

INSIDE OUT

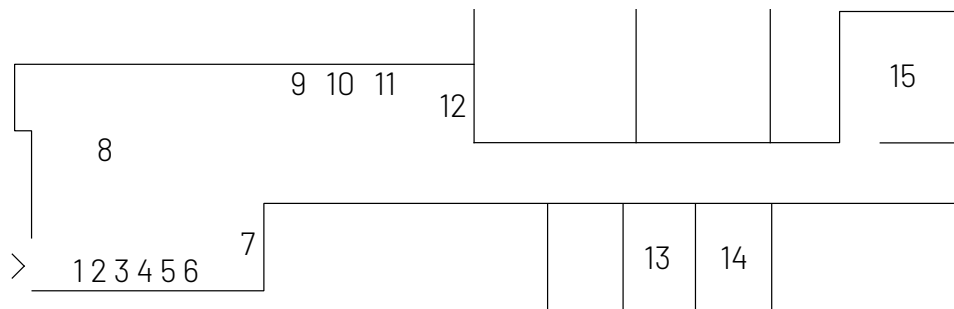
Curtis Taylor

For this invitational exhibition, Martu artist Curtis Taylor interrogates the physical and spiritual dislocation of Aboriginal people inside and outside bounds of the institution of Heathcote Hospital and the cultural deprivation they experienced in this place.

Goolugatup Heathcote has layered and deeply conflicting histories that reflect the inner conflict doubtlessly felt by generations of Aboriginal people brought to site's historical Hospital from across Western Australia for treatment of ailments including mental illness, substance addiction, and disorderly behaviour.

Taylor's photographs, film, bark paintings and installations echo the physical space, stories and experiences he has researched and imagined during his time in residence. He urges us to interrogate the impact of receiving care and treatment away from Country and the necessity but inevitable futility of this approach to wellness for Aboriginal people.

Curtis Taylor presents *Inside Out* as part of TILT, an annual residency and exhibition program responding to the history and landscape of Goolugatup Heathcote.



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| 1 <i>Gitgi (Spear)</i> , 2021, acrylic on paperbark. 400 | 10 <i>Patient 1</i> , 2021, archival inkjet print on Canson Rag Photographique 310gsm, edition of 5. 800 |
| 2 <i>Untitled</i> , 2021, acrylic on paperbark. 400 | 11 <i>Pressure</i> , 2021, archival inkjet print on Canson Rag Photographique 310gsm, edition of 5. 800 |
| 3 <i>Hunting Ground</i> , 2021, acrylic on paperbark. 400 | 12 <i>Patient 2</i> , 2021, archival inkjet print on Canson Rag Photographique 310gsm, edition of 5. 800 |
| 4 <i>Throw Net</i> , 2021, acrylic on paperbark. 400 | 13 <i>Wirrilyi (long way from its natural place)</i> , 2019-21, human placenta, resin, sand. NFS |
| 5 <i>Rum</i> , 2021, acrylic on paperbark. 400 | 14 <i>Spirit Sick</i> , 2021, Installation, cast iron bed frame, paperbark, strobe light, sound. POA |
| 6 <i>Plains</i> , 2021, acrylic on paperbark. 400 | 15 <i>Kunta (Shame)</i> , 2021, digital video, sound, music with permission of Anohni, edition of 3 + AP. 5,500 |
| 7 Historic local paperbarks, courtesy of the City of Melville Museum Collection. | |
| 8 <i>Shanty</i> , 2021, installation, local sand, corrugated iron, wire, rope, dehydrated fish bones and fishing line. NFS | |
| 9 <i>Untitled</i> , 2021, archival inkjet print on Canson Rag Photographique 310gsm, edition of 5. 800 | |

Goolugatup Heathcote is 'the place of children' for the local Beeliar Noongar people. It housed Heathcote Hospital (1920s to 1990s) and has a long history (pre- and post-invasion) as a site for recreation and pleasure. It is, ultimately, a site of deeply conflicting histories, histories manifested by inner conflict doubtlessly felt by generations of Aboriginal people brought to Heathcote Hospital from across Western Australia for treatment of ailments including mental illness, substance addiction, and disorderly behaviour.

For this invitational exhibition, Martu artist Curtis Taylor interrogates the physical and spiritual dislocation of Aboriginal people inside and outside bounds of the institution of Heathcote Hospital and the cultural deprivation they experienced in this place.

Taylor has worked with film and multimedia in the first decade of his career to tell the stories of his community in Martu Wangka, as well as offer timely, often prescient, narratives of contemporary identity. For *Inside Out*, his second solo exhibition, Taylor has undertaken site specific work for the first time.

Early in his residency Taylor stated, 'I have given a lot of thought to what Heathcote was, and what it is today, for a lot of different people. Even for people who live in this area or families of patients or people who have gone through Heathcote. I don't have a cultural attachment to the site; I am working with what I see around the area.'

There is very little reporting on Aboriginal people in mental institutions in Western Australia. There are no recorded figures on the number of Aboriginal people admitted to Heathcote. However, the recorded place of origin of most Aboriginal admissions was consistently outside the metropolitan area, and, in most cases, from the far north at least 1000 kilometres away.

The tensions between the geographically centralised systems of western medicine and the important role that connection to Country and proximity to family play in the role of healing and wellbeing for Aboriginal people can be particularly felt in this place, according to Taylor. 'It is still happening today, with people coming from regional areas into major centres to receive special care, treatment or operations. A lot of people feel sicker because they are not back in their home Country getting that kind of service. Their Country would make them feel better.'

In the 1960s, an unidentified Aboriginal man was known for painting landscapes and hunting scenes at Goolugatup on paperbark gathered from surrounding trees. He would walk from door to door selling his wares for two dollars. His name and identity are unknown, though we could imagine that he was perhaps living on site in a temporary shack on the waters' edge while he waited for a loved one receiving treatment in hospital before taking them back home to their Country.

Taylor has rehearsed and echoed this artistic gesture 60 years later—gathering bark from the site and painting it with images that asks questions of this space, its buildings, and its memories. Who was here? What happened to them? How did the people feel?

In his film and photographic work for *Inside Out* Taylor explores the inner turmoil experienced by an imagined patient at Heathcote Hospital. He projects himself into their inner world by calling on his own battles with alcohol and addiction. The film depicts the endless binding and unbinding of an unblemished body with white bandages. Heads are cradled in hands. A wine bottle nestled amongst paperbark is wrapped with the same bandage. The 'treatment' itself imposes isolation, deprivation and shame on Taylor's body. It considers the way in which people with illnesses related to their mental state, including addiction, are often treated as having flaws of the whole character. This kind of treatment is futile at best, but more problematically, it amplifies suffering.

Taylor's photographic works are inspired by the work of Polish dystopian surrealist artist Zdzisław Beksiński who, like Taylor, was interested in psychological self-portraiture. His post-World War II photographs of asylums during the Soviet occupation of Poland are some of his most aesthetically simple works. The abject horror in his photographs lies in the unseeable mental illnesses and the ways in which they are treated. Obscured, disrupted, and compartmentalised, Taylor's photographs give us sense of the abstract and seemingly senseless concept of hospital treatment for Aboriginal people seeking mental wellbeing.

Inside Out brings Taylor's signature talent for physically and performatively embodying narratives to depict the dislocation, deprivation and disillusionment of Aboriginal people who interacted with Goolugatup and Heathcote Hospital. He urges us to interrogate what it means to receive care and treatment away from Country and the necessity but inevitable failure of this approach to wellness for Aboriginal people.