

Colonial Frontier Massacres in Australia, 1788-1930

Visual Representations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Visual Representations of Massacres

The focus of this site is on mapping massacres with supporting historical evidence and making this publicly available. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people discuss and represent massacres in a variety of ways. We cannot include a comprehensive list of all such representations and discussion here, but here are just a few:

[The Aboriginal Memorial](#) at the National Gallery Australia

[Rover Thomas: Ruby Plains Massacre 1](#) on the Australian War Memorial website.

[Sweet Country](#) Warwick Thornton's vivid and compelling film depicts many characteristics of massacres in Australia.

[Julie Gough](#) (Trawlwoolway people) has many works relating to massacres such as those at the [Defying Empire](#) exhibition.

Judy Watson (Waanyi people): [The Names of Places](#), exhibited at the [Defying Empire](#) exhibition. Also, [A Picnic With The Natives - The Gulf](#) at Art Gallery NSW, Sydney.

Fiona Foley [Witnessing To Silence](#) Brisbane Magistrates Court, 2004

[This Whispering in Our Hearts: the Mowla Bluff Massacre](#), (2001) Mitch Torres (Dir)

[Coniston](#), (2012) David Batty, Francis Jupurrula Kelly (Dir)

[Lovett-Gardiner, Iris \(Gunditjmara Elder\) Lady of the Lake](#) Culture Victoria

[High Ground](#) (2020) directed by Stephen Johnson depicts a fictionalised massacre in the Northern Territory and the events surrounding it, with many historically accurate details.

There are also many colonial and later depictions of massacres which are beyond the scope of this site to collect.

This site does not include other factors affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations as a result of colonisation, such as disease, loss of land, and changes to community and culture.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mapping Technology

Mapping has long been an integral part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and is richly expressed in art and technology. These maps are not limited to geographical features but fuse together layers of meaning. The maps can be read on many, sometimes inseparable, levels including law, religion, music, history, psychology, social organisation, literature and economics. Maps are not only recorded visually in art and text, but also in oral literature, song and dance. Maps may be written in sand or read from the night sky. Here are just a few examples of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mapping in different forms:

Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri Warlugulong Anmatyerr people, 1977

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra

Indigenous Australian Art, Queensland Art Gallery, Gallery Of Modern Art, Brisbane

Indigenous Art, National Gallery Victoria, Melbourne

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, Art Gallery of NSW, Sydney

Dixon, RMW & Duwell, Martin (eds) *The Honey-Ant Men's Love Song and other Aboriginal Song Poems* University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1994

Peggy Rockman Napaljarri, Lee Cataldi (trans) *Warlpiri Dreamings and Histories: Newly Recorded Stories from the Aboriginal Elders of Central Australia* Yale University Press, 2011

We Don't Need A Map, (2017) Warwick Thornton (Writer, Director, Camera) and Brendan Fletcher (Producer and Screenplay)

Songlines On Screen, NITV and Screen Australia, 2016 available at SBS on Demand

R. Fuller, M. Trudgett, R. Norris and M. Anderson "The Euahlayi People and their Use of the Night Sky" in *Journal of Astronomical History and Heritage*, 17(2), 149 – 160 (2014).

Stage 5.0, 2024. The information on this site represents the best evidence available to the research team. It has been updated and changed in response to ongoing feedback, community consultation and research.

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The first stage of this project, covering Eastern Australia, 1788-1872 was funded by the Australian Research Council Project ID DP 140100399. The rest of Australia and most updates and enhancements were completed on a volunteer basis by qualified professionals. <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1340762>.