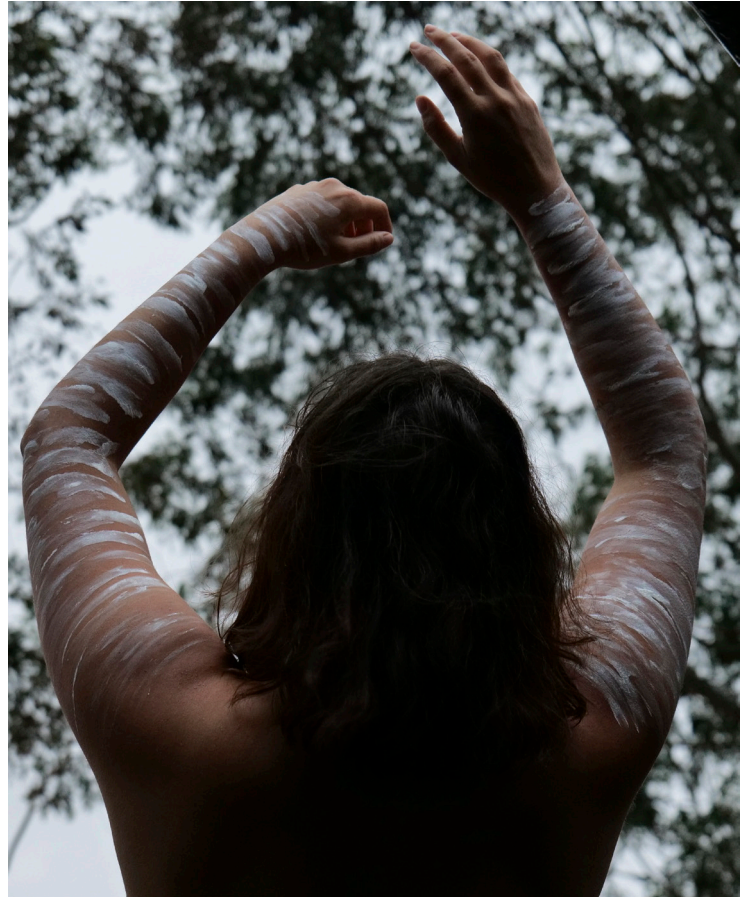


*The Mill's
Collaboration
& Mentorship
Residency*

*27 September
—
29 October 2021*

*The Mill Adelaide
154 Angas Street,
Adelaide SA 5000*



Curated by
Adele Sliuzas

Lilla Berry

**STRNG
WMMN**

Lilla Berry

Lilla is a Yankunytjatjara woman, multi-disciplinary artist, arts worker and producer. Lilla began her arts career at Carclew in 2014, and completed a secondment part time role with Country Arts South Australia as the Aboriginal Programs Associate Producer in 2018, and has contributed to a wide range of exciting programming.



In 2017, Lilla formed the Aboriginal cultural contemporary dance company Of Desert and Sea, alongside her fellow dance ensemble members. Of Desert and Sea explores themes relevant to the 5 Aboriginal women who make up the company. They have had performances and workshops at places such as WOMADelaide, Art Gallery of South Australia, Dance Rites at the Sydney Opera House, and their debut show Beautiful, presented in Tarnanthi, November 2019. Beautiful's second season at Adelaide Fringe 2020 also received the Emerging Artist Award.

In 2019 she received her first screen credit, producing Sansbury Sisters as part of the Deadly Family Portraits Initiative with South Australian Film Corp and ABC iView.

Lilla's practice as an artist is multi-disciplinary, as she explores mediums including dance, weaving, painting, video and photography. Her artworks are representation of her own lived experiences, and those of her community.

Artist Statement

STRNG WMN explores what it means to be strong Aboriginal women. Including culturally, physically and mentally. I have always been surrounded by strong women growing up. I was raised by a single mother, and as an athlete all of my team mates were strong women, being strong role models. And growing up watching other young Aboriginal woman dancing with Kurruru, I was so inspired by their strength in culture. I want to capture the authentic voices of our community, and explore all the ways we as women find strength, as it comes in all different types of forms.

About

The Mill

The Mill welcomes Yankunytjatjara woman, multi-disciplinary artist Lilla Berry as our second Collaboration & Mentorship artist in resident (CaM-Res), supported by City of Adelaide. Lilla has created this work through development time in The Mill's Breakout space, mentorship with The Mill's artistic team and the opportunity to collaborate with photographer Morgan Sette. Lilla's exhibition celebrates her relationships with the strong women in her community, through practicing dance, footy, weaving and the act of coming together. She has also collaborated with strong women from her community, including Pearl Berry, Iteka Ukarla, Carly Tarkari Dodd, Mali Isobel, Amber Ahang and Kirsty Williams.



STRNG WMMN



Essay by **Lilla** and **Pearl Berry**

What does it mean to be strong women? Are we strong in numbers? Are we strong when we are alone? Are we strong in our weakness? Sometimes it's hard to discuss what it means to be a strong woman. Sometimes we find ourselves comparing the women we are now, to what we think a strong woman should look like. Are we doing enough? Or are we doing too much? Have we struggled enough to be successful? Are we deserving?

But when we reflect on what it's like to live as women, it is clear that we are inherently strong, resilient, and incredible beings. Our strength is within us from the moment we come into our existence; it's there when we are being nurtured as babies, and it's there when we cry in the school yard after a snotty nose kid calls us ugly. Our strength is there when we smile back at the man on the street who tells us not to look so sad, and it's there when we decide to cuss him out instead. It's there when we run out onto a football field, hungry for a victory in a sport that we grew up watching only men play, and it's there when we hide away under the covers because the world feels a little too scary that day.

Strength and womanhood are intertwined like a woven basket, holding within it the entire universe. In the times we continue to pick ourselves up and carry on even when our bodies don't feel like they belong to us anymore, that is strength. When we are denied opportunity, but continue to seek out our own challenges, that is strength. And when we feel like we can't go on alone, and so we ask for help, that is strength.

Through the practice of being authentically ourselves, we can be undeniably strong women. We can look to the those who came before us, paving the way, so that those today can strive. And we can look at the women of today, who continue to break down barriers for our sisterhood, and ensure we know there is nothing we cannot achieve.

We thank our sisters and aunties, like Lowitja O'Donoghue, Evonne Goolagong Cawley, Gladys Elphick, Cathy Freeman, and the many more trailblazers for showing us the power we hold. And that no matter society's attempt to oppress or restrain us, we will never cease to believe that we are capable of anything we put our minds to, for we are strong Aboriginal women.

And so, *"here's to strong women: may we know them, may we raise them, may we be them."*

Footy portraits — **Rebekah** and **Teesh**

1. Lilla Berry and Morgan Sette, *Teesh*, 2021, digital image

2. Lilla Berry and Morgan Sette, *Rebekah*, 2021, digital image



An excerpt of **Burning Finch** by **Pearl Berry**

There is a tree in the desert
made of rotten wood.
It's branches bare no leaves nor sway in the wind
but hang crooked, lifeless.
The tree trunk is hollow and frail
No roots connecting it to the earth
It rests stagnant on top the red sand
This tree
was poisoned long ago
and now it simply does not grow.

Or hold space
for any living thing.

What a perfect place
for a little finch.

A finch with mattered feathers
who could never quite take flight
She thought perhaps she is not worthy
of that mighty blue sky.
Alone, the finch found herself
settled in the tree
She danced around the bark until
golden sap crusted at her feet
like rusted shackles.
But the finch didn't see it
That deadweight felt like purpose

She would give to this empty vessel
more than she had
and the tree would accept it
with such ease.

It absorbed the little finch.

Her feathers began to fall
As blistered feet paced the barbed branches
The finch looked up towards
The night and
cried

atop this tree I am the highest I've ever been
and yet
I have never felt further from the sky.

Collaborators

Pearl Berry

Pearl Berry is a Yankunytjatjara woman, who has always been passionate about the arts. Whether it be writing, drawing, dancing or acting, she has always found her strength in creating things. She is a member of Of Desert and Sea, and has also performed within the theatre realm. A hands-on learner, Pearl is always looking for ways to gain knowledge about things that interest her. She recently started working with Ku Arts, and will be supporting their programs and work as the Administration Coordinator. Pearl has also been developing as a filmmaker and wrote and directed the short documentary *Deadly Family Portraits: Sansbury Sisters* in 2018. She was also successful in being part of the last series of Black Comedy writing workshops, with her work appearing in the final season.



Mali Isabel

Mali Isabel is a twenty-two-year-old Arabana and Kokatha woman based in Adelaide. Mali's arts practice focuses on acrylic dot painting alongside drawing, pour painting, digital creations, videography and photography. Mali loves that art is a way for people to be creative and express themselves in a safe non-judgemental space of complete freedom. Her emphasised use rainbow colours centre the concept of equality. She focuses on topics such as racism, discrimination, mental health, diversity and feminism. Mali uses her platform to promote positivity, happiness and kindness. Her art is a way to depict her reality to others and express her perspectives and opinions on topics that she has experience dealing with throughout her life. Mali's goal is to change the world and make it a stronger and more equal society for all.



Iteka Ukarla Sanderson-Bromley

Iteka Ukarla Sanderson-Bromley is 20 years old and lives in Adelaide, South Australia. Her language groups are Adnyamathanha (Flinders Ranges), Narungga (Yorke Peninsula) and Yarluyandi (Simpson Desert). Iteka's 'Yura mityi' (Aboriginal/birth order name) is Warrikanha meaning 2nd born. Iteka has grown up making regular trips home to country. She loves sharing her culture and does this through her art and dance, as well as working in the cultural education field. Iteka's art reflects her culture and stories from Country, primarily Adnyamathanha Country, the Flinders Ranges, but also Narungga Country, Yorke Peninsula & Yarluyandi country, the Simpson Desert. Stories, language and culture are learnt from family and elders. Iteka's art combines traditional and contemporary themes. Iteka is a member of Of Desert & Sea, a contemporary Aboriginal women's dance group and SA First Nations Dance Collective.



Carly Tarkari Dodd

Carly Tarkari Dodd is a Kurna\Narungga and Ngarrindjeri artist. She has been mentored by Indigenous Tasmanian artist Max Mansell and was taught traditional weaving by Ngarrindjeri artist Ellen Trevorrow. Within her practice Carly mixes traditional and contemporary techniques, to produce works that are conceptually and culturally driven. In 2018 she was the recipient of the Carclew Emerging Curator Residency. Her works were exhibited during SALA 2018 at Adelaide Town Hall, The Mill in 2019 as part of Tarnanthi, ACE in the Survey Artist Exhibition *If the future is to be worth anything*. Carly won the South Australian NAIDOC Young Aboriginal of the Year in 2018. Carly has facilitated art workshops at WOMAD, Spirit Festival, The Art Gallery of South Australia and the Adelaide Fringe. Carly was the chosen artist in *The Studio* at The Art Gallery of South Australia for Tarnanthi 2020



Amber Ahang

Amber Ahang has been dancing since she was young, and has been a member of Kurruru Arts and Culture Hubs Dance Ensemble. As a dancer she has travelled throughout Australia and was part of a delegation that travelled to Taiwan in 2012. Amber has performed at Adelaide Fringe, Spirit Festival, Black Nite and WOMADelaide. Amber was a member of Kurruru Youth Performing Arts show *Min Min* which was awarded best dance show Adelaide Fringe 2011. She was also part of the cast in Kurruru's show *Knowledge Keys* as part of the 2016 Spirit Festival. Amber continues to develop her practice and is always open and keen to find new opportunities that will further her dance skills. Amber is one of the founding members of Of Desert and Sea, and has been performing with them since 2018.



Kirsty Williams

Kirsty Williams is a Kurna, Narungga and Ngarrindjeri dancer and mum of two. She trained at NAISDA as well as being a key member of Kurruru Youth Performing Arts dance ensemble, where she had the opportunity to perform on multiple occasions. Kirsty also appeared on an episode of *Move It Mob Style*. Kirsty was cast as a Spirit Girl in the world premiere of *Cloudstreet!* the opera by State Opera of South Australia. She performed in Taree Sansbury's *Next Wave* work during its early development. Kirsty is one of the founding members of Of Desert and Sea, and was acting producer in 2020.



Of Desert and Sea

Of Desert and Sea is an Aboriginal cultural contemporary dance company, currently made up of 5 young women, based in Adelaide. Our dancers come from a variety of language groups from across South Australia. ODAS was formed after the dancers started working together to continue developing their practice. We are passionate about dance and how it can be used to tell stories. Our practice has also been a vehicle for each dancer connecting to, and exploring their culture and expressing themselves, and we look forward to sharing our culture and stories with the world. Of Desert and Sea has performed at various events and festivals, including WOMADelaide, Art Gallery of SA and Dance Rites at the Sydney Opera House, as well delivering workshops and sharing cultural knowledge in schools. In 2019, they completed their debut show *Beautiful* as part of Tarnanthi, which was then restaged for Adelaide Fringe 2020, and received the award for Best Emerging Artist.

Lilla Berry's 'STRNG WMN' is presented as part of Tarnanthi Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art.

Collaborators:

Pearl Berry

(Yankunytjatjara people)

Iteka Ukarla

(Adnyamathanha, Narungga
& Yarluyandi people)

Carly Tarkari Dodd

(Kurna, Narungga
& Ngarrindjeri people)

Mali Isabel

(Arabana & Kokatha people)

Amber Ahang

(Ngarrinjderi people)

Kirsty Williams

(Kurna, Narungga
& Ngarrindjeri people)

Morgan Sette