

IMA Belltower at the Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts

IMA Belltower, a year-long program dedicated to Queensland art exploring the meaning of place, is curated by **Freja Carmichael**. It is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland.

Freja Carmichael is a Ngugi woman belonging to the Quandamooka People of Moreton Bay. She is a curator working broadly across the cultural sector with artists and communities on exhibition projects. Her past projects have focussed on the preservation and promotion of First Nations fibre art and collaborative curatorial approaches. Carmichael recently curated *Around and within*, Space Gallery, Sydney (2018), and was a co-curator of *The Commute*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2018). In 2014, she received an Australia Council for the Arts emerging curatorial fellowship and the 2016 National Gallery of Australia International Indigenous Arts fellowship. In 2017, she was awarded the inaugural Macquarie Group First Nations emerging curator award. Freja is also undertaking curatorial projects with Redland Art Gallery, The University of Queensland Art Museum, and is a member of Blaklash Collective.

Institute of Modern Art

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Opening Hours

Tuesday–Saturday 11am–6pm | First Thursday of the month 11am–9pm

IMA Belltower Partners



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IMA Principal Support



The IMA is supported by the Queensland Government through Arts Queensland, and from the Visual Arts Board of the Australia Council for the Arts, and through the Visual Arts and Craft Strategy, an initiative of the Australian Federal, State, and Territory Governments. The IMA is a member of Contemporary Art Organisations Australia.



Mandy Quadrio *The Country Within*

22 June–17 August 2019

Exhibition Guide

Mandy Quadrio: The Country Within

Brisbane-based artist, **Mandy Quadrio** is a palawa woman whose Country is the Coastal Plains Nation and the Oyster Bay Nation of North and East Tasmania. For many Aboriginal people, Country is both an expansive experience and physical space that connects ancestral, spiritual, cultural, and historical relationships with the land, waters, sky and all living things. Quadrio expresses her place of connectedness through working with bull kelp, a natural material that embodies memory and lived experiences of her Country.

Bull kelp grows in the oceans surrounding Tasmania, in large underwater forests that stretch across vast distances. Individual strands can extend beyond thirty metres in length, with their roots systems embedded in the ocean floor. Beneath the tall towers there exists dynamic and complex ecosystems, supported by the nutrients from the fertile sanctuaries of the kelp.¹ Along the coastline, kelp dances on the water's surface, moving with the current and swell before arriving on the shoreline.

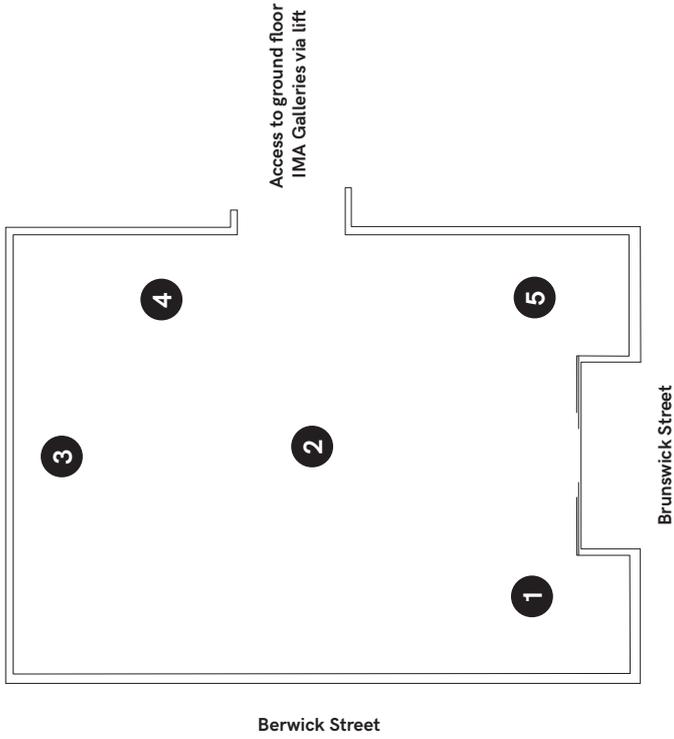
The emergence of this material from the ocean speaks to the relationship between water and land. These are two environments that have never been separated within Aboriginal culture. Saltwater and freshwater people continue their rich history of sustainably collecting, fishing and harvesting food and material gifted from the waters. On Quadrio's Country, as island people, their long and harmonious engagement with the ocean is reflected in cultural practices of using kelp to create water carriers and other objects of material culture. The knowledge and skills of working this dense leather-like material into distinct forms draws on wisdom and memories that reach back through generations.

Quadrio applies her inherent understanding of kelp and extends the practices of her ancestors. She creates a series of body-like sculptural forms from different varieties of kelp. The varying shapes, sizes and techniques applied to the forms are influenced by the nature and texture of the organic material. The kelp is able to be re-worked over and over again. Each new iteration carries remnants of previous forms that flow into new stories. Collectively, the sculptures come together in an installation that evokes the underwater forests where kelp thrives and flourishes. The gentle movement of the works reference the shifting nature of seasonal changes, storms, and human activity. Against these forces, the bull kelp holds strong.

The regenerative and revealing spirit of tidal water link to Quadrio's own experiences of uncovering and claiming personal, ancestral, and political narratives of her Aboriginal heritage. In *Speaking with Alizon* (2019), hidden histories of the Australian colonial experience are subtly revealed through a bullet belt buried among the kelp. This confronting object brings to the surface stories and events surrounding the attempted annihilation of her people. As a concealed element, the bullet belt invites a close viewing experience.

Kelp is the key fabric linking past and present and provides Quadrio with both a grounded and fluid sense of where she comes from and where she belongs. The resilient nature of kelp mirrors the resilience of palawa culture and connection to Country, a connection that has never been ceded.

¹Tasmania's Great Kelp Forest, 2019, <https://www.discovertasmania.com.au/about/articles/tasmanias-kelp-forests>



- 1 Mandy Quadrio, caught in time, 2019**
Bull kelp, ochre, and beeswax
 - 2 Mandy Quadrio, dancing on tebrakunna, 2019**
Bull kelp, ochre, string, beeswax, metal, and fishing line
 - 3 Mandy Quadrio, Teekeltoomee, Wybalooberr, Plenperrenner, 2019**
Bull kelp, ochre, ti tree, river reed, and beeswax
 - 4 Mandy Quadrio, from the tide, 2019**
Bull kelp, ochre, ti tree and beeswax
 - 5 Mandy Quadrio, speaking with Alizon, 2019**
Bull kelp, bullet belt, and beeswax
- Mandy Quadrio** is a Brisbane-based artist working across sculpture, installation, and mixed media. As a proud palawa woman, her art practice brings forward First Nations histories and self-representation. Quadrio is currently a Doctorat candidate at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University. In 2018 she held her first solo exhibition, *Speaking beyond the Vitrine* at Metro Arts, Brisbane. Recent group shows include: *Unleashed*, artisan, Brisbane (2018); *Around and within*, Space Gallery, Sydney (2018); *Hatched National Graduate Show*, Perth Institute of Contemporary Art, Perth (2018); and *Maiwar*, Brisbane City Council, Brisbane (2018).