

Maree Clarke is represented  
by Vivien Anderson Gallery



**Koorie Heritage Trust Inc**  
'Gnokan Danna Murra Kor-ki'

**Koorie Heritage Trust**

**New Location**

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CREATIVE  
VICTORIA



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image courtesy of the artist

**Maree Clarke**  
**Ritual**  
*Connection to Country*  
**4 – 26 July 2015**



## Artist Statement

I consider myself lucky. My working career is one that I love, is supported by my cultural knowledge, and one that I am extraordinarily passionate about. ART.

It all began when Jim Berg – the then CEO and one of the founders of the Koorie Heritage Trust Inc. – asked me to paint a tram advertising the Koorie Heritage Trust. It turned out not to be any tram, but the first green and gold tram to hit the streets of Melbourne. I packed up my little flat in Mildura and moved to Melbourne, and I have not stopped making art, and supporting other artists, since. 1988 was the year that my life changed.

The passion I feel for the work that I do has never diminished. With every exhibition that I am part of, I learn something new. My art practice has given me access to Museum collections across Australia and the world. Experiencing the work of those who came before me is something that I will carry with me always – I will never forget.

I use these collections to inspire me to recreate material heritage from the south-east Australia. Learning how to make these objects creates another need and responsibility, which is not to allow these practices to slumber again. It is so important to give to and mentor the next generations. This is fundamental to my art practice.

## Biography

Maree Clarke's traditional lands extend from Yorta Yorta, Mutti Mutti, Wamba Wamba and BoonWurrung country that connects her to Palawa people in Tasmania. Maree is from Mildura in northwest Victoria. She began working as an Aboriginal Educator in 1978 in her home-town of Mildura. This work experience, although not directly related to her life as an artist, provided a solid base from which to begin her career in supporting and promoting southeast Australian Aboriginal histories, culture and knowledge. This was particularly critical given the history of colonisation in the southeast, where many believed that Aboriginal people throughout the region had been successfully assimilated into European ways of life, with little authentic Aboriginal culture remaining. Maree's working life as an artist has contested this assumption and has seen her develop as a pivotal figure in the reclamation of southeast Australian Aboriginal art practices, as well as a leader in nurturing and promoting the diversity of contemporary southeast Aboriginal artists.

Maree's inclusive approach to art practices – where art and culture are inseparable to all other aspects of life – has seen her involved in working with many members of the Aboriginal community, some of whom were imprisoned or were dealing with issues relating to drug and alcohol addiction, as well as assisting Aboriginal women residing in refuge shelters. The capacity for art to enable people to reconnect with their cultural heritage and to assist in their recovery remains central to Maree's philosophy. Maree's central concern is the power of art to heal and inspire people to positively identify with their Aboriginality, a process that for some continues to be difficult given the ongoing negative effects of colonisation.