

The Kondoli Dreaming Story

April Rigney

'The Kondoli Dreaming Story' is the name of my artwork. It is a Ngarrindjeri dreaming story based in Victor Harbor about the Ngarrindjeri and Ramindjeri people. The Kondoli Dreaming story is about when the Ramindjeri people has no fire to dance at night, so they had to dance in the daytime. Their feet made the steep hills and valleys of Muthabaringa (Hindmarsh Valley). This is shown in the green 'U' shape with various green hues creating hills/valleys. The days were very hot and the sweat from the dancers pooled in the valleys creating the rivers and the creeks. I used various blue hues all around the artwork representing the creeks and a dark blue behind the whale creating the river. The Ramindjeri people wanted fire so they could dance at night but the only person with fire was Kondoli the Whale Man. The fire was represented in my artwork through red and orange hues for example through the linework behind the stingray. Two people were formed to kill Kondoli, this was Kuratji (The Tommy Ruff Man) and Kribali (The Mullet Man). These animals were represented in the 'E' shapes shown throughout my painting. They invited Kondoli to a dance ceremony. When Kondoli danced, sparks flew from his body and flames from his feet. Everyone was amazed when they saw flames. Ngarankani (The Shark Man), Mulori (Stingray Man), and Pungari (Seal Man) asked Kondoli over to dance. While Kondoli was dancing, he had his back turned and Kribalu and Ritjuruki readied their spears. The spears lodged deep into the neck of Kondoli. Flames shot out from the spear wound. Kondoli dived into the sea to put out the fire and was instantly transformed into a whale. The spears and Ramindjeri people have been painted black to stand out within all the colours. Ngarankani, Mulori, and Pungari all followed, turning into their totems, Shark, Stingray, and Seal. Kondoli came out of the sea pultang (Victor Harbor) to rest at Hindmarsh River to this day the whale continues to spout water from its back.

I decided to create a body of work based on several paintings focusing around a dreaming story as I wanted to develop my own knowledge about Ngarrindjeri culture and develop my skills in Ngarrindjeri art. I have gone down to Victor Harbor and learnt about the Kondoli Dreaming story from Cedric Varcoe who is a Ngarrindjeri Elder. Taking inspiration from the story Cedric told me, I was inspired me to create my own artwork the way I interpret the story. This allows me to share the story to Non-Indigenous Australians and other Indigenous Australians about the Kondoli Dreaming and how it's an important dreaming story for the Ngarrindjeri people. It is important for Elders to teach the younger generation about the dreaming stories so they can keep being passed down to the generations to come. Another reason why I chose to paint about the 'Kondoli Dreaming story is because I want to share my culture in schools, to my friends and anyone that wants to learn. It's not just about self-developing and learning but also sharing cultural knowledge so it doesn't get lost along generations through artwork. My biggest inspiration was taken from Cedric Varcoe who is a Ngarrindjeri and Narungga artist from Victor Harbor. He uses traditional Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal art which is linework. I wanted to focus on linework, developing my own skills in traditional Ngarrindjeri art. This was successful as I have developed my skills in linework which was key focus in creating my collection of artworks. I used various warm, cool, vibrant, and bright colour tones throughout my collection. My idea to utilise animals over the top of the linework background was influenced by Rebecca Reid who is a Wirudji Artist in Australia and paints wildlife animals with Aboriginal art in the background.

It is critical to understand the difference of painting on fabric and canvas as textile art is a trending art form today and I wanted to my dream story to be showcased in different art forms. I created A4 canvases for my Jumper, T-shirt, Tote Bag and Tea Towel as I wanted to showcase that art and stories can be created in different medium forms not just the traditional canvas. I had created these art pieces by digitally scanning the canvas painting, printing the picture on the fabric, and then using textile medium to mix with acrylic paint to paint the extra detail on the T-shirt, Jumper and Tote Bag. The tea towel has been hand painted to showcase that tea towels can be used as a canvas which Vincent Van Gogh has used this technique in his artwork. The process went smoothly but I did encounter some challenges. For my original designs I wanted to do black jumpers and black t-shirts but due to the printer only printing on light material I had to change my idea and use white and grey instead. Overall, it was still a success as I like how the bright colours look on a grey jumper. Throughout this art piece, I have both further my techniques in detailing. Such as in the whale, seal, shark, and stingray; trying to make all animals realistic. I have also further developed my skills in linework and creating movement and rhythm within the painting. My goal for the project was to develop my understanding and knowledge about the 'Kondoli dreaming story' so I can pass it on to other people and generations to come while also creating a unique painting that no one has seen before. This was done by using traditional Ngarrindjeri art such as linework and mixing it with a contemporary style to create a unique but stunning painting. Overall, I am very happy with the overall painting and textile artwork, I have created however if I were to do it again, I would have painted the whale bigger, and the Ramindjeri people bigger in a lighter grey tone as they do not stand out as much, I would have wanted them too currently. I would also add in the extra animals that were in the story such as the two birds and fish as they play an important role in the story but in my painting, they are currently represented through symbols. Besides from that I am happy with the outcome of my painting and love the look of my Jumpers, T-shirts, Tote Bags and Tea Towels.