

Twelve Canoes

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Two years after the release of Ten Canoes (www.tencanoes.com.au/tencanoes/ and see our previous [post](#) on material world), a collaboration between Yolngu living near Arafura swamp in Arnhem land and the film maker Rolf de Heer, a website has been launched that continues that dialogue: <http://www.12canoes.com.au>

The websites features several short films narrated in both English and Yolngu by community members about a range of topics - creation, the swamp, language, kinship, seasons, first white men, ceremony, our ancestors, thompson time, nowadays, plants and animals and the macassans. Each film begins with a bark painting and then moves into a montage of images of the Arafura landscape, and in some cases historic photographs and prints.

Alongside these films the website also has three galleries: music, people and place, and art. The music gallery features several mpegs of short performances. While people and place is a selection of images (which strangely are not labeled as to who, what or where). The anonymity of these images aside they help create a fuller perspective of what life is like in the community. Art is a gallery of bark and canvas paintings, each of which possess a link to a short story about the image and a brief bio of the artist. Finally a section entitled 'About us' possess four links to 'where in the world' (a map with link to google earth), 'study guide' (still to be completed), 'meanings' (which explores terms used throughout the site) and 'the people' (which is a brief commentary on the community involved). The website is a wonderful example of what can be done with the web and how to do so with indigenous voices and shaped by their concerns.

A short article in the Sydney Morning Herald(September 8, 2008) by Garry Maddox comments further on the project:

www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/07/1220725855307.html

The Twelve Canoes sites is usefully complemented by a site developed with the Yolngu at Yirrkala and the Yuin people of the south coast (who have experienced two centuries of colonialism) which similarly looks at the materialisation of indigenous knowledge: <http://livingknowledge.anu.edu.au/> . This site is part of a three year Australian Research Council (ARC) research project Indigenous knowledge and Western science pedagogy: a comparative approach, and was developed as an education resource by for the Australian National Maritime Museum and the New South Wales education department by academics at the Australian National University (notably Pip Deveson, Katie Hayne, Howard Morphy, Daphne Nas) the site has showcases both indigenous narratives but also presents a range of associated curriculum materials. After selecting either the Yolngu or the Yuin people, one is able to explore a selection of links. For example under the Yuin section, selecting Koori connections takes one to a text explaining the Yuin's wider connections along with a talking head video of people speaking about their kinship ties. The section 'Many Stories' introduces the various narrators for the Yuin again through video. These people are returned to throughout the site. 'Continuity and change' explores among other things shifts in art production involving shells. While the videos are not dynamic, a transcript is also provided.

The other main sections of the Yuin section are: Knowing land and sea; Knowledge through art; Sustaining culture. Each of these sections are further broken down into other subheadings and videos used to help present information along with useful external links. 'Knowledge through art' similarly highlights different paintings which are then broken down into relevant sections and the corresponding landscape feature to which a painting's element relates is discussed. The Yolngu portion of the site follows a similar logic but is more extensive in scope. The section entitled 'Bark Painting' is particularly interesting.

The two websites are wonderful examples of what can be done with the web and how to do so with indigenous voices and in a manner shaped by their concerns.