



CATHERINE SPECK

THE EVENTS SURROUNDING the British nuclear tests in Central Australia came alive for Australian television audiences when the ABC screened *Operation Buffalo* in May and June 2020. The series was inspired by the actual tests at Maralinga, although screen writer and producer Peter Duncan was upfront in announcing that it was a work of 'historical fiction', along with a proviso that 'a lot of the really bad history actually happened'.¹ The series was promoted as a 'captivating drama' set in Maralinga in a Cold War climate in which 'paranoia runs rife and nuclear bombs are not the only things being tested as loyalty, love and betrayal are pitted against each other'.² The characters in *Operation Buffalo* include the handsome operations manager Major Leo Carmichael who is seduced by visiting British meteorologist Eva Lloyd George, a Russian spy; British General 'Cranky' Crankford who befriends Ruby and her Aboriginal family affected by the testing; and nurse Corinne who treats soldiers exposed to deadly nuclear chemicals. Meanwhile the British High Commissioner, key Australian politicians, prostitutes and ASIO agents weave in and out of the drama that includes visiting dignitaries observing the explosion of a nuclear device from a viewing platform.

Operation Buffalo presented 'a tangential view of history', and it joins other successful Australian film productions such as 'The Dish'

in doing so, nevertheless those most affected by nuclear tests, the Aboriginal people, felt like a by-line in the overall plot. Luke Buckmaster in his review for *The Guardian* observed that Ruby and her family searching for a missing family member seemed like a 'tacked-on' element in the story.³ The historical record shows there was never proper consideration for the Aboriginal people living in Central Australia during this time.

In 1946, when Britain established an Atomic Weapons Research Establishment to develop a nuclear weapons program, Australia agreed to be involved. By November that year, the Australian Minister for Defence John Dedman announced that a joint Long Range Weapons Establishment (that is a rocket range) would be built in Central Australia. He said the area envisaged was 'largely uninhabited', except for a few pastoral leases and the Central Aboriginal Reserve, and that the Government would do 'everything possible to safeguard the Aborigines from contact, or encroachment on any area of special significance to them'.⁴ Woomera was selected as the site for the rocket range, but this was land occupied by the Anangu for millennia. The British, as the ultimate colonisers, disregarded this fact.

OPPOSITION TO THE ROCKET RANGE

What *Operation Buffalo* omitted was that, even before this official announcement, there was strong community opposition to the plan. The

▲ Montage of two images: John L Stanier at Maralinga in protective clothing showing a camera also protected in a special plastic cover, 1956 by Australian Government photographer; and photograph of an atomic bomb mushroom cloud.

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first person to raise an alarm was Aboriginal activist Bill Ferguson, the leader of the New South Wales based Aboriginal Progressives Association, who claimed on 17 April 1946 that it was akin to 'declaring open season on the Aborigines'.⁵ By 27 July Charles Duguid, an Adelaide doctor who worked with Pitjantjatjara people at the Ernabella mission (Pukatja) in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia, exposed the plan in Adelaide's *Advertiser* newspaper on 27 July 1946. Resolutions were passed at a subsequent public lecture urging the Prime Minister to prevent the control of atomic energy from passing into the hands of the military, and to reject any actions that would jeopardise the lives of the Aboriginal people.⁶ A South Australian social issues group, the *Common Cause*, mounted a petition which was sent to Federal Government protesting against rocket bomb tests in Australia. It was signed by 10,000 people in churches, women's organisations and industrial leaders across the nation.⁷ *Smith's Weekly* ran a story in October 1946 detailing how the proposed Rocket Range 'threatened to disturb the lives and customs of over 1,000 Aborigines'.⁸ Phyllis Duguid mobilised her networks in the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), and Melbourne and Sydney women staged protests.⁹

By September 1946, the Australian Aborigines League was involved. This was a small but articulate urban group operating in a hostile climate of assimilation policies, the suppression of language and customs, and the forced removal of children.¹⁰ William (Bill) Onus was President and Reverend Doug Nicholls was Secretary. Both were Yorta Yorta men. Nicholls said the Rocket Range would mean 'some of the last unspoiled Aborigines will be forced to civilisation, and thus be ruined'.¹¹ In October he was a part of a delegation from the Aborigines Fellowship who met with the Governor General, the Duke of Gloucester, to voice their concerns.¹² In November 1946, Doug Nicholls announced that, 'if necessary, we will gather a big deputation of Aborigines and march to Canberra, even to the doors of Parliament itself'.¹³ Their concern was

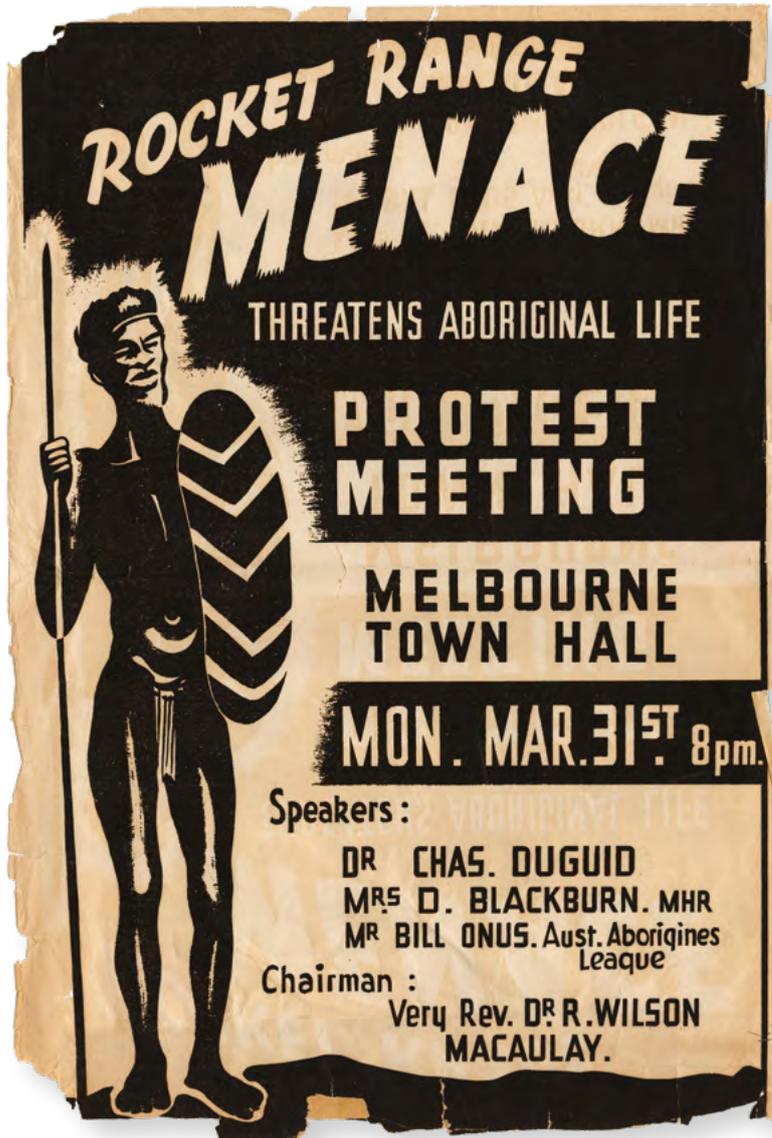
for maintaining the lands of those who lived in the desert.

Duguid kept up the public pressure, gave radio interviews, and let it be known he had letters from leading figures 'pleading with me to save the natives'.¹⁴ Donald Thomson, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Melbourne, joined the protest. He published a persuasive article, 'Rockets will doom Aborigines', in Melbourne and Adelaide newspapers in October 1946, in which he pointed out the need to preserve 'the hunting and ceremonial grounds of the Aborigines', who are 'nomadic hunters, whose lives are spent in seasonal wanderings over a wide territory, not just any territory, but the country by which each man is linked by his totemic beliefs'.¹⁵ Thomson and Duguid held slightly different perspectives, but together they were vocal opponents.¹⁶

Critics of all persuasion of the Rocket Range had little effect. Prime Minister Chifley believed 'only about 100 Aborigines would be affected'; although the government did ask the National Missionary Council to suggest an alternative site.¹⁷ The British showed little interest in the protest, and Prime Minister Clement Atlee is reported to have said that 'the welfare of Aborigines was a matter for Australia'.

The Australian Government had little real understanding of the military power they were embracing. Minister Dedman said that the 'probability of missiles falling on Aborigines in the reserve would be extremely remote' because 'the area is vast and the average density of population is probably about one native in every 50 to 100 square miles'.¹⁸ The only voice of dissent in Parliament came from an Independent member, Doris Blackburn, who held the seat of Bourke and had been associated with the Aboriginal cause since the 1920s.¹⁹ Her motion to the House of Representatives in December 1946, which failed to pass, pointed out that locating a rocket range on Aboriginal lands was 'an act of injustice to a weaker people who have no voice in ordering their own lives'.²⁰

There was widespread newspaper coverage of the opposition to the Rocket Range and how



▲ Fig 1. Rocket Range Menace Threatens Aboriginal Life: Protest Meeting, Rocket Range Protest Committee, Melbourne, 1947

IMAGE: STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, PGR 387/1/8/1

it would affect Aboriginal people, although lesser coverage of the protest by the Australian Aborigines League. This led to the Government establishing an Australian Guided Projectiles Committee to consider the issue. It met in early 1947. Its members were government specialists in Aboriginal Affairs, including the University of Sydney's anthropologist, Professor A.P. Elkin. Charles Duguid and Donald Thomson were asked to give evidence.²¹ Each sought continuation of the traditional way of life for Aboriginal people, with Duguid pointing out that it would be 'quite impossible' to keep a mobile Aboriginal people away from the test sites.²² The Government, however, chose to listen to the advice of Professor Elkin, rather than that of Thomson, his counterpart at the University of Melbourne. Elkin advocated

the Government policy of assimilation of Aboriginal people into white Australia, whereas Thomson opposed assimilation. Not surprisingly, the Minister accepted the findings of the expert Committee which concluded that the construction of the Rocket Range 'will not introduce effects detrimental to the Aborigines', and 'it cannot be considered an act of injustice.'²³ The Government decided to appoint two patrol officers to warn Aboriginal people to avoid the test area, with Elkin observing that 'those of us who know Aborigines in the central areas of Australia and their way of life know this can be done.'²⁴ A bitter Mrs Blackburn declared in Parliament it would mean 'the disintegration of the moral and physical lives of a primitive people by white men who have the habit of forgetting they are civilised.'²⁵

Given the Government's intransigence amid strong public opposition to the plan, the protesters united. In February 1947 the Australian Aborigines League (AAL), the Presbyterian Board of Missions and the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) formed the Rocket Range Protest Committee.²⁶ Forty-five organisations joined with members ranging from supporters of Aboriginal rights to pacifists, Communists and church groups. Even though this represented a 'wide spectrum of ideologically diverse interest groups' with differing agendas, the committee was united on the humanitarian issue of opposition to the Rocket Range and its effect on Aboriginal people in remote communities.²⁷ Another 3,000 members of the Presbyterian Church signed a petition which was sent onto the Prime Minister in late February 1947 requesting reconsideration of the test site.²⁸

The Rocket Range Protest Committee held their first public meeting on 31 March 1947 at Melbourne Town Hall (fig. 1). One thousand concerned citizens attended although key Government figures declined the invitation. The audience were treated to rousing speeches from Dr Charles Duguid, Bill Onus and the Reverend Doug Nicholls from the AAL, Mrs Blackburn MHR, and Mrs Nankivell, President of the WCTU.²⁹ Duguid pointed out that 'the whole fabric of life of 1,500 or more of our tribal Aborigines is to be sacrificed to this

preparation for another war',³⁰ while Bill Onus said that funds earmarked for the tests should be used on Aboriginal welfare.³¹ Motions were passed including that the Rocket Testing Range 'is inimical to the welfare of the Aborigines'; that it 'violates the policy of the United Nations in regard to primitive races'; and that it 'represents a great disservice to world peace'.³² These motions were sent to the Prime Minister, members of the Federal Government, the United Nations, and the British Government.

Despite the public meetings, and significant objections raised in Parliament by Doris Blackburn, the Government and the Opposition were adamant that it was in the national interest that the Rocket Range would go ahead.³³ South Australians formed their own Rocket Protest Committee with eighteen organisations banding together. They sent a letter to Prime Minister Chifley on 7 May calling for open debate of the issue in Parliament.³⁴ Duguid resigned in protest from the Aborigines Protection Board saying it 'would mean the end of tribal Aborigines', and that 'no justification had yet been shown for putting the range through the northern, inhabited part of the Reserve'.³⁵ The Rocket Range Protest Committee sent a letter to each member of Parliament, along with a copy of Duguid's Melbourne Town Hall speech, while the Presbyterian Church sent yet another petition with 10,000 signatures to the Prime Minister.³⁶ The Government tried to take the heat out of the situation by labelling the protesters as Communists.³⁷

The anthropologists debated the issue in the press. Elkin, the high-profile assimilationist, defended the Government decision on 20 May 1947. In his view 'the project had been decided by the Empire leaders' and energy should not be wasted on 'futile protests or abstract arguments'. He said a patrol officer would 'inform any Aborigines who are likely to be near part of the range where, and when, projectiles are expected to fall and to avoid it for the time being'.³⁸ Donald Thomson replied stating he had no reason to believe that the safeguards 'could be any more effective than in the past', and that the use of the Reserve for the tests 'must mean doom of the Aborigines in

the territory concerned' and that 'posterity will prove the truth'.³⁹

Nevertheless, the Defence Projects Bill was passed in the Parliament at 3.30am on 27 June 1947. Doris Blackburn was the only dissenting voter.⁴⁰ The Rocket Range Protest Committee held one last large public meeting on 24 August 1947 in Melbourne's Princess Theatre even though, under the new Approved Defence Protection Act, there was the possibility of prosecution for speaking openly about the project. As committee chairman Reverend James Stuckey said, 'a voteless and voiceless minority is being treated ruthlessly and we aim to do something about it'.⁴¹ Doug Nicholls from the AAL made an impassioned speech saying, 'we ask for our rights, we want our children to have the opportunity which your children have'.⁴² The motions passed at this public meeting, which were duly sent onto the Prime Minister, called for the cessation of the violation of Aboriginal rights in the area affected, and a denunciation of the Act limiting the freedom of speech. However, the threat of punishment for speaking out on issues of national security did quell further protests.⁴³ The new Defence Protection Act declared that anyone who spoke out against an approved defence project would face a fine of £500 or twelve months in prison.⁴⁴ Civil liberties had been seriously curbed and preliminary work had already begun on the Rocket Range.

By September 1950, both America and the Soviet Union were conducting nuclear tests, so Britain's Prime Minister Clement Atlee requested permission to test atomic weapons in Australia.⁴⁵ R.G. Menzies, the newly elected conservative Liberal Prime Minister, agreed. He was an Empire man. Over an eleven-year period from 1952 to 1963, in what has been described as a sustained act of 'nuclear colonialism', the British conducted tests at remote sites in Australia.⁴⁶ Britain ruthlessly exercised its power over its former colony in a situation in which that colonial relationship was still strong, and Australia bowed to Britain's interests, rather than to those of their own Aboriginal people who went on to experience the full brunt of that nuclear colonialism.

The name 'Maralinga' means 'the thunder.' This is what 'echoed across the pristine desert lands' after each test, leaving behind radioactive contamination.⁴⁷ The name also resonates in the Australian imagination as the place where *all* the tests were conducted, and it was the site selected for the drama, *Operation Buffalo*. Whereas twelve atomic devices were exploded over *three* sites: three at Monte Bello off the coast of Western Australia in 1952 and 1956; two at Emu Field in 1953; and seven at Maralinga in 1956 and 1957. By 1963 a Partial Test Ban Treaty came into effect which meant only underground tests of nuclear weapons could take place. Further secretive tests at Maralinga in 1960, 1961 and 1963 may have contravened an International Moratorium of 1958.⁴⁸ The outcome for Britain was the creation for the first time of operational nuclear weapons.

Much secrecy surrounded the testing. The Australian Government bowed to the British request for D-notices (Defence notices) and the media complied. But before the tests could begin, the Aboriginal people living near the test zone at the United Aborigines Mission in Ooldea were to be moved on. The mission was closed and many were relocated to Yalata near the coast of the Great Australian Bight.

Anangu women have begun to speak publicly about the upheaval they experienced. In 2009 they produced an illustrated book *Maralinga: The Anangu Story* which described the disruption and confusion that ensued prior the testing.⁴⁹ Family groups were split up, some went north, others to the west. And in being removed from their Country, they related how they were 'deeply troubled about what was happening to their own lands, and acutely unsettled by their forced removal to this alien country'. They said that the land at Yalata had 'grey powdery limestone so different from the red earth of the desert they knew and loved', the weather close to sea differed, and there was less bush tucker because it was sheep grazing land.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, those living traditionally in the bush were unaware of the impending danger. It transpired that only one patrol officer, Walter McDougall, had the impossible

task of finding all Aboriginal people in the area and relocating them.

In March 1952, just before the tests started, the Australian Aborigines League protested for the last time at a Women's International League for Peace and Freedom meeting in Melbourne. Bill Onus spoke of the need for compensation for his people, while AAL co-founder and treasurer Margaret Tucker, also a prominent Yorta Yorta woman, spoke too. It was moved and passed at the meeting that the bomb tests at Maralinga should stop.⁵¹ Predictably, this had no effect on the Government.

When the nuclear tests did begin in 1953 at Emu Field, some Anangu were still living in the desert. We now know from the women's account in *Maralinga: The Anangu Story* that those who lived nearby at Wallatinna experienced black mist and the air was filled with a metallic smell. Their exposure to radiation meant they became very sick; this included vomiting, choking, diarrhoea, peeling skin, headaches, and sore eyes. Those who looked up at the flash such as the unsuspecting ten year old Yami Lester were blinded. Old and frail members of the community died.⁵² Australian servicemen co-opted into the test program were seriously affected in later years too, with shocking medical conditions.⁵³ The British Government's agenda, as Frank Walker observed, 'was to turn the whole of Australia into one giant nuclear laboratory. They wanted to use the Australian population as human guinea pigs for decades to come'.⁵⁴

THE CONTEMPORARY ABORIGINAL RESPONSE

Aboriginal people have lived with consequences of this cruel testing program for decades, the warning signals having been ignored. Their art produced decades later is now speaking back, reclaiming their history and their land. While it might seem like a delayed response this needs to be placed in context. Aboriginal people were only granted citizenship in 1967, the Anangu were a dispossessed and fractured people, they had lost their land and had a struggle to get it



◀ Fig 2. Lin Onus, Yorta Yorta people, born 1948 Melbourne, died 1996 Melbourne, *Maralinga*, 1990, synthetic polymer paint, acrylic and paper stickers, 163.0 x 56.0 x 62.0cm (figure), 125.0 x 119.0 x 45.0 cm (cloud).

IMAGE: STATE ART COLLECTION, ART GALLERY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

back; and the Aboriginal acrylic art movement, a symbolic form of land tenure, only commenced in the early 1970s. The struggle for compensation and a proper clean-up of contaminated land could not begin until the Maralinga Tjarutja Land Rights Act was passed in the South Australian Parliament in 1984, and the British Government finally agreed in 1995 to pay compensation.⁵⁵

The first Aboriginal artist to protest in 1990 was Yorta Yorta artist Lin Onus (1948–1996), the son of Bill Onus who was bitterly disappointed at the AAL's failure to stop the British bomb testing over his peoples' lands. Bill Onus continued to work for the Aboriginal cause in other important ways, including the Victorian Aboriginal Referendum Movement.⁵⁶ Lin Onus grew up in a family of political activism, and it is unsurprising that he pursued art as a form of cultural resistance.⁵⁷ His sculpture *Maralinga*, 1990, (fig. 2) revisits the cause his father felt deeply about in the 1947 protest meetings. It

shows the consequences of the tests with an Aboriginal mother attempting to shelter her children from the full force of an atomic blast, symbolised by a mushroom cloud. Her protest is overt, her body language has been described as speaking 'of outrage and resistance in the face of this horrific event'.⁵⁸

Pitjantjatjara artist Jonathan Kumintjara Brown (1960–1997) is another artist whose visual response to Maralinga is etched in his life story. He was directly affected by the movement of his people from Ooldea to Yalata prior to the tests commencing. At three weeks of age he was taken from his family in Yalata and placed with a non-Aboriginal family on the east coast of Australia. He became one of the Stolen Generation who suffered from the Government's policy of assimilation. He only located his birth mother at Yalata in 1984, and later his wider family at Oak Valley, Maralinga and Ooldea. By the mid-1990s Kumintjara Brown was producing an emotionally wrought

series of paintings *Maralinga Nullius*, that are a critical personal narrative aiming at recovering meaning in the face of the violence wrought on the landscape by the colonisers. It included imagery of his grandfather's land of Maralinga which his family had to leave behind in the move to Yalata. *Poison country*, 1995 (fig. 3)

shows the dreaming lines of Country obscured by the force of the atomic explosions on his lands. He achieved this effect performatively by rubbing ochres, collected from the contaminated land, onto the canvas itself thus covering the iconography. While he points to how the British contaminated Indigenous land

► **Fig 3.** Jonathan Kumintjara Brown, Pitjantatjara people, SA, born 1960 Yalata SA, died 1997 Melbourne, *Poison country*, 1995, synthetic polymer paint, earth pigments on canvas, 225.0 x 175.0cm

IMAGE: SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT GRANT 1996, ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



by conducting atomic tests there, his people's connection to country was never erased: the dreaming lines endure beneath the ochres.

Yhonnie Scarce (b. 1973) of the Kokatha and Nukunu people, and born in Woomera, is another who has responded to the ultimate colonising act of releasing atomic bombs over her country. Many in her language group were affected, and her family members are now caretakers at Woomera. Her medium is glass. In *Thunder raining poison* (fig. 4), which was commissioned for the 2015 Tarnanthi Festival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, Scarce recreates the mushroom cloud rising from the atomic tests in an installation consisting in 2,000 transparent and opaque glass yams suspended five metres high, symbolically raining down their poison onto the land. It is a deeply disquieting work due to the disjuncture between its 'tantalising, glistening presence' and the reality of what is being represented.⁵⁹ The glass yam refers to the tubular plant, the yam, a staple of the Aboriginal diet for those in the bush, which was destroyed in this region by the atomic

blasts. The medium of glass is especially apt because the extreme heat from the atomic tests turned the red sandy earth at Maralinga into green glass balls in a process known as vitrification.

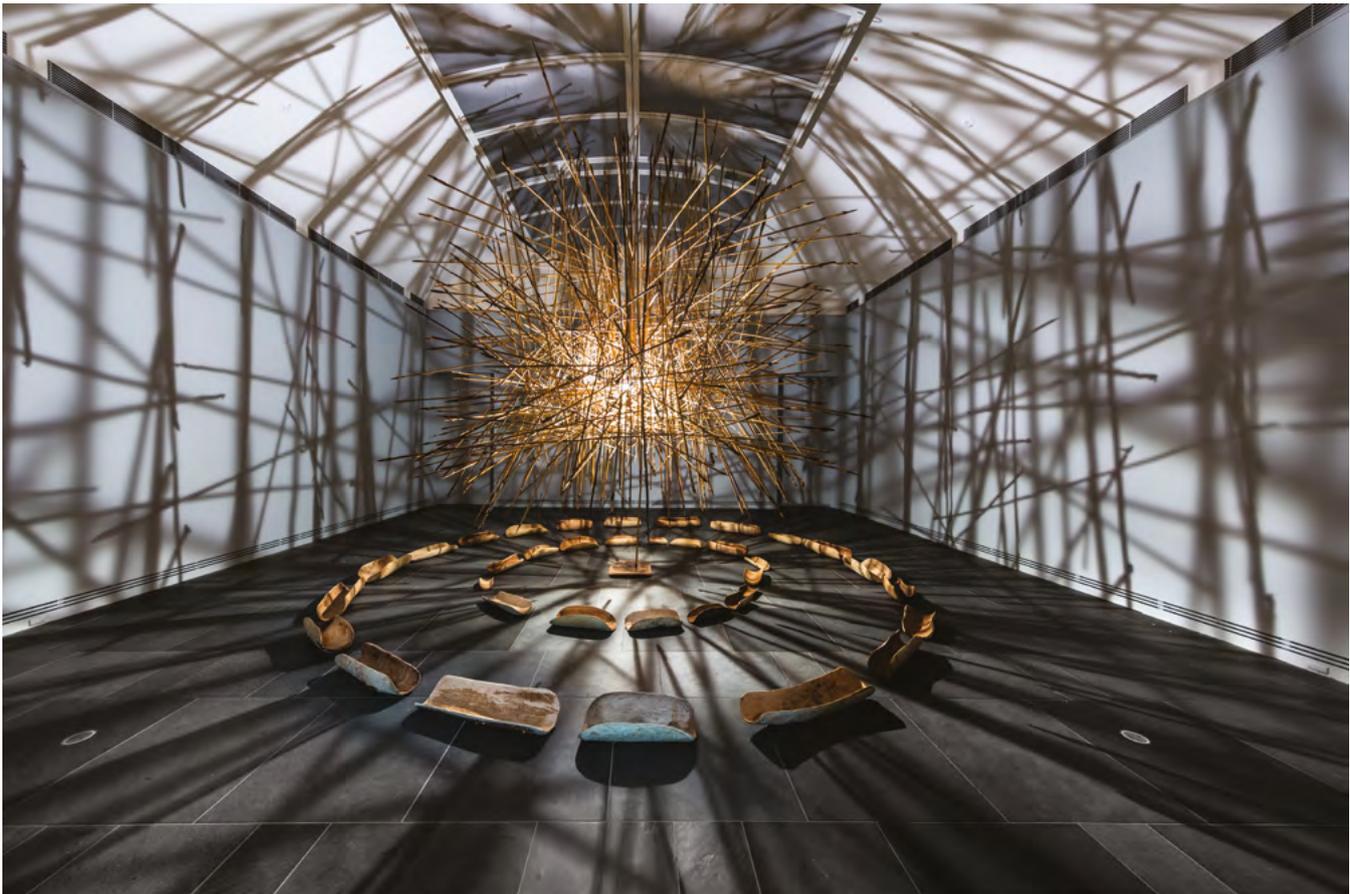
Perhaps the most extraordinary response to the nuclear tests in Central Australia is *Kulata Tjuta* (fig. 5) which consisted in traditional spears, kulata, assembled to form the spherical shape of a mushroom cloud emanating from an atomic bomb test. A bright light, the flash from the explosion, was at its centre, and beneath were empty piti (food gathering bowls), empty because the land as a source of their food had been contaminated. In an adjoining gallery space a video installation of 9 screens showed archival footage of Country, while artists spoke, many for the first time publicly, about their memories and experiences of being close by the test site. This joint exhibit by sixty men and women, many senior Anangu artists in the APY Lands, was shown at the 2017 Tarnanthi Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art at the Art Gallery of South Australia.

▼ Fig 4. Yhonnie Scarce, Kokatha / Nukunu people, SA, born 1973, Woomera SA, *Thunder raining poison*, 2015, Adelaide, blown glass yams, dimensions variable, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, purchased 2016, with support by Susan Armitage in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Referendum. Installation image at Tarnanthi Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, 2015, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide.

IMAGE: ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, ADELAIDE

PHOTO: SAUL STEED





▲ **Fig 5.** *Kulata Tjuta*, 2017, APY Art Centre Collective, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytatjara Lands, South Australia, wood, spinifex, resin, kangaroo tendon, plus 6 channel DVD with sound, Acquisition through Tarnanthi Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP, 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia. For a complete listing of artists visit www.agsa.sa.gov.au/collection-publications/collection/works/kulata-tjuta/64243/

IMAGE: ART GALLERY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

As Iluwanti Ken, an elder, said: ‘This story has framed everything in my life and the life of my younger sister Mary. We lost our parents and were raised by a new family. ... I know the sicknesses that have come from the Black Mist. I know the bomb has affected the younger generation as well, that trauma has gone down the family line. We elders have lived with this illness in our bodies, and the sadness in our hearts. Many Anangu lost their lives. It has been hard for many of us to take our minds back to these painful memories. It is only now we can share these stories, and it is a painful process. We are doing so because we know it is important to record our memories. It is important that this story is known.’⁶⁰

This was the first time the spears (kulata) Anangu men have always made to protect Country, were shown to confront the nuclear explosions that changed the course of their lives. As elder, Mumu Mike Williams (1952–2019) said, ‘the kulata (spears) are a fence around our Country and culture. Through the bomb at Emu Junction the whitefellas tried to break down our fence. There were many

Anangu, my family members, who were lost and many more who were sick from the impact of the bomb—but the tjilpies (old men) kept making kulata, with the sons and grandsons. They kept strong our culture and now we are still here today. Hundreds and thousands of spears have been made since that sad time of the bomb tests, and the fence is stronger than ever.’⁶¹ The 550 spears exhibited as the glow from the mushroom cloud above the empty piti, can be seen as the Anangu rebutting this shameful act of nuclear colonialism at last.

CONCLUSION

The nuclear tests in Central Australia are a dark chapter in our nation’s colonial history of the Cold War era, which protest groups failed to avert. The callous indifference shown to the Aboriginal inhabitants is an especially shocking chapter which contemporary First Nations artists are reclaiming and critiquing. While *Operation Buffalo* may have played lightly with history, it did shine a light on a national tragedy that is still not widely known. ¶



CATHERINE SPECK is an art historian whose work focuses on the gendered representation of war and wartime in Australian art. Her publications have won critical praise for their outstandingly original re-envisioning of the landscape

of war through the humane gaze of numerous women artists, both minor and major. Professor Speck's work is also highly regarded for being culturally comparative and statistical, giving her scholarship a broader and more effective argument. She developed the concept of 'Australian art without borders', which defines the contribution of expatriate artists to art history and national narratives. She is currently Professor of Art History at the University of Adelaide.

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3. Buckmaster, p. 4.
4. John Dedman cited in Sue Davenport, Peter Johnson and Yuwali, *Cleared Out: First Contact in the Western Desert* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2005) p. 16.
5. *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 April 1946, cited in Paul Wilson, 'Rockets and Aborigines August 1945–August 1947' (unpublished honours history thesis, La Trobe University, 1980), p. 8.
6. Wilson, 'Rockets and Aborigines', p. 15.
7. Alison Holland, 'Saving the Aborigines: The White Woman's Crusade: A Study of Gender, Race and the Australian Frontier 1920–1960s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of New South Wales, 1998), pp. 251, 253.
8. 'Aborigines and Rockets', *Smith's Weekly* (Sydney), 12 October 1946, p. 31.
9. Phyllis Duguid was State and National Superintendent of the 'Australian Aborigines Department' of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Melbourne women protested on 9 August 1946 about the use of atomic energy for destructive purposes; Sydney women opposed the construction of the rocket range near the Central Aboriginal Reserve: Holland, 'Saving the Aborigines', p. 249.
10. The AAL was a political action group that Yorta Yorta man William Cooper (1861–1941) formed in Melbourne in 1936. See Sylvia Kleinert, 'Rear-vision Mirror: A Koori Context', in *Urban Dingo: The Art and Life of Lin Onus 1948–1996*, ed. by Margo Neale (South Brisbane: Craftsman House and Queensland Art Gallery, 2000), pp. 25–26.
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15. Donald Thomson, 'Rockets Will Doom Aborigines', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 11 October 1946, p. 4; Donald Thomson, 'Rocket Tests Will Mean Doom For the Aborigines', *News* (Adelaide), 21 October 1946, p. 2.
16. Geoffrey Gray, 'A Deep-seated Aversion or a Prudish Disapproval: Relations with Elkin', and Bain Attwood, 'Anthropology, Aboriginality and Aboriginal Rights' in *Donald Thomson: The Man and the Scholar*, ed. by Bruce Rigsby and Nicolas Petersen (Canberra: Academy of Social Sciences, 2005), pp. 91–97; 101–16. Sitarani Kerin, "'Doctor Do Good?": Charles Duguid and Aboriginal Politics, 1930s–1970s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Australian National University, 2004), p. 95.
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28. 'Petition by Church on Rocket Site', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 22 February 1947, p. 5.
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33. 'A Lone Woman Against Rocket Range Plan', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 May 1947, p. 2; Doris Blackburn, Australia, House of Representatives, 1947, *Debates*, 190, 438–39.
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36. 'Letters Sent to M.Ps. on Rocket Range', *News* (Adelaide) 16 June 1947, p. 4.
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40. 'Members slept when Rocket Bill passed—says Mrs Blackburn', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 27 June 1947, p.3.
41. 'US Experts to See our Rocket Tests', *The Herald* (Melbourne), 26 July 1947, p. 3.
42. 'Aborigines' rights "violated"; rocket protest', *The Argus* (Melbourne), 25 August 1947, p. 4.
43. Wilson, 'Different White People', p. 147.
44. 'Approved Defence Projects Protection, no. 47, of 1947', *Commonwealth Acts*, 1947, 303–04.
45. The US detonated a plutonium bomb at Bikini Atoll in July 1946; the Soviet Union exploded its first atom bomb in August 1949: the US retaliated in 1951 testing their first two thermonuclear fusion weapons at Eniwetok Atoll. The Soviet Union responded exploding the same kind of bomb in August 1953.
46. Elizabeth Tynan, 'Thunder on the Plain', in *Black Mist, Burnt Country: Testing the Bomb, Maralinga and Australian Art* (Upwey, Vic: Burinja, Dandenong Ranges Cultural Centre, 2016), pp. 21–35 (p. 21).
47. Tynan, p. 21.
48. Tynan, pp. 23–24.
49. Alice Cox, Margaret May, Pansy Woods, Mabel Queama, Marjorie Sandimar, Yvonne Edwards, Mima Smart and Janet May worked as translators with non-Aboriginal author Christobel Mattingley, while Dora Queama, Hilda Moodoo, Audra Bridley and Noelene Bridley provided the illustrations for the book.
50. Yalata and Oak Valley Communities; with Christobel Mattingly, *Maralinga: The Anangu Story* (Crows Nest, NSW: Allen and Unwin, 2009), p. 35.
51. 'Stop deadly atomic blast in Australia', *Tribune* (Sydney), 16 April 1952, p. 2.
52. *Maralinga: The Anangu Story*, p. 39.
53. Roger Cross and Avon Hudson, *Beyond Belief: The British Bomb Tests: Australia's Veterans Speak Out*, (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2005), pp. 56–75.
54. Frank Walker, *Maralinga: The Chilling Expose of our Secret Nuclear Shame and Betrayal of our Troops and Country* (Sydney: Hachette, 2014), p. ix.
55. \$45,250,000 is placed in a trust for this purpose: *Maralinga: The Anangu Story*, p. 59.
56. Bill Onus was President in 1967 of Aborigines Advancement League (Victoria): Sylvia Kleinert, 'Bill Onus b. 15 November 1906', *Design and Australia Online* <<https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/bill-onus/biography>> [accessed 9 October 2019].
57. Margo Neale, 'Lin Onus b. 4 December 1948', *Design and Australia Online*, <<https://www.daa0.org.au/bio/lin-onus/biography/>> [accessed 9 October 2019].
58. J.D. Mittmann, 'Atomic testing in Australian art', in *Black Mist, Burnt Country*, pp. 36–65 (p. 50).
59. Tina Baum, 'Yhonnie Scarce', in *Defying Empire: 3rd National Indigenous Art Triennial*, ed. by Tina Baum (Canberra: National Gallery of Australia, 2017), p. 114. The title of this paper refers to this art work.
60. Iluwanti Ken in 'The Kulata Tjuta Project', in Nici Cumpston, *Tarnanthi: Festival of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art* (Adelaide: Art Gallery of South Australia, 2017), pp. 40–43 (p. 42).
61. Mumu Mike Williams in 'The Kulata Tjuta Project', in Cumpston, p. 42.