

DARKSON

DE ROSA

FREEMAN

KUTSCHBACH

RANKINE

RICHARDSON

CROSS

CURRENTS

CROSS

CURRENTS

CROSS

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12 MAY –
5 SEPTEMBER 2025

Flinders University Museum of Art
Ground Floor Social Sciences North Building

FREE EXHIBITION

OPEN
Weekdays 10am – 5pm, Thursdays until 7pm



Crosscurrents presents newly commissioned works by Brad Darkson, Chris De Rosa, Honor Freeman, Michael Kutschbach, Sonya Rankine, and Mary-Jean Richardson—artists whose practices are deeply connected to the coastal edges of Ngarrindjeri, Kurna, and Narungga waters, from Encounter Bay to Moonta.

Through speculative sculpture, reimagines cultural practice, collaborations between artists and with marine ecologies, **Crosscurrents** unfolds as a richly layered schema of place. The stark realities of extractive bioprospecting sits alongside painterly mediations on the intimate rituals of coastal life – swimming, walking, and observing the ever-shifting thresholds of land, sea, and sky.

These intersecting narratives reveal the myths, histories, images and objects unique to this stretch of South Australian coastline, while also evoking universal phenomenological experiences of the coast. It is through the artists' vision that we witness the rapture of light and atmosphere, the pull of liminality and immersion, shared moments of communion with non-human entities, and the foreboding shadows of our shared ecological future.

Crosscurrents is an exhibition presented by the Flinders University Museum of Art, curated by Dr Belinda Howden. The project has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body, and supported by the Government of South Australia through the Department of the Premier and Cabinet.











Michael Kutschbach

born 1975

cnidølysis noeëidolon, 2025

wood, glass, plastics, gel wax, acrylic stuffing, paint, pewter, chrome, hair, dust, textiles, grass, found objects, silicone, motor, LED lights, sound, speakers, fog machine, 67 x 418 x 247 cm

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock

cnidølysis noeëidolon is an almost four-metre-long speculative sculpture, a cryptid whose existence is yet to be scientifically proven. Washed up on the floor, the organism appears to be a foreigner to the gallery. It's laboured breathing, illuminated innards and long tendrils make it an ambiguous arrival. Did it surface from the deep past or as an anomaly of our emergent future?

Like the sculpture itself, which combines materials, surfaces and textures, the cryptid's genus—*cnidølysis noeëidolon*—is a portmanteau. It hybridises several terms and references: *cnidaria* is a classification of aquatic invertebrates with barbed stinging cells, including coral, sea anemones and jellyfish; *lysis* is a biological term for the rupture of a cellular wall; and *noesis* combines the Greek word for mind, *nous*, and *eidolon*, meaning a phantom or spectral image. As the artist states, this combination describes 'a liminal being in a state of dissolution and cognition, a speculative remnant.'

**Mary-Jean Richardson**

born 1964

Barroco Slump, 2024—2025

limewash, oil on glassine paper, 280 x 1210 cm

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock

Regarding her adjacent fresco and translucent oil paintings, Mary-Jean Richardson recounts a recent memory. She says,

‘On a dry, hot summer day in Rome, I encountered a massive first century A.D. marble sculpture, *Marforio*, the Roman god and personification of *Oceanus*. In passive recline, the imposing masculine form begged absurdity: how could it encompass all that the ocean means? Moreover, how do I make paintings about the complex relationship I have with the mysterious and mainly inaccessible ocean?’

Barroco Slump is Richardson’s pursuit of this impossible task. Richardson regularly swims and walks the coast of Horseshoe Bay, Kantjiniwald / Port Elliot, and brings her vision as a colourist and painter to her observations of the southern ocean. For *Barroco Slump*, Richardson has reframed the absurd authority of Italian Baroque fountains and mythological forms, while acknowledging their enduring sensory power. *Barroco Slump* at once captures the impermanence of culture, the transience of colour, light and atmosphere, and the wet materiality of paint.


Mary-Jean Richardson

born 1964

The Drowned Face (always staring towards the sun), 2024—2025

acrylic paint, oil on oil-prepared paper, 280 x 495 cm

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock

The opposing circular installation, *The Drowned Face* (always staring towards the sun), draws on Adrienne Rich's 1973 poem *Diving into the Wreck*, in which the poet describes a diver's descent:

*First the air is blue and then
it is bluer and then green and then
black I am blacking out and yet
my mask is powerful
it pumps my blood with power
the sea is another story
the sea is not a question of power
I have to learn alone
to turn my body without force
in the deep element.*

Like Rich's poem, *The Drowned Face* captures a spectrum of shifting atmospheric conditions in a tonal register of waters observed at Horseshoe Bay, Kantjinwald / Port Elliot. Mary-Jean Richardson's fugitive mission to capture these changing colours was as contingent on the sky and sun as what lies below. Her field of blues, greens and greys were created through physical acts of swimming, floating and observational painting. And, as the artist describes, imply 'looking up from a perpetual aphotic darkness towards the light.'


Chris De Rosa

born 1958

Sea Maps, 2024—2025

153 x 245 x 8 cm

handmade paper (pulped prints and solar plate etchings, seawater, sand, seagrass, algae, spongia, marine debris, plastic, gloves, rope, fishing line, seeds, pigment stain, cans, maps, fishing line and hooks, silk thread, glazed ceramic, papier-mâché, plaster, earthenware, acrylic paint, studio debris)

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock

The adjacent grid of handmade paper, *Sea Maps*, and opposing paper stacks, *Sea Notes*, are the result of an experimental artistic proposition: what does it mean to make paper out of seawater?

Artist Chris De Rosa lives and works in Kantjinwald / Port Elliot, and as a near-daily swimmer in Ramindjeri waters, she has witnessed significant ecological change over the years. In November 2022 to February 2023, a series of heavy rain and flooding events affected the region, turning the clear waters of Horseshoe Bay cloudy. De Rosa describes her underwater field of vision as about one metre deep, flecked with suspended marine matter like algae and seagrass. *Sea Maps* and *Sea Notes* mirrors this field of view and colloidal effect. Each page features a cosmos of organic and inorganic debris gathered by the artist from the shoreline, as a daily, changing record of the coast.

Sea Notes and *Sea Maps* also references De Rosa's enduring interest in Jessica Hussey. The nineteenth century biologist produced a collection of over 2000 specimens of marine algae and flora, taken from Goolwa and Port Elliot, currently housed in the State Herbarium of South Australia. While a product of the colonial attitudes of the day, Hussey's collections remain a valuable contribution to the knowledge of coastal vascular plants and marine flora of the region. And, constitute an ongoing ecological archive. De Rosa's 'maps' and field 'notes' reframe this archival impulse as a poetic encounter with close observation.

**Chris De Rosa**

born 1958

Sea Notes, 2024—2025

87 x 379 x 50 cm

handmade paper (pulped prints and solar plate etchings, seawater, sand, seagrass, algae, spongia, marine debris, plastic, gloves, rope, fishing line, seeds, pigment stain, cans, maps, fishing line and hooks, silk thread, glazed ceramic, papier-mâché, plaster, earthenware, acrylic paint, studio debris)

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock

**Chris De Rosa**

born 1958

Sea Speaks, 2024–2025

papier-mâché, wire, algae, rope, sand, marine and studio debris, latex, earthenware, plaster,
80 x 80 x 80 cm

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock

Sea Speaks are a suite of oversized papier-mâché spongia— marine sponge—that appear to have found an unlikely home in the gallery. The spongia are playful yet ominous in their scale; they are an example of 'portmanteau biota', a term coined by American academic Alfred Crosby in his 1986 text *Ecological Imperialism*. While Crosby used the term to trace the movement of biological matter—soil, plants, animals, diseases—along paths of European empirical expansion, *Sea Speaks* materialises the inverse: the spongia threatens to colonise our world.

As artist Chris De Rosa describes, *Sea Speaks* has a 'Ballardian presence'. The spongia are beacons of an increasingly overgrown, dystopian ecological dominion, as imagined in J G Ballard's science fiction novel *The Drowned World* (1962). In the throes of making *Sea Speaks*, De Rosa witnessed a microalgal bloom event affecting the Fleurieu Peninsula / Ramindjeri waters, where she lives and works. The results of an ongoing marine heatwave, the bloom caused a mass marine kill. It affected the health of local swimmers and surfers, and, in recent weeks, resulted in a pervasive sea foam causing the beaches to close. *Sea Speaks* is a genus De Rosa imagines thrives under these new, wonky conditions, where humans are no longer the top of the food chain.



GUUYANGGA-BARND' – FISH TRAP is Sonya Rankine's woven representation of the Wadla waru / Wallaroo tidal fish trap in Garnarra, the northern Narungga region of the Yorke Peninsula. On the subject of Narungga fish traps, Rankine writes:

'On a recent visit with Peter Turner, a Nharangga yardli (Narungga man) and cultural guide, he explained the cultural significance, design, concept, construction and traditional use of Guuyangga-barnda. Nharangga dhura (Narungga people) constructed traps along the coast of Guuranda (Narungga territory). Utilising existing rock pools, they strategically placed barnda (rocks) high enough to enclose the pools, allowing guuya (fish) to swim in during high tide, feed on muuya (seaweed) and remain trapped at low tide.

At the centre of the trap, a sandy clearing was created by removing rocks, muuya was planted to entice the guuya into the trap. All Guuyangga-barnda have a muuya hole. The sandy area is hollowed out to create a deeper section in the middle to help shape the environment, encourage growth of the muuya and allow the guuya to survive during low tide. Offering a shelter for small guuya meant the Guuyangga-barnda also acted as a nursery. These techniques were used to enhance the overall effectiveness of the Guuyangga-barnda and to protect fish stocks. The Guuyangga-barnda was a family and community responsibility, making its maintenance a collective act.

Since colonisation of Guuranda, Nharangga dhura have been unable to maintain the Guuyangga-barnda and, over the last 150 years, the traps have eroded.

Sonya Rankine

born 1970

Ngarrindjeri / Ngadjuri / Narungga / Wirangu

GUUYANGGA-BARND' – FISH TRAP, 2025

barnda (rocks), bundu (Ghania filum), waxed polyester thread, sand,

240 x 240 x 116 cm

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock



Thousands of years and generations of work maintaining the design and technology of the Guuyangga-barnda was halted within six generations of invasion of Nharangga banggara (Narungga country). It is an historical example of cultural genocide and the colonial rule of law prohibiting Nharangga dhura from travelling on bangarra and maintaining the Guuyangga-barnda.

Nharangga dhura possessed an intimate and in-depth knowledge of the tides, which was essential to the effective use of the Guuyang-ga-barnda and knowing the seasons for different guuya. The species caught at Wadla waru would have been mullet, whiting, tommy ruffs, flathead, gummy shark, crabs and squids. The families would tie bundles of native grass on top of the widna (fishing nets) to join and help them float on the surface. Together the families would walk the widna around the back of the guuya as they saw them coming in, herding them into the mouth of the trap.

Each Guuyangga-barnda relates to the tide times and height along the coast of Guuranda. The ideal tide height at Wadla waru is approximately sixty centimetres. Other Guuyangga-barnda, further along the coast, were designed for specific species such as the Gadbari (snapper). This fishing practice was different. A dhingara (young man) would swim out into the yardlu (sea) with a Gayinbarra (butterfish) walanggudja (wrapped) in bark and tied to his back. He would swim back into the trap itself to lure the Gadbari, who were following the scent of the Gayinbarra. The family would come in behind the Gadbari, catch and stop them from swimming back out of the trap, taking only what they needed and then releasing the remaining Gadbari back out to open yardlu.'

Sonya Rankine

born 1970

Ngarrindjeri / Ngadjuri / Narungga / Wirangu

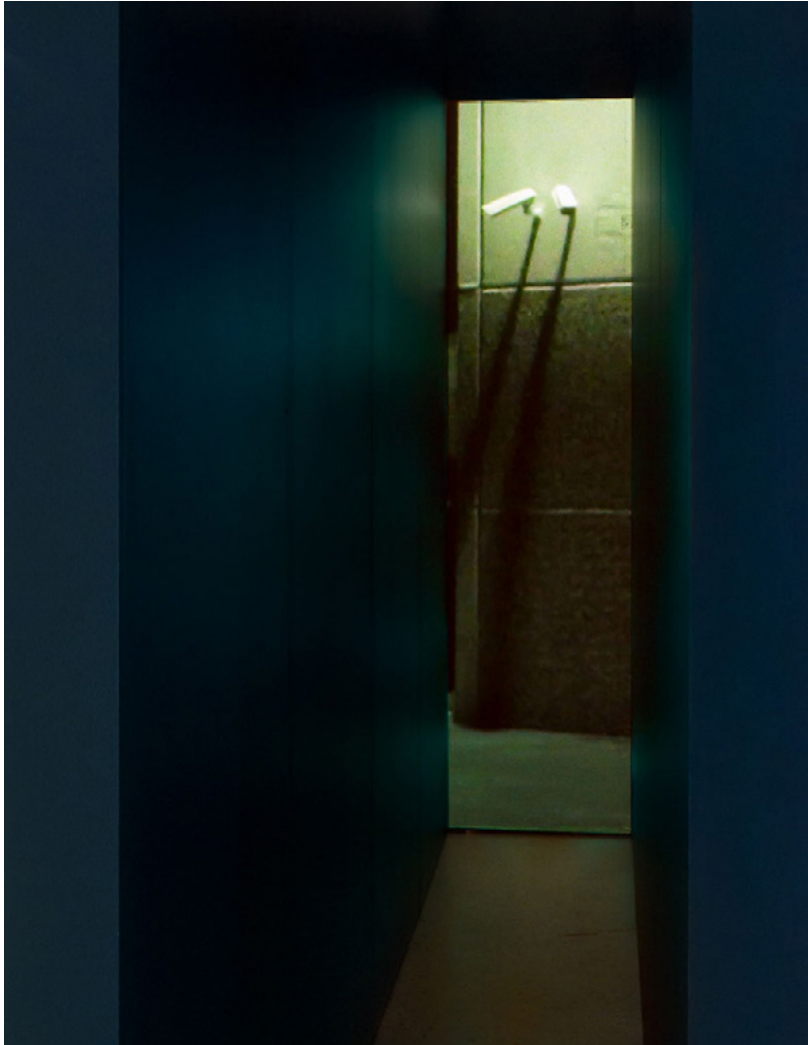
GUUYANGGA-BARNDAL – FISH TRAP, 2025

barnda (rocks), bundu (Ghania filum), waxed polyester thread, sand,

240 x 240 x 116 cm

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock



In *Blue water rule*, artist Brad Darkson returns the gaze on bioprospecting practices in Kauria waters. Illuminating the end of a long, narrow aperture at the centre of the gallery, Darkson's video focuses on two government facilities: a desalination plant and an aquatic research and development facility. Both feature long undersea pipes, invisible to the casual observer, that run perpendicular to the coast.

The sliced footage of *Blue water rule* draws our attention to the security measures and patrolled perimeters of these two sites, emblematic of their proprietorship over unceded waters. Darkson's handheld night-vision footage offers a surveilling eye and is an opportunity for us to 'look back' in a covert yet public act.

Brad Darkson

born 1987

Narungga

Blue water rule, 2025

single-channel video installation, 4:41 minutes

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock

**Brad Darkson**

born 1987

Narungga

Blue water rule, 2025

single-channel video installation, 4:41 minutes

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock

Blue water rule

Steal it.

Primitive.

Build a fence.

Name it. Call it something reminiscent of somewhere else, or someone noteworthy – perhaps one of the notable people who funded the stealing... or just call it a direction in relation to something that never existed before. Steal from it.

Build a pipe. Could give it a name but who would care, it's buried.

Watch over it with vigilance. Watch everything around it slowly deteriorate because of it.

Ignore it.

Worry about it? Maybe a sensible amount of concern, then invent a solution to bring it back to life. Try again.

Discover a new frontier full of economic promise. No prior knowledge existed.

Explore options.

Maybe some knowledge was there and can be of value.

Steal it and be vigilant.

Blue water at just the right depth, at just the right longitude.

Measure the density of life to extract.

Experiment.

Discover.

No prior knowledge. Patent it. Blue water rule.

– Brad Darkson



Honor Freeman's opposing stack of sandbags reference a community-driven coastal rehabilitation program Seeds for Snapper. Initiated in 2020 to address the widespread disappearance of seagrass meadows along Adelaide's metropolitan coastline, the program expanded to the Fleurieu Peninsula / Ramindjeri Country in 2022, in the bay near Freeman's home and studio. The revegetation program uses hessian sandbags as a holdfast for *posidonia* seeds. This important genus of flowering marine plants captures carbon, provides vital habitat for fish and mitigates sea floor erosion.

While the sandbags themselves are present, Freeman has also undertaken the technical challenge of slip casting a sandbag in porcelain. It is an alchemical process that transforms a solid object into liquid to solid once more. In *Swollen*, the sandbag's sturdy, utilitarian form—an 'emergency object' as Freeman describes it—is made fragile. She states, 'The sandbag is an unremarkable, yet mighty object called upon in times of storm, war and flood. It speaks to a desire to protect and regenerate, an attempt to save what's already lost.'

Honor Freeman

born 1978

Swollen, 2025

slip cast porcelain, glaze, sand, hessian, 107 x 90 x 65 cm

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock



Full fathom five is an experiment in aquatic collaboration. In October 2024, Honor Freeman submerged the adjacent stoneware besser block at Encounter Bay, in Ramong waters, with the assistance of her son. Two and a half months later, she retrieved it with help from fellow artist Chris De Rosa, after considerable snorkeling to unearth it. *Full fathom five* is a carefully hand built mimetic form. To local boaties and fisher folk, however, the besser block would have appeared as rubbish and, ironically, at home.

Full fathom five bears the results of being enacted upon. In the period it was submerged its surface was subject to forces that shape the coast; it shows evidence of non-human collaborators: sunlight, sand, salt, marine matter. Collaboration also extends to *Wrack*, Chris De Rosa's purpose-built 'plinth' for *Full fathom five*. Modelled on hillocks of seagrass wrack that seasonally wash up on the shore, *Wrack* emulates an important terrestrial phase in the life-cycle of *posidonia* — a genus of flowering marine plants. As artists who regularly swim together, *Wrack* is emblematic of their shared observations, concerns and oceanic rituals.

Chris De Rosa

born 1958

Wrack, 2025

papier-mâché, paper, collected organic and inorganic debris, marine matter, 90 x 70 x 70 cm

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock

Honor Freeman

born 1978

Full fathom five, 2025

stoneware and porcelain, marine matter, 17 x 17 x 36 cm

On loan from the artist

Photo by Grant Hancock