Bread of Bone





Bread of Bone

Fee-fi-fo-fum! I smell the blood of an English man: Be he alive, or be he dead, I'll grind his bones to make my bread.

Bread is one of life's simple pleasures. It is the most widely consumed food in the world, a staple food across cultures. At times it has been considered more important than meat, with wheat being so highly sought after. Bread can be a meal in and of itself or sit comfortably alongside a meal with a wedge of butter. It can be crunchy or soft, brown, seeded, sprouted or white. It can be fruity or cheesy, flat or puffy, dense or airy. Rarely, however, is bread made of the ground bones of disinterred humans. Such a macabre practice is rumoured to have occurred in the late 16th century France, when Paris was in the throes of starvation leading up to the French Revolution.¹

Desperate times call for desperate measures. The idea of grinding bones to make bread stems from a society in the grips of crisis. Cannibalism is a last resort when all other options are exhausted. There are many stories of cannibalism which present the fall of humanity into deprivation, into a serious existential, moral and corporeal crisis, crossing forbidden lines when human flesh becomes food.

In today's world, there are questions around the nature of the food that we eat, what it contains, how it is made and where it comes from. Food production, distribution and consumption are, in many ways, different to what they were centuries ago. Food also acts as a language of sorts, it signifies. It signifies how much, or little, effort and care the maker has taken, it signifies taste, class, attitudes and values, it signifies history and culture. Food can speak to the past as much as the future while locating you palpably in the present through your senses. Food is "...a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations and behaviour."² At the same time, it is essential matter for survival, it is the stuff consumed daily to sustain life and not everyone has access to enough of it.

Such ideas and more form the basis for artistic exploration in *Bread of Bone* as each of the artists offer a different perspective on the matter of food. **Ross Potter** questions the ethics and sustainability of our food choices as the bones of a ram and a whale are rendered large in graphite and saffron ink. These choices are considered towards justifying the food on the dinner plate to young inquisitive children why do we eat some animals and not others? Why is it acceptable in some cultures to eat foods we would not consume in our culture?

Similar concerns come into play with **Anna Louise Richardson's** drawings. A goat carcass represents respect for the animal in the family household, as both a source of nourishment and a previously living animal on the family farm. When talking to children where do we draw the line between pets, food and business when it comes to farm animals that are so easily befriended? In another drawing, three mice are rendered large. This playfully considers the everpresence of mice wherever there is food and the broader fictional meanings they suggest in myth and fairy tales.

Andy Quilty tackles the socio-economic realities of food consumption and the dual pleasures of both junk food and home-grown foods, whilst growing up in the outer suburbs. The conflicting signification of each form of food is brought into tight conversation,





as the values associated with junk food butt up against those associated with homegrown food – the superficial against the meaningful, the nutritionally devoid against the nourishing. Quilty's works compel us to consider why we eat the foods we do and how much that is contingent on our place in the world.

Suburban foraging is a casual pastime for the artist **Ric Spencer**, who localises food consumption in a very grass-roots way – from his own back yard to the local neighbourhood. In this artwork, Spencer prioritises local foods against a background of concerns of food scarcity during a pandemic and in a complex world of mass-consumption, mass-production and overly processed foods. This is a nod to a simpler way of being and becoming when approaching food consumption.

Erin Coates has put something different on the table, about digestive biology, future foods and imaginary scenarios. Using collage, graphite and the aesthetics of body horror, Coates considers the human impacts on the animal world and the foods we might consume in the future. Complex collages emerge as strange life cycles and bizarre ecosystems. Another work presents an imagined underwater dinner where different sea lifeforms occupy dinnerware and takeaway containers. This is a personal reflection regarding the consumption of seafood when confronted by recent research into the intelligence of underwater lifeforms compounded with Coates' own interactions with them.

All these thoughts about food and art are not separate from the actual making and sharing of food. Food is often linked to memory and nostalgia; certain kinds of food and recipes are passed down and shared through generations. Food is a sensorial way of grounding us within the world, within a culture and a family. To this end, each of the artists have shared a family recipe within this catalogue.

In the history of art more generally, art and food have a long association. The representation of food has been a subject of interest for still life, portraiture, depictions of feasts and domestic life. Whenever food is represented, it speaks volumes about the cultural and societal context from which it emerges. In current times it is apparent that there are many concerns about the ethics and politics of food; with the rise of biotechnologies, food scarcity, lack of species diversity and increasing intervention into the foods that appear on supermarket shelves. We are not at the point of desperation of grinding bones to make bread, but, as these artists demonstrate, many other pressures compel us to re-think the foods that we eat.

- 1. As chronicled by Pierre de L'Estoile, clerk-in-chief of the French parliament.
- Barthes Roland (1961), "Pour une psychosociologie de l'alimentation contemporaine", Annales ESC, vol. XVI, no. 5, pp. 977-986; Eng. trans. "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption", in C. Counihan & P. Van Esterik (eds.), Food and Culture: A Reader, New York and London, Routledge, 1997, p.22

Erin Coates

Erin Coates is an artist and filmmaker living in Boorloo Perth, who creates drawings, sculptures and short films. Her practice draws from her background as a climber and freediver as well as her interests in biology and body horror. Her process regularly involves physical interactions with submerged, enclosed or hard-to-access terrestrial spaces. The works that are produced examine our relationships with the natural world, our physical thresholds and the nature of transformed bodies – both human and non-human.

About the works

Food Chains

Food Chains explores digestive biology and the living biome within human bodies to speculate on our consumption of protein in the future. The works employ body horror and dark humour to examine our shifting cultural constructs around food and in particular our ever-evolving relationship with the animal world. Anthropogenic impacts on the animal kingdom from feeding the human population ripple far beyond farming practices. Food Chains considers how broader ecosystems are and may become a part of sourcing protein for human consumption in the future. When I began drawing graphite onto these giclee prints, I realised that it creates a ghostly quality on the paper. I have worked with this inherent image quality to create a deliberately ambiguous physiology in the digestive organs. At times, the human merges with an unrecognisable biology and there is a sense of unnatural growth and metamorphosis. Bulging sacs, sinuous tubes and orifices bring a transgressive bodily aesthetic to the interspecies landscape of flesh and it is uncertain where the human begins and ends.

Coates holds a Master of Fine Arts from the University of British Columbia, Canada and has shown in exhibitions in Australia and abroad as well as in international film festivals. Coates was commissioned to make new work for *rīvus: the 23rd Biennale of Sydney* in 2022 and the Art Gallery of Western Australia presented a solo survey of her screen-based works in 2021. Her artwork is held in state and private collections, including the Art Gallery of Western Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, Wesfarmers Collections, Janet Holmes à Court Collection and the Murdoch University Art Collection. Erin Coates is represented by Moore Contemporary.



Flooded Dinner

Flooded Dinner is a continuation of my recent drawing practice, which has used intense graphite shading and chiaroscuro technique to generate imagined scenes on the deep-sea floor. In *Flooded* Dinner a lavish meal takes place in the unlit depths of the ocean, or perhaps on land where the sea-level has risen. There is no eating and instead dinnerware and plastic takeaway containers are habitats for cephalopods and a substrate for sponges. The initial impetus for this drawing was to consider my conflicted relationship with seafood, based on my notions of animal intelligence. I often interact with octopuses when I'm freediving and I recognise their curiosity and almost preternatural intelligence, so as a result I no longer eat them. Recent studies have begun to also understand intelligence within fish species, including complex social structures, intergenerational learning and even the ability to dream. Yet there is something about cephalopod behaviour that for many of us places octopus within the uncanny valley and off the plate.





Anna Louise Richardson

Anna Louise Richardson is an Australian artist living and working on Whadjuk Nyoongar Boodja in the Peel Region. Richardson's practice centres around drawing, rendering realistic scenes that speak strongly to her experience of rural life as a member of a multigenerational farming family. Richardson's practice explores parenthood, familial relationship, intergenerational exchange, settler identity, relationship to place as well as regionally specific mythologies. Richardson's work offers audiences a direct, and sometimes harsh realism about life and death, with animals employed as the protagonist of these stories. Richardson is working toward a solo exhibition cocommissioned by Wagga Wagga Art Gallery, NSW and The Condensery, QLD and touring nationally with Museums and Galleries of New South Wales. She has had solo presentations at Maitland Regional Art Gallery, NSW and Galerie pompom, NSW and recently exhibited with Abdul-Rahman Abdullah in 'Still Watching' at Fremantle Arts Centre in 2022. She was finalist in the 2020 Ramsay Art Prize at the Art Gallery of South Australia and has been a practising artist since graduating with a BA from Curtin University in 2013. Alongside her art practice Anna also contracts as an independent curator working with Australian art institutions, festivals and organisations.



About the works

Little Goat

My drawings explore the role of animals in our lives: as food, as business, as part of the environment and as pets. Depicting a butchered goat this work explores the personal rules we set around what animals we raise and choose to eat on the farm. For me *Little Goat* is a celebration of the intimate spectacle of death and an honouring of the animal that has become my daughter's favourite meat.

Three Little Mice

To me mice represent ideas of multiplicity when it comes to food. They also signal food security and seasonality. Mice are never alone and we are never far from a mouse either. They live in our compost bins and we have to protect our food from the mice when they move into the house in the cool of autumn. There are also things about mice and children that are inextricably linked: Fairy tales, crumbs, squeaking and the ability to find all the food in the house. Mice stand in as archetypal figures when I think about my relationship with food and how complex, nuanced, and chaotic it is, but also how inevitable the growing, precuring, preparing, storing, and eating of food is; that endless repetition. No matter what mice seem to find their way in.





Ric Spencer

Ric Spencer is an artist and writer living and working on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja in Coolbellup, Western Australia. From 2011 to 2020 he was the curator at Fremantle Arts Centre and concurrently in 2019/20 was acting chief curator at the Art Gallery of WA. He has been involved in numerous art activities as a curator, writer and artist; has exhibited in Australia, Asia and the UK and had his work published in Australian, UK and American art journals. From 2004 to 2010 he wrote art criticism for *The West Australian* newspaper and from 2000 to 2010 he lectured at Curtin University where he holds a Doctor of Creative Arts.

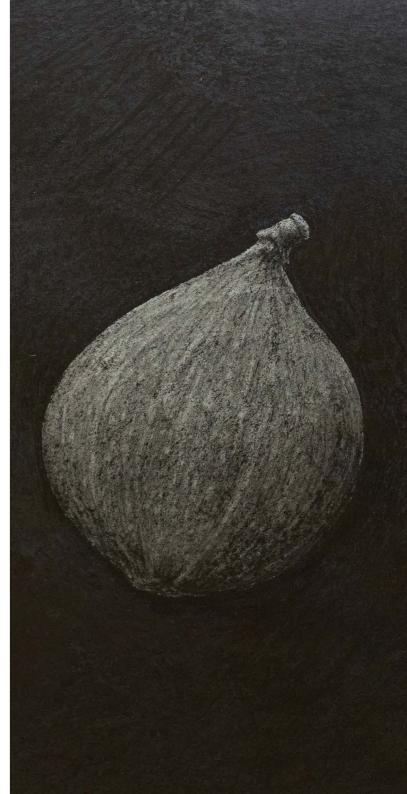
About the work

Suburban foraging

This series of pencil drawings looks at food as a local phenomenon. The food is sourced from our garden or foraged on my walks around our neighbourhood and then drawn in the studio I built in our backyard. Within a world of myriad concerns, what's on the shop shelves and the provision of food becomes pivotal in our minds. Over the last couple of years I have had more time to spend at home, this immersion in my local area and the studio has allowed me the space to reflect on the act of becoming; the speed at which things are made and the abstraction and contortion of time that a life of consumption prioritizes. Through this time the inherent connection of home and the life within and around it has come to the forefront of my life and my drawing. The food, the drawings that depict them and the place these drawings are being made are all encased in a slow and deliberately conscious act of becoming.







Ross Potter

Ross Potter is a Kamilaroi man living and working full time as an Artist on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja, Fremantle. He works with graphite and paper to produce highly detailed representations of his subjects. Through magnifying microscopic features, Potter brings the abstractions of reality to our attention, while telling compelling stories of everyday life. Well-known works include the life-size sketch of Perth Zoo's elephant Tricia for Fremantle Arts Centre's Animaze: Amazing Animals for Kids and WHALE at High Tide 17 Fremantle Biennale on display at Boola Bardip WA Museum. Potter has been awarded many residencies across Western Australia including; Cossack 2019, Vasse Felix 2020,

About the works

Ram Skull and Whale Bone

I wanted to highlight the idea of shock over what 'other' cultures eat. Animals that we deem forbidden and would never dream of eating, when food sources vary so much around the world and we are often quick to judge these differences. While not wanting to see that whale be hunted to extinction, I also feel our very lifestyles are having a similar effect, leading to the destruction of habitat for other animals... eventually leading to their extinction all the same. Is this hypocritical to be concerned about someone eating whale, when in my own backyard there are animal species on the brink of life today, that my future Grandchildren may never see?

This series was created with an extreme dark graphite pencil to portray an intensity to the subject and they are garnished with a Saffron ink spray. Using this very rare ink, I wanted to add a splash of colour to make this gritty subject more palatable

Bug

As a young man in my 20s living in Far North Queensland, I found myself surrounded by seafood. Between spending time with my Father, who was an extremely keen fisherman and befriending a team of chefs where I worked at a local resort, I was faced with a bounty of fresh seafood everywhere I went. The Moreton Bay Bug was the last seafood dish that I would prepare at work as a cook, as shortly after, upon moving away from the Northern Tropics to head back to city life in Brisbane, I developed a sudden distaste for seafood. To this day I still find it very hard to eat. I'm not sure if it's the lack of fresh seafood available, the ideas of unsustainable fishing practices or whether I am just getting soft in my old age.

Fremantle Arts Centre 2021, Hale School 2021 and

most recently Element 27 Subiaco in 2022.







Andy Quilty

Andy Quilty is a multidisciplinary artist engaged with material and psychological expressions, markings and gestures in low-middle-income Australian outer suburbia. His work identifies the oral, visual, and material languages these forms contain as inventive expressions of outer suburban experience, and real and faux cultural signifiers of class mobility and immobility, social and political flux, nostalgia, ritual, and territorial identity.

Quilty is a Lecturer in Fine Arts at the University of Western Australia and works across the state facilitating creative development workshops in Aboriginal art centres, schools, non-profits, prisons, and community groups. He is the artist patron for the Military Art program Australia, an art therapy program for military veterans and is on the Cultural Development and the Arts Advisory panel for the City of Rockingham.

About the works

Growing up in a family of nine, meals were dictated by the necessities of feeding many mouths on one income. This meant powdered milk and Black and Gold brand groceries, but also an 'abundance' as Dad would say, of homegrown veggies and seafood caught spearfishing. Around the time I started high school Mum went back to work teaching. With both parents working full time there was a noted improvement in the treats we got at home, Pop Tarts, Viennetta, Nutella, and junk food Friday dinners, it was awesome. In high school, we got after-school jobs at Kmart and McDonald's allowing the freedom to buy and eat what we wanted which of course meant more junk food.

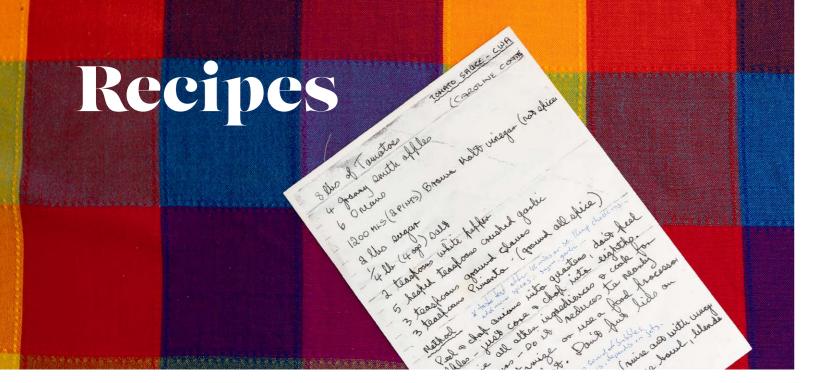
I have an affection for both homegrown and junk foods. Mum passed down a love of veggie gardening from her dad and living in the outer suburbs fostered my affection for junk food. This affection is rooted in memory; skateboarding the painted curb outside Red Rooster and hitting the Maccas opposite for lunch, strange encounters working as a delivery driver at Pizza Hut, salivating over Hungry Jacks TV ads during footy telecasts, and eating chip'n'gravy rolls from the lunch bar while labouring in a surfboard factory. At home, I think of picking gooseberries and sweetcorn in the veggie garden, eating abalone and crabs caught by dad and my brothers, and sneaking the shit-tasting plain roasted veggies like whole squash and zucchini into the scrap bucket, so we wouldn't miss out on dessert.

The different ways drawings can be made and function parallel the varied forms of labour, taste, preparation, and purpose that homegrown and junk foods present. The works I've made here range from carefully planned and precise executions to frenetically improvised collections of images and marks. The way I draw is not unlike the way I garden, shop and eat, showing the way I've grown up, and the way I carry my childhood with me, whether I am mowing down a chip'n'gravy roll, meditatively tending to the veggie patch, or making a picture.













Erin Coates

I have a strange relationship with cooking at the moment. My husband died last year and since then cooking and eating has become somewhat perfunctory. Ikea frozen meatballs, boiled eggs and roughly cut vegetables are where it's at for me right now. I am trying to slowly find my way back to cooking and recently my Mum and I made a big batch of tomato sauce from her family recipe. She grew up on a farm near Corrigin and her mother used to make this too, from an old, adapted Country Women's Association recipe. It felt good to know that I will keep this little tradition going, and I have also just started growing my own tomatoes.

Tomato Sauce C.W.A. (Carolíne Coates)

- 8 lbs of Tomatoes
- 4 Granny Smith apples
- 6 Oníons
- 1200mls (2 pínts) brown malt vínegar (no spíces)
- 2 lbs sugar
- 1/4 lb (402s) salt
- 2 teaspoons white pepper
- 5 heaped teaspoons crushed garlic
- з teaspoons ground cloves
- з teaspoons Pímenta (ground allspíce)

*Taste test after 40 minutes or so. Keep checking, add more spices, sugar, garlic.

Method

Peel & chop an onion into quarters, don't peel apples
just core & chop into eighths. Combine all other
ingredients & cook for 3-4 hours - so it reduces to
nearly half.* Vitamise or use food processor. Bottle
while hot. Don't put lids on until cool.

*Ploppins sound of bubbles, 2-4 hours, depends on jets.

items needed

 8-10 medium sized bottles (rinse out with vinegar), funnel, very large pot, large bowl, blender, wooden spoon, jug.







Anna Richardson

This is my version of a Women's Weekly classic, it is my go-to recipe when you need to "bring a plate" and can be made last minute in the morning while getting ready for school. It is endlessly adaptable and can be done with any veg combos (carrot, broccoli, cauliflower, sweet potato, etc) even with no zucchini at all! Abdul-Rahman calls it egg cake. The following recipe is my efficiency version. I promise you can have it prepped in 10mins and cooked in 30mins.

Zucchíní Slíce

- 1-2 zucchinis depending on how big (roughly 350g needed)
- 1 onion or 1/2 fennel, diced or grated (I don't eat onion)
- з rashers bacon, díced
- 1 cup grated cheese
- 1 cup self-raising flour
- 1/3 cup oíl
- 5 eggs

Turn on oven to 200 degrees fast heat up setting if that's an option for you. Grate cheese, zucchini, and onion/fennel in that order into a large bowl. Use a 1/3 cup measure to add the flour, then add oil and tip the dregs of oil from the cup into your tin (I use a square Pyrex dish but you can use any baking dish about 20 x 20cm volume) then smoosh it around with your hand to grease. Chop bacon and add to bowl, crack in whole eggs and salt/pepper if you like. Mix well. Pour into tin and bake for 30 mins. Wash hands/wash up. Go about your morning. The slice is done when nicely browned and skewer inserted into centre comes out clean.

Can be eaten warm or cold. We like it with sweet chilli sauce, plain yoghurt and a salad or raínbow veggie plate.







Ric Spencer

The green smoothie has been a part of our family's nourishment for over 15 years, for me it provides a welcoming sense of familiarity, continuity and wellbeing.

Elson-Spencer Green Smoothie Recipe

- Large quantity of greens
- e.g kale, parsley, mint, basil, dandelion leaf, spinach, lettuce, any edible weeds
- 1ltr of favourite nut milk
- Equal quantity of fruit to greens
- e.g banana, berríes, mango, peach, etc...

Optional extras

- 1tbsp supergreen powder, i.e. chorella, spirulina, wheatgrass
- 1tbsp cocoa powder

Squeeze of lemon, drizzle of honey to taste, add water for desired consistency and blend in high speed blender

Chew whilst drinking and feel the love.







Ross Potter

Shortly after meeting Ellen, I would hear stories of her Great Grandmother, Nanny Jo. Nanny Jo was a humble painter and quite the cook. As I got to know the family a little more, I would see her artwork scattered though out everyone's houses. Then at Christmas Eve the fruit mince pie baking would begin, a tradition that was handed down from Nanny Jo and baked every year with Ellen, her mother Deb and grandmother Sue. It is a beautiful thing to watch them all baking away on the hot summers day getting ready for the next days feast. And now extremely proud to see my own children taking part in this beautiful tradition

Although I had never had the chance to meet Nanny Jo, I feel I have been able to get to know her on some level though her cooking and art. It is very warming to feel that we can all stay connected to her through these beautiful traditions.

Mince Pies

Double pastry (Nanny Jo's Apple Pie) Makes 3 dozen With 2 jars of fruit mince plus 1 small tin of apple (or slightly less)

Apple Pie (Nanny Jo Style)

Pastry

- 1.5 cups plain flour
- ¹/₂ cup cornflour
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- Pínch of salt
- 5g margaríne
- ¹/₂ cup castor sugar
- 1 tablespoon iced water

<u>Filling</u> (for Apple pie, or for Mince Pies see above)

- 6 large Granny Smith apples
- з descent spoons sugar

Either slice apples very thinly or cook apple pieces slightly first

Method

Sift together flour, cornflour, sugar, baking powder and salt, rub in marg until mixture resembles bread crumbs, beat egg yolk well with iced water, sprinkle over mixture and mix lightly, add a little water if necessary. Knead gently and chill for an hour.

Roll out 1/2 pastry to fit a 9" greased pie plate, fill with mound of apples and sugar, brush edges with egg white and water, rollout top, press edges together, brush top with egg white, make slit in centre.

Bake in moderately hot oven 190 degrees for 15 minutes, lower heat to 160 degrees for a further 30 – 40 minutes.







Andy Quilty

Nan's Golden Syrup Pudding was my favourite growing up, it was crispy on the outside, fluffy inside and super sweet. Mum cooked it for our family of nine because in her words "it was cheap and filling while seeming to be special."

When mum was a kid Nan cooked on a wood-fired stove, "It took a lot of skill to have the oven at the right temperature for baking cakes, scones, puddings etc. Nan would put her hand in the oven and hold it there, not touching anything of course, and guess from the feel of the heat. In winter we always had wet shoes from walking home from school. After dinner when the fuel stove was allowed to die down Nan would open the oven door and put our school shoes in, stuffed with newspaper, to dry out for the next day at school."

Nan's Golden Syrup Pudding

Ingredients

- Puddíng míx
- 1 cup self-raising flour
- ³/4 cup sugar
- − ½ cup mílk
- 55g butter
- Pínch of salt

·Sift the sugar, self-raising flour and salt into a deep ovenproof dish.

Heat the butter and milk together until melted, add to the dry mix in the oven-proof dish and combine well.

Sauce míx

- 2 Tbsp golden syrup
- 1 1/2 cups hot water
- зод butter

•Heat the golden syrup, hot water and butter together until melted. Pour over the top of pudding mix in the oven-proof dish.

- ·Bake in a moderate oven for 30 to 40 minutes.
- ·Serve with vanilla ice cream.



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Image credits

Cover image: Ross Potter, *Ram Skull* (detail), 2023 p.2: Erin Coates, *Food Chain* (detail), 2023 p.2: Ric Spencer, *Suburban Foraging* (detail), 2023 p.4: Erin Coates, *Heart Foods* (detail), 2023 p.5: Anna Louise Richardson, *Three Little Mice (Spying, Sneaking, Hiding)*, 2023 p.6: Ric Spencer, *Suburban Foraging* (detail), 2023 p.7: Ross Potter, *Ram Skull* (detail), 2023 p.8: Andy Quilty, *Chippy shop 15 times (Brett Heady)* (detail), 2023 P.14: Erin Coates, *Brain Foods* (detail in studio), 2023

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Bread of Bone

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Exhibition Curator: Ellen McCarthy Coordinating Curator: Laetitia Wilson Catalogue Design: Clare McFarlane

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Ngala kaaditj Noongar moort keyen kaadak nidja boodja. We acknowledge the Noongar people as the original custodians of this land.









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