

Deep Listening Circle at Wonthaggi ArtSpace

'What is calling through this art?'

Darug artist and sculptor Daniel Church was a Special Guest at a Deep Listening Circle held to accompany his exhibition 'This is My Story', held at Wonthaggi ArtSpace.

Curated by Ursula Theinert, Susan Hall and Karin Ellis, the exhibition revealed Daniel's creative journey of recovery through trauma and heartbreak. Daniel has lost many people he has loved and has witnessed deaths in custody first-hand. His healing has come through the making of art, drawing on a deep well of connection to culture and Country. In Daniel's words ...

Songlines

Kangaroo and Sea People

The Darug

Meeting on the land and sea

All along the coast of Country

Travels of my Ancestors

Like flying foxes

Shadows in the sky

Ancestors always watching over us

Rivers that flow

Meeting places

Colours of the Land and the Tree of Life

Songlines flowing through Darug Country



Daniel Church is a mature artist, thoughtful and quietly spoken. He is able to hold sorrow and beauty together and his artworks express the texture and dynamic tension of that. They reveal a personal story of survival, made possible by the strength he derives from his culture and Country. Daniel's work also illuminates the universal story of suffering and the extraordinary human capacity to endure the unendurable.

Against the backdrop of colonisation and all that has been lost, Daniel is still here, making art, reaching out and telling stories. His generosity and courage are palpable in the work. His paintings, wood sculptures and poetry invite us into a deep appreciation of Daniel himself, his First Nations' culture and the healing power of connecting to community and Country. Supported by The Torch Project, Daniel has been called on in his journey of creative healing and recovery. In turn, his artwork and his words call to us.

Calling

Calling through this art

Connecting back to culture

Family and forgiveness

The journey continues

The Dreaming of our Ancestors

Creating still

Our culture

Eternal love

True and strong

Flowing forever

Like the oceans

And the tides

A Deep Listening Circle is an opportunity to listen deeply and respectfully to stories and to the silences and spaces between them. Deep Listening involves a special kind of attention where we listen with our whole being, not just our ears. Deep Listening builds community and compassion for all living beings. In the words of Wamba Wamba artist and musician Uncle Ron Murray:

'For Aboriginal people Deep Listening comes naturally

It's about walking on the land

Softly, quietly

And listening to the stories around the campfire

Listening to the Elders

Listening to the teachers

Respect for Elders and respect for all people

And giving everyone the time

We've got to listen to the wind in the trees

Listen to the birds

It's the feeling of a gift

A gift always comes back'.

Source: Laura Brearley (Editor), 2010. *Gulpa Ngawal Indigenous Deep Listening*, RMIT University, Melbourne.

The focus of the Deep Listening Circle being held in association with Daniel's exhibition was a key question: 'What is calling through this art?' The Circle created time and space for participants to explore this idea through the sharing of stories, ideas, and the practice of deep and respectful listening.

Alongside Daniel Church, other Special Guests at the Deep Listening Circle included Uncle Steve Ulula Parker, artist and ceremony maker, Gunnai artist Aunty Elizabeth Dalton and musician Mark Finsterer. Uncle Steve and Mark are both Lead Artists for Phillip Island Conservation Society Eco Arts project 'For Our Future', supported by Bass Coast Shire Council. Laura Brearley, Coordinator of the 'For Our Future' project facilitated the Deep Listening Circle.