



another way

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Desmond Taylor and Helen Seiver





Helen Seiver, *Big Blue Sky*, 2020, photo by Samuel Tetlaw

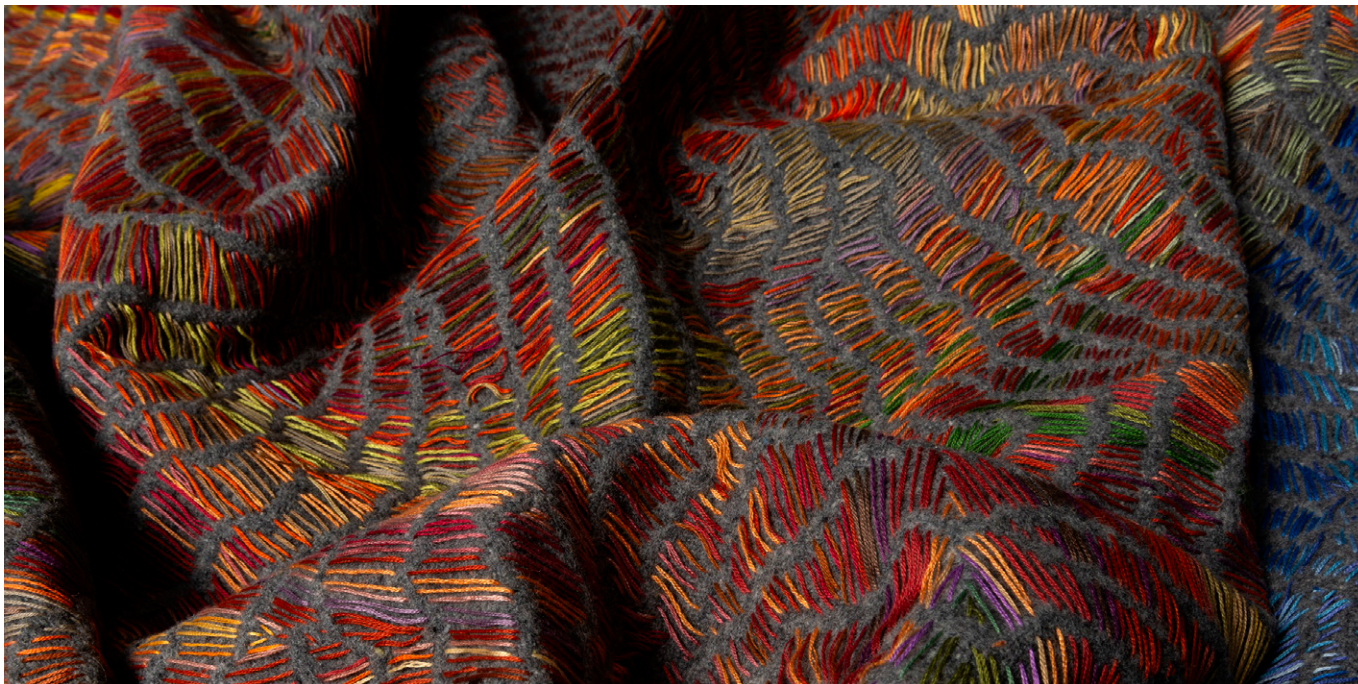
Kujungkali Ngaraku / We Stand Together

Desmond Taylor and Helen Seiver are an unlikely duo. Desmond was born close to the Oakover River. He is a Warnman man from the Martu Lands. Desmond primarily paints his family's country around Karlamilyi (Rudall River) and the creation stories for that country, especially the Ngayarta Kujarra Dreaming. He also works as a translator and interpreter of many desert languages. Helen was born in Boorloo (Perth) and currently resides on Wardandi Noongar land in the Southwest. Helen makes art across many different media, often exploring issues of environmentalism, gender and postcolonialism.

Together, these artists share a tragic moment. One that could easily keep them apart. Against the odds however, against neo-colonialism and family and cultural polarisation, Desmond and Helen have come together in a powerful gesture toward peace. The event that precipitated this coming together will

not be publicly described, suffice to say, this joint exhibition is a remarkable culmination of a five-year journey of forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. The artists, the individuals, bring different backgrounds, experiences, and world views together to work within an in-between space. This is their meeting ground, their yarnning ground – a space of potentiality – offering the potential to think, talk and be different, outside of conventional norms, expectations and antagonistic binaries. It is a gently subversive, creative and malleable space, as Desmond says; "calling what we have done 'another way'. Not Martu way or white fella way."

This space is what the post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha describes as a 'third space', a 'space of cultural enunciation'. The purpose of this space is to undermine "the binary thought and essentialist identities produced by colonial knowledge." It is



Helen Seiver, *Nullagine Insignia*, 2022-3, photo by Eva Fernandez

a hybrid space of intercultural contact, enabling a heteroglossia, the mixture of previously disparate ideas - it is not about a simple 'black and white' distinction. When Desmond and Helen sit on country and participate in the making sacred of the space and when they craft a bridge together, they are also metaphorically building a bridge across previously disparate worlds, through the languages of art and ceremony and the ethics of connection.

This project has required great strength, patience and persistence for Helen and Desmond to choose to walk together on this challenging path. Artistic practice is a valuable tool in this journey. Through its very nature it provides the possibility for resistance and healing and a means of communication beyond language. Desmond however, does use language in his art to express the complex emotions arising from the collaboration,

words emerge including; *Kurrurnpa Palys/Good Feeling*, *Walyku Kurrurnpa, Bad Feeling*, *Natirrp Kurti/Strong Heart*, *Yulapayi Kurrnja/Crying Heart*, *Nantirrpali Kujungka/We are strong together*. His words reveal the depth of emotion and the steps taken toward intimacy and understanding without prejudice.

This exhibition is an honest expression from the heart – as Helen's radiant heart artworks make apparent. The artists have literally and metaphorically travelled to each other's homelands and within each other's past and present being, towards a becoming expressive of the truth of standing together.

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1. Desmond Taylor in conversation March 2024
 2. Bhabha, H.(1995), *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, p.276



Desmond Taylor, *Many Ways to Heal*, 2023 (part of a series of 17 works), photo by Eva Fernandez

Artists statement

Desmond Taylor and Helen Seiver have collaborated on artwork for the past five years, including undertaking several intense periods on country. This work has engaged in a very personal exploration of Homi Bhabha's argument that a 'newness' enters the world through a cultural 'space' he named a 'Third Space'. The artwork is primarily concerned with the creation of a visual Third Space to understand and process the 'why' of a personal tragedy that has affected them both. This project is an investigation into understanding forgiveness and transformation through a variety of art practices; shared practice

to explore and discover connection, and to create a meaningful combination of artistic processes and traditional ceremony. Their work attempts to express those concepts, which in truth, 'represent the incomprehensible and non-representational' (Anselm Keifer).

"We sit on the land together, to ritualise each meeting, challenge resistance and consent to change. Together we see these processes as our personal story that informs a larger Reconciliation endeavour."

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Inside cover image: Desmond Taylor and Helen Seiver, *Sitting Together*, 2022, photo by Samuel Tetlaw

Ngala kaaditj Noongar moort keyen kaadak nidja boodja.

We acknowledge the Noongar people as the original custodians of this land.

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