

Mapping UNSW Impact Global Development

Primary SDG	10: REDUCED INEQUALITIES
Broad theme	Aboriginal art, language and culture
Research	Supporting and sustaining tangible and intangible Indigenous heritage
Impact region	Indigenous Australia
Faculty	Art and Design
School/Institute	National Institute for Experimental Arts
Academic	Associate Professor Jennifer Biddle
Project Partners	ARC Funding Future Fellowship: 4 years, \$777,604; ARC Discovery Project: Cultural sensorium: An ethnography of the senses, 3 years, \$243,000; ARC LIEF Design & Art Australia Online Research Tool: enabling next generation e-Research in Australia's visual and design cultures, 1 year, \$190,000; Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) with Concordia University and McGill University, 4 years, \$445,758; TRACKS Dance Company, Collaborative art research, 2010- current; Warnayaka Aboriginal Art and Cultural Aboriginal Association, Collaborative art research, 2008 – current
Related SDGs	4: Quality Education

Elevator pitch

Through her research on Indigenous art, language and culture, Jennifer is using the latest technology to develop new ethnographic methodologies that document Indigenous culture as a living form of heritage, empowering Indigenous artists and connecting more people to Indigenous culture.

The Challenge: Disappearing Indigenous heritage

Indigenous art has had a huge impact globally. The art acts as an archive of Indigenous Australian history, and it has positively influenced the perception of Indigenous people and their rights to land and country, particularly in the Central and Western Deserts of Australia.

Outside of paintings, Indigenous heritage is not written down or archived in the ways that heritage is in the Western world (what the UN calls tangible heritage). Much of Indigenous heritage is intangible: it exists in more ephemeral forms such as song, dance, ceremony, gesture, and forms of inscription (e.g. on objects, in country, on the body). These more intangible aspects of Indigenous heritage are understood to be at high-risk of disappearance and destruction; a global crisis formally recognised by UNESCO in 2013.

UNSW's solution: Using digital innovation in ethnography to retain intangible Indigenous heritage

Jennifer is developing innovative approaches to understand how Indigenous art forms (art, ceremony, dance, song, painting, textiles, film, photography) sustain at-risk intangible Indigenous culture. This includes researching the role the senses play in Indigenous knowledge and tradition together with Australian and Canadian Indigenous artists and curators, cultural anthropologists, and immersive visualisation experts. Jennifer uses digital and immersive visualisation to document cultural and art practices through high resolution scanning and other sensory-specific technologies. This work generates new kinds of heritage and

experimental forms of art that are exhibited publicly. Jennifer has worked with northern Warlpiri in Lajamanu since 1991, and with a number of other Central and Western Desert artists and art centres since 2010.

The Impact: Sustaining intangible Indigenous heritage

Jennifer is researching new ways to support and sustain Indigenous art, language and culture through collaborative research that highlights Indigenous agency and empowers Indigenous artists and community members. Her work produces new kinds of heritage for public consumption and exchange. The art work cuts through all levels of community, in Australia and around the globe, and offers them a connection to Indigenous heritage and an understanding of its vital importance to the world.

Researcher

Jennifer L. Biddle is Senior Research Fellow at the National Institute for Experimental Arts (UNSW Art & Design). She is also the founding Director of Visual Anthropology & Visual Culture, an international program specialising in Indigenous and Asia Pacific research. She has curated art exhibitions, film programs, and public symposiums that bring together remote artists, art industry members, academics and the public. Her most recent book *Remote Avant-Garde: Aboriginal Art under Occupation* (Duke University Press) models the importance of new and emergent desert Aboriginal aesthetics as an art of survival.

Ben Falkenmire 12.03.18