

Unceded Seeded (Ngampa)

Brad Darkson in consultation
with Aunty Lynette Crocker

The Guildhouse Voice of the Artist commission
Supported by City of Adelaide



Ngampa (Kurna word for Yam Daisy, *Microseris walteri*) is a perennial root vegetable, high in starch, and a staple food source for Kurna. In appearance it is similar to the ubiquitous dandelion, with green leaves at the base of the stem and a bright yellow flower in Spring. When eaten raw it has a sweet coconut flavour and when cooked is more similar to potato. It can be made into flour and used to bake cakes and bread.

The Kurna way to cultivate is through digging up the smaller tubers leaving the large ones to continue into the next season, with the digging promoting further spread and growth. Uncle Bruce Pascoe highlights the early colonial records of the cultivation of murnong (Woiwurrung language for ngampa) in his book *Dark Emu* and the significance that this documentation has in dispelling the hunter-gatherer myth that formed the backbone of *terra nullius*. These records of cultivation are another tool that can help establish widespread understanding of First Nations methods of agriculture and land custodianship.

In his book *Call of the Reed Warbler*, Charles Massy talks about giving the land the chance to heal through regenerative agricultural practices. These methods encourage the germination of native Australian

seeds that have been dormant beneath the surface since traditional colonial farming practices took over. The native plants that grow then stabilise the soil, increasing water retention, diversifying microbiota and improving the health of the land. Ngampa used to be everywhere around the Tarntanya region prior to the colonial establishment of Adelaide, but overgrazing by horses and livestock wiped out the foliage and flowers, leaving the tubers beneath the surface waiting for the chance to regrow.

Unceded Seeded (Ngampa) is a work that references the land on which the artwork is installed. It acknowledges the Kurna culture that has always existed within the land, and it highlights the need for everyone to walk together and work together in healing Country. This is not just a job for First Nations people, and everyone that resides on Kurna land can celebrate and partake in practicing Kurna culture. Everyone can feel a sense of custodianship for, and kinship with, the land. The use of neon in this instance acts as a beacon of truth, and in homage to the classic neon motel sign, the red and green allude to the aesthetic of 'No Vacancy'.

We thank Steve Hoepfner from Wagtail Farm for the Ngampa.





Brad Darkson is a South Australian visual artist currently working across various media including carving, sound, sculpture, multimedia installation, and painting. Darkson's practice is regularly focused on site specific works, and connections between contemporary and traditional cultural practice, language and lore. His current research interests include hostile architecture, bureaucracy, seaweed, and the neo-capitalist hellhole we're all forced to exist within.

Conceptually Darkson's work is often informed by his First Nations and Anglo Australian heritage. Brad's mob on his Dad's side is the Chester family, with lineages to Narungga and many other Nations in South Australia from Ngarrindjeri to Far West Coast. On his Mum's side he's from the Colley and Ball convict and settler migrant families, both arriving in 1839 aboard the Duchess of Northumberland.

Aunty Lynette Crocker is a Ngangki Burka, Senior Kaurna Woman, and has served on a wide range of community and local government committees for Aboriginal affairs. She worked in Aboriginal Education and has chaired the National Aboriginal Education Committee (NAEC).

Her main passion is around community education and developing strategic and operational plans around cultural heritage management.

In 2015 he completed a BFA at the University of South Australia and in 2017 he completed an MFAD at the University of Tasmania.

Selected solo and group exhibitions include *Make Yourself Comfortable / Post Office Projects 2022*, *Neoteric 2022*, *Experimenta Life Forms* (international triennial of media art) touring 2021 – 2024; *Adelaide//International* Samstag Museum 2020; *International Symposium on Electronic Art* (South Korea) 2019; *VIETNAM – ONE IN, ALL IN* (Country Arts SA national exhibition) touring 2019 – 2021; *The Return* Dark Mofo 2018; *LOSS. GAIN. REVERB. DELAY. Vitalstatistix* 2017.

She continues to develop pathways for students through the elders group at UniSA and encourages all people to look at 'two-way education' - intercultural understanding and Aboriginal way of learning, doing, thinking.

She has advised around land management and coastal regeneration, and has helped develop Reconciliation Action Plans for the Campbelltown, Adelaide, and Marion City Councils.