arthur Phillip came, saw the beginning of what would become the rolling frontier, the colonisation and the invasion that later spread across of the whole of Australia as we know

The work Barangaroo Ngangamay is an honoring of Old Lady Barangaroo, who lived during the time of the invasion of Sydney. It's a coming together of women and men from Sydney clans and further beyond to make a promise that our culture will continue and that we will keep our stories and our cultures alive in the Sydney region. It's an invitation to visitors from Sydney, from Australia

and from the world to come down to the reserve at Barangaroo and to listen and to learn and to experience the beauty of culture embedded in Country or in a site. No matter the season or the weather you can go on your own personal journey in your own personal connection through the use of an app that you can download for free from the app store, and go on an adventure around the site.

We wanted to do healing and we wanted to bring the idea of a cultural journey and that story exists in place, not just story, but people and particularly because we're in Sydney where there is the assumption of there's no Aboriginal people, if there are they're all a certain way, so we really wanted to use the technology to bring people back on site. Reallife people. The capacity of what the Augmented Reality medium can do is

as wild as our imagination... But for us this work was also an opportunity for us to do community projects - t this project happened to be seeded as a women's project through the inspiration of Barangaroo herself. We are both curators at heart in that sense of we love holding a space to bring in lots of collaborators, lots of other people through our practice and projects that have a healing and strengthening component and a journey as well.

We did a call out to women, to traditional owners and then Aboriginal women living in Sydney as well and running a series of workshops that were behind the scenes and didn't have to have a public outcome, where women could sit and learn from elders if they wanted to or share stories and just gain something through the experience that always didn't have to have the pressure of a public outcome that we could just use some of our money to come together to strengthen culture because again. that sense of continuing women's business was our number one priority throughout the project.

The culture camp and workshops were good because many people wanted to come and talk about things and share and learn but didn't necessarily want to be involved in the project and others did so we think that's really important especially when often funding is given towards tourism outcomes and to Aboriginal people creating content to be consumed by the general public. Sometimes shifting the balance of oh well, let's get our foundations

and lets' invest in our communities for that healthy culture within our own spaces first so we can then share with the broader public. I think these things are important no matter whether you're writing a book, an exhibition or technology. Technology doesn't change the importance of the commitment to community and to Country and to those strengthening cultural practices. It's one of those things that I think is about a process of working that's critical that goes across many mediums.

JH: That was a fantastic background to the project. For those who haven't used it, could you describe what someone's experience is if they go out onto the reserve at Barangaroo and uses the app?

AMJ: Barangaroo Ngangamay is a sitespecific work utilising AR technology through a free app. Visitors can then interact with the artwork through their own personal devices and their own real life journey walking around the site enables them to either search for, or stumble across hotspots where short films, songs, photos or story can be accessed. Sometimes those hotspots are marked in the real world by a rock engraving created by Senior Men and linked through a symbol on the app. Sometimes the hotspots are marked in the real world by elements of Country that are less obviously 'signposted' such as the rise and fall of sun or moon at certain times of the year and linked through a photo or symbol on the app.

Whether the visitor consciously

recognizes it or whether it's in some subconscious experience; they are immersed in the journey, in the story, in Country and their own walking on Country at this site is multi-layered through the technology, the weather and the path they choose to follow and which content they access. As you move around the site a different story belongs there, you can't see all the stories at all the places, you can't take the phone home and watch the films as they are only accessed at geolocations so you have to be there.

In one sense it's based on one of the foundations of how our culture works. The Creation Ancestors did all of their businesses and then they sat down in Country at certain places and that's they belonged.Sometimes where that's the only place you can sing these songs or hear these songs. There's a way of knowing and understanding Country that is so desperately needed by modern Australia because if people understood more (and there's a lot of people interested and wanting to learn) about our land management practices, our respect for mother Earth, all of those things. We felt like we were giving strength to ourselves and our collaborators too by coming together and making a promise to that old lady Barangaroo. We're going to do our job, look after this and we're going to keep trying to teach and show people these values and help them understand that. There's an underlying purpose that we want people to understand Country better.

JH: It's great to be able to talk about how augmented reality responds

to this idea that here's a lack of sensitivity or there's something that's going on that if you're not prepared to be audience to you'll miss.

It's more than just using AR as an engaging technology. You are using this technology in a way that resonates, a metaphor for a way of seeing in a site as well. A haunting or presence there that some people will be aware of and some people you have to switch on and get an idea of what's going on there.

The other thing that I found really interesting was that your efforts weren't focussed just around an augmented reality product where you just sit in a lab and make 3D objects and tag where they appear in the site. You were documenting contemporary practice of the site that was at least as important as the experience of the videos in augmented reality, after the fact. The focus on going out to Barangaroo and practicing the site for the project is really exciting.

In some way, it's a different medium to film, for example, but it's one where you can have a very visceral experience, when you go to a certain location and you see those videos, for example, it's very much about being there and things going on and these echoes of things that have happened in that location which is very different from any other way of doing it for sure.

The technology is often used as a novelty, for projecting something sort of fantasy-future, like a spaceship or whatever, into the space. And



for your use of Augmented Reality, the importance was to represents a presence.

AMJ: That's strong on your decolonizing theme.

JH: Yes.

AMJ: Decolonizing technology. The fact that we're in the center of Sydney, but also anywhere in Australia has had some form of the erasure and destruction of country through colonisation, I mean that was also the motivating reason. Culture continues because of the old and because of the new, because of the previous generations, because of the past generations living in the Creation era. Time collapses. And so on one level we're developing the app. And on the other hand we asked some of the senior men, would they lead the men's business and engrave the rock onsite. The greater Sydney basin is

one of the biggest rock art galleries in the world, it's a major site and a lot has been erased through the building of the city.

And so it was a chance for the men, and they speak very emotionally and so deeply proud of what it meant to be able to come and put those engravings on the site. And that would continue into the future alongside the technology, I mean everyone was crying. We are all crying all the time because of what that would mean. And it's like technology alone didn't have that solution. It was all of these things together. The concept of the past and the future coming together in the present; the technology (whether stone tools or digital tools) being put to use to continue culture, strengthen people and Country, and reveal a layer of the presence of Aboriginal people. .

The Old People like the Old Lady Barangaroo knew Country on a level that we don't know because of invasion and colonisation and language that has been lost. But we know it and experience connection on another level, at this moment in time and after colonization. Both Genevieve and I and our collaborators who shared culture and came together through this project, were inspired to do the best we could and to keep learning through collaborative, creative and cultural practice.

We wanted to honour the Old People's deep knowledge and connection of seasons, the environment and astronomy. And to renew some of our neighbouring clan and songline connections in the Greater Sydney Basin - the artwork and cultural experience has generous and inspiring contributions from so many people including Gadigal, Bidjigal, Garigal, Dharug, Yuin, Guringai - the coming together of people connected through the old songlines and trade-routes and family relations. It's not that often that custodians get the opportunity to come together to work on a Public Art project in their region and so this work is also a pledge that there is always a place for Aboriginal people in the city It's still Aboriginal Country, the Reserve is on Gadigal clan land and the words of the Aboriginal human rights activists who have fought for community and for Country since the invasion 'always has, always will be Aboriginal land', although not explicitly stated resonates through the presence of the artwork. In one humble way it is contributing to presence instead of absence.

Visitors to the site may or may not engage, some people don't know about it, some people walk past everything, some people want experience, some people will go out of their way to learn. And that's how we are right now in modern Australia.

JH: I mean the idea of having the representing things in the augmented reality it's like, if you're with the right set of eyes and the right sort of way of seeing, you wouldn't need any of those cues. You just see all of these things that wouldn't be apparent to me, for example, looking around and seeing things. But that different way of perceiving and knowing, for example, that this is when the wattle is going to bloom and this is when the fish are going to be there. There's a few questions that are really interesting that have come up from that. I suppose one of them is how would you think about the use of technology as a continuation of indigenous cultural practice?

AMJ: Absolutely, I think it's key in the 21st century. And I think I get so excited by all these young people like in Digitec, and all the young generation. Aboriginal people are massive adapters of mobile phone, of technology, of all of those things, of keeping connected, keeping a community, creating new spaces. I don't know if you saw Black Comedy last week where they had a skit of a dance group called the "Wigglymuyu Dancers" painted up and doing a dance for tourists on how their mob communicate and the song goes "Facebook, Instagram, snapchat, tinder - no reception, no reception dance". It was very funny take-off skit but true on how important communication technology platforms are for community.

I've had the great privilege as has Genevieve in our lives, through museum work of sitting down with Elders, particularly from the southeast, but from all over Australia as well, and hearing about some of the challenges around cultural continuity and intergenerational transfer of knowledge. And so many Elders we've heard say, "We've got to get to them on their phones." That's what they're spending all their time on. And we need to get onto their phones, how can we get onto their phones? So, I mean the background of this project was also a thing of, "well, they'll be on their phones." And part of that how to get on their phones, it's not just because kids are spending so much time in a digital world or kids that we know, Aboriginal kids, are really big adapters of this technology. So many Elders see the importance of exploring new mediums.

When you breathing you're living, when we take our last breath we're no longer living. And when we're speaking, we're hearing the vibration of our voice. So even more than seeing, the hearing and the voice is so important. And so that's one reason song people and songlines are so strong and so important. And they do go over time and they go over distance and they have important points along a journey. And this modern technology that we can

take with us and access content at different points is in my experience, far closer to the old ways of knowing country than a book or a film. Not that I don't love those mediums, I love those mediums, they're are so important and we need to have all of these mediums. But it gives you a chance to understand, you can only get this story here at this place, by this person, not by everyone. And it's in a different context if someone tells it to you somewhere else far away. But it's connecting the links between people and Country.

So it's actually a way to strengthen the knowledge system rather than to sit in a room, dislocated from a season or a star or ... So the old ways of knowing can be strengthened if you only release content at certain places or at certain times. And this medium ... or if you're with somebody, a certain person, there's a whole lot of potential in this medium for actually strengthening our knowledge systems and our ways of knowing and learning in stages and at different sites. That sometimes the pressures of the modern world are taking us away from those ways of knowing. Does that make sense?

JH: Yeah, absolutely. It's very different from sitting down and talking. This idea of sort of global, non-contextualised knowledge, like everything is sort of horizontal access with things like Wikipedia and Google where they just consider everything completely equivalent.

I still find it amazing and kind of creepy that I can sit down and use google maps and zoom into places where I've lived before and what it looked like the last time the Google van drove by to look at it. The idea that we have all knowledge completely accessible universally without any context, is definitely a very sort of 'Google' way of thinking about things.

And Google's had heaps of problems with that way of thinking about the world coming up against, for example, their belief that they can drive those cars and around and capture everywhere and then show it to everyone.

In Germany there's rights to privacy that have come out, in Japan their cameras were higher than the average height of people's building fences, so they had to lower them because there was an expectation of privacy. Many problems, especially around mapping, coming out of Google and just them not realizing that they don't own all knowledge and they can't just provide it always.

AMJ: I know an Aboriginal community who took on Google and got their little community erased from the map. The detail of, "All right now you're on this or that community." Erased. And they took them on really early on I think, they were like, "These streets were around, they're not."

Anyway, they got it all removed. Like obviously the outline of the coast and everything is still on there. But their little street maps, you can't look up

their street names or get the thing on there, on this one little place.

JH: Well, hopefully Google is learning. I don't know if its completely at odds with their approach to thinking about the world, but hopefully they're learning some lessons in there.

One thing that connects into your idea of creating access to different types of knowledge, is the fact that the sited experience of spaces with Augmented Reality is fundamentally in sympathy with the sort of stories that you're telling and the way that knowledge has been shared.

One question that I have is about that choice between watching the women fishing in the midst of the women's business and the men's business. What was the thinking around the presentation of either of those two? Did you have to think about cultural protocols, like sensitivity around representing women's business and men's business in the augmented reality system?



AMJ: Yeah. When I talked about those issues, about the capacity for the future of technology, we haven't necessarily utilized all of them to their full capacity in this particular work. So our main emphasis on this was around the women's contemporary song cycle and our invitation to the men, honours the strength of men's business. Their project was incredibly significant, particularly the rock engraving aspect and that we wanted to give glimpses into the Elders creating that.

So the one thing we did talk about with everyone is, especially the Elders, is if they pass away, can we continue? Because we do have the capacity to remove content from a medium like this and they all wanted it, everyone wants it ongoing as long as it's there. So we did have that conversation and people very strongly felt, "Oh, we want this now to stay." So that was one of the cultural issues that may have come up or may have a different context in different communities. Otherwise we already knew we were making the work for the public, so our choices all along the way were very much, while we've got all these priorities about what we're doing, we're sharing this work with the public. So we only created content that was shareable. Am I getting somewhere with the sort of question you're asking?

JH: Absolutely. And also it sounds like what you were doing as the initial stages, the thing that you finally rolled into the augmented reality experience was entirely in the context of having

conversations with everyone involved about how it will be presented.

I think that's really interesting, to be able to give people an understanding of what comes along with the technology and to be able to give informed consent for example, and think through. For me, especially from a technical background thinking through, because pretty much a whole swathe of the technology already has western cultural assumptions built into it. So when you have to think about cultural concerns that also illuminates some of the western concerns, if you know what I mean.



That Google approach to thinking about knowledge isn't neutral, it's a particular cultural way of thinking about knowledge. So just that thing of like, "Okay, we had to think about the allowance of removing people ... If it was necessary."

Can you speak a bit about the intended audience and how different audiences might come to the experience?

AMJ: Well Gen and I share this sort of

approach to what we do, is if we say the word community, we say it with the understanding that community's incredibly diverse. Everything we do, we always go, it's going to work for community. Which again, there's complexity in saying that because community is so diverse and so different. But with each project you define who the stakeholders are. So, that's really important to remember that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are an audience. And not just an audience as a consumer, but a student that could learn culture from their Elders through this artwork. There is an importance to intergenerational experiences. It doesn't always have to be learning, it can be just connection or cultural experiences.

We are also always trying to show that there's a lot of diversity in our community. There's old diversity, in terms of, the cultural diversity of different clans of the Sydney region or the Southwest, or the North Coast or the West. Some people are possum people, some people are mullet people. That sort of traditional diversity, and there is contemporary diversity. Some of us, like me, have multiple nationalities from around the world as well. Some have lighter skin or have darker skin, some speak a certain way or have different accents, there's a huge, incredible contemporary diversity of lived experience on top of that as well.

It's just the sense of trying to be true to the beauty of the ages and the diversity, and the way we are in the modern world. The fourth scene featuring the young Madden women - we filmed that onsite with the city and their background, Gadigal right there, city, country. Our sound editor actually had the idea of bringing in some sirens and sounds into the soundtrack, which works so beautifully, because visually we could see all of the city lights there.

We're so used to only seeing a certain type of person on our consumption of TV, or a certain age or valuing women of a certain way they look, or see, or feel. Through this work we celebrate the different ages of women, it's something that underpins who's in it and what we're doing. It's something, I think that some people, other older women might really respond, from other cultures might see their grandmother there, or go, "Hey, I know that, I know grandmothers because I've got my grandma. I am a grandmother and I've got grandchildren. I've got a grandmother." I think having that presence of the different generations, which is so fundamental that people can recognize it in their own cultures as well. It's a way in for some people to connect.

JH: That's definitely not just through representation in digital media art. At least when you start looking at what is mass produced and mass distributed, things like games. It has such a narrow area of representation that's getting slowly better, there are lots of projects that are doing good things to widen that set of what type of people are represented in them. Your project has also managed to contribute to

the wider representation of diverse women in that sort of medium, which is fantastic as well.

AMJ: The other thing is, we don't have really spoken language in this. We only have song language and we have no translations. In the museum world, because of things I believe in around accessibility issues, you often have captions for hearing impaired as well as the label and sub-title translations into English. But as an art work, you don't have that pressure. It doesn't really matter if people don't know the exact words because your spirit feels this little film clip. You can just experience the song cycle for the voice and the sound, and the imagery and the beauty and the poetry.

We were creating little poetic moments because I really feel, and I felt this my whole life, too much experiencing of culture is done in a very didactic way. And to me that's a very western approach as well. And there are benefits for that, I'm all for loving learning through all of the different ways, but we can't lose the fact that our song cycle structures and our old gatherings, corroboree, coming together are so potent in the creative arts as communication - body paint, that art that's on your body, that's on the surface, that links to that constellation that's there right now. That's the song. A lot of people say we have no writing. And through this project I said, "We do have writing, these are symbols, these mean something, if you know what they mean. You just don't know the multi layers that they mean."

So, to me that was another interesting thing, that some people might be frightened that our audience wouldn't understand because there was no caption underneath. But no one actually complained about that at all.

JH: The caption at the bottom is like what anthropology has done. The idea that you can sum up, make sense according to the Western academic way of thinking and often get it completely wrong as well. It implies that there's an easy translation from one thing to the other and that it's something you dismissively make sense of with a little caption at the bottom saying this is x, y, z.

AMJ: Absolutely, and you're actually taking away the capacity of people to learn, to start to look at all these other kinds of processing information. When people keep looking at the caption, often people don't learn. The argument I often make is do people learn football and all the rules of football because there's a little thing down on the bottom of the screen? Does a caption describe if that man was tackled? Or do they watch it enough, and listen to it enough, observing and learning so that they slowly start to understand the rules. Some the people might have played, so they learned it through that. But millions of people watch the football - have they read the referees conduct rules or whatever? No, they haven't. They've watched enough and listened enough and seen this to understand the thing through stitching together the elements and repeat experiences.

In some ways it's the same principle, to put this didactic label on it is taking away audience's capacity to take the time to learn through many senses.

JH: It's like saying that this thing in itself doesn't have agency to communicate to you. The thing that you should be trusting is the institution's caption to communicate the knowledge, which is a little bit of a violent turn to the original, to go, "Okay, we're mediating your experience to the original one because we're the gatekeeper to what your understanding of this thing is."

AMJ: Yeah, to make it clear, we didn't have this problem at all with this work. It was at another institution, that experience. So sorry, just in case when this gets communicated, that didn't come up for this work!

JH: I think we're just about getting close to the end, do you want to talk about future projects that you're working on?

AMJ: Future projects that we've got ideas for and future projects that are funded are two different things. There is one project we really want to do using this medium, but in terms of what that is, we're sort of keeping that a bit quiet, because we want to get funding for it, but it relates to exploring 3D a little bit more with figures and scenes in Augmented Reality; a women in a canoe on the harbor.



COLLISIONS IMAGE CREDITS

In order of appearance:

- 1. Photo Credit: Piers Mussared
- 2. Behind-the-scenes of the Collisions production. Photo Credit: Piers Mussared
- 3. Nyarri tries virtual reality for the first time. Photo Credit: Pete Brundle
- 4. Photo Credit: Piers Mussared
- 5. "Spirit Cloud" Artwork by Jossie Malis, spirit cloud imagery Lynette Wallworth.
- 6. Liam recording fire sounds. Photo Credit: Piers Mussared
- 7. Collisions. Photo Credit: Piers Mussared
- 8. The Jaunt virtual reality camera on a drone over a landscape of fires burning spinifex, an ancient Martu land management practice. Photo Credit: Piers Mussared

PROJECT BIRRONGGAI IMAGE CREDITS

In order of appearance:

- 1. Render of the Biame. Image Credit: Jeremy Worrall / Frenetic Studios
- 2. Wugan the Dream guide. Image Credit: Jeremy Worrall / Frenetic Studios
- 3. The Alter at which Wugan draws in the pathways through the Dreamtime allowing you to travel between realms (level selector). Image Credit: Jeremy Worrall / Frenetic Studios
- 4. Wugan accessing the Rites stone (level select). Image Credit: Jeremy Worrall / Frenetic Studios
- 5. Turntable shot of Wugan; An extension of Biame Wugan follows you through the Dreamtime guiding you on your journey and bridging the gap between realms. Image Credit: Jeremy Worrall / Frenetic Studios
- 6. Render of the playzone in its infancy, features Biame and the home tree. Image Credit: Jeremy Worrall / Frenetic Studios
- 7. Another perspective shot. Image Credit: Jeremy Worrall / Frenetic Studios
- 8. Original Concept for the play zone, a chunk of earth lifted into the heavens by Biame the ancient all father and sky god. This is the centre piece for the players adventure. Image Credit: Jeremy Worrall / Frenetic Studios