

FILMMAKER STATEMENT – LYNETTE WALLWORTH

I first heard of Nyarri's story four years ago on a hunting trip with the Martu women painters in the Western Desert. Hearing that I had been to Maralinga where Britain tested atomic bombs in the 1950's, Nyarri's wife Nola turned to me with what felt like an instruction...

"You have to talk to Nyarri."

A year later I did just that and I heard a short powerful parable that Nyarri had waited almost his entire life to share. So this work was born, as a thought or an imagining. I hadn't yet experienced Virtual Reality and I was waiting to decide the form that would best suit this work. I experienced my first VR film, almost a year ago to today and when I saw it I knew how to make Nyarri's story come alive.

I have worked in immersive environments for over 20 years and I felt like VR was the technology I had been waiting for. At the same time Sundance New Frontiers Institute co-directors Shari Frilot and Kamal Sinclair had exactly the same thought. A partnership with Jaunt VR has made Collisions a reality but only with the inexhaustible, unflappable energy of producer Nicole Newnham.

I love new technology. I love the moment when the viewer experiences a new sensation for the first time. I know that moment gets seared into memory. I also believe in the power of story to reshape us collectively. I think the two belong together.

VR will soon hit in a big way, very possibly to become ubiquitous. In the window of time that exists before then I wanted to make a work that has protocols of meeting at its core. Nyarri's world is only available to me to visit, and in this work through the technology, that invitation is extended to the viewer. The agency in Collisions belongs to Nyarri. When I put the camera down in front of him he said, "It has sixteen eyes." I replied that it has sixteen eyes and four ears. From that moment Nyarri became the one who decided what was seen and what was not to be seen, what was told and what was not told. The powerful sense of presence of VR makes everything personal. Nyarri knew who it was he was speaking to.

So this work is something of a gift sent out from a private world. It contains an old story, held close till now. It is a film that bridges cultures, it has two narrators and it has two old men at its heart. It contains an old story, held close till now. It is a technological message in a bottle to a world that teeters on the edge of climate catastrophe but it is a message shared with a fundamental hope in our capacity to contemplate more carefully the consequences of our actions.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos and the Sundance Film Festival in Park City with Nyarri travelling for the first time out of Australia to join us, I am so happy to be able to share this experience with you.