

Another Country

An Aboriginal art exhibition by Djon Mundine at the Peacock Gallery, Auburn Sydney NSW. The exhibition, using both gallery spaces, attempts to inform on the landscape prior to British colonisation - that there was already a multi-cultural society here- there were numbers of Aboriginal societies in what is now the Sydney basin.

It strives to provide an idea of the pantheistic relationship carried by Aboriginal people to the environment including Duck Creek and Auburn.

It engages with local Aboriginal populations (and other non-Aboriginal) in the installing of two 'wall paintings/murals' of the landscape; one naturalistic, one more 'abstracted or spiritual'- inviting them to 'finger paint' the images on the wall.

A third element is the projection of the movement of water by wind and tide that creates amazing natural patterns.

Another Country – Artist Statement

Sweet Auburn! loveliest village of the plain

- Oliver Goldsmith 1770

In the early 1960s my family moved from the Bandjalung 'country' on the north coast of NSW to Auburn; then an industrial suburb of western Sydney. Around this time African-American writer James Baldwin finished Another Country (1962), a novel about 'black' writers living in the urban setting of 'the village', New York city, and their struggles in interacting with the multi-racial society there.

I went to Marist Brothers Auburn boys' school. where the name Auburn and local history were rarely discussed except that the name supposedly came from the colour of the red-brown mud the first colonists observed on Duck Creek.

The site was of course already really 'another country'- another consciousness; Duck Creek being the boundary of the Burramattagal and the Wategora Aboriginal peoples. In their 'other country' the perennial stream, in seasons, provided enough fish, shellfish, fruits, game, and vegetables, such that life allowed one to go fishing in the morning, hunting in the afternoon, and to write poetry at night. Time could be spent on reading of 'the scriptures', so to speak, through repetitive chanting, songs, and cyclical mimetic dances in a form of social temporal performance. A vision of God could be found in the meditation on nature; the coming and going of seasons, the rise and fall of tides, and the patterns formed by these natural forces. Like Goldsmith's village their homes would soon be colonised for the imposition of 'another person(s)', different view of another country.

Djon Mundine OAM

Concept Curator of The Aboriginal Memorial 1988