

# In the Loop: Feeding the Polyphonic Present

14 OCTOBER–27 NOVEMBER 2015

A Macquarie University Art Gallery Exhibition



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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**CURATORS:** Terry Pelarek,  
Selina Springett and Danielle Zorbas

**ARTISTS:** Vanessa Berry, Clare Cooper,  
Wade Marynowsky, Alex Mesker,  
Terry Pelarek, Selina Springett,  
Clinton Walker and Danielle Zorbas

**CO-ORDINATOR:** Rhonda Davis

**TECHNICAL CURATOR:** Iain Brew

**CATALOGUE DESIGN:** Paper Monkey

We would like to acknowledge the hard and outstanding work of all the people involved in the production of this exhibition, in particular to all the artists for their outstanding work and participation. Special thanks to the following people: Effy Alexakis of Photowrite for her brilliant photographic work, Iain Brew for his outstanding technical expertise, Macquarie University curators Leonard Janiszewski and Kate Hargraves for their creative input and ongoing support, Cameron Oldfield for his brilliant fabrication, Rocket Mattler and Tim Moore for their expert and finely-tuned installation, Philippa Borland from the Events team for her outstanding work and support. Lester Bunnell and Ben Lopez from Paper Monkey for their elegant and brilliant graphic design work, Stuart McDougall from Macquarie Lighthouse Press for his ongoing and outstanding work. We would also like to acknowledge the wonderful support from the Learning and Teaching Centre at Macquarie University for loaning much needed technical equipment and to David Morgan for kindly facilitating this loan.

# In the Loop: Feeding the Polyphonic Present

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**COVER:**

Wade Marynowsky  
*Stairway to Heaven*  
2014  
four channel HD video, audio, custom built software,  
four computers, four LCD monitors, sound  
Duration: endless  
Originally commissioned in 2014 by the  
National Gallery of Victoria for the survey exhibition  
*Nostalgia for Obsolete Futures*

# Introduction

*In the Loop* is an inaugural exhibition celebrating the diversity of Arts practice within the Department of Media, Music, Communication and Cultural Studies within the Faculty of Arts. It aims to interrogate the liminal and expanding zone of creative practice as research, exploring independent means of presenting, embodying and manifesting art-as-research; a research that does not simply write about art, but, that is, of it. As curators, we feel passionately about creating platforms which encourage the celebration of art as scientific inquiry within the academic community.

This concept exhibition seeks to amplify the voices which do not fit neatly into more common modes of text-driven analysis, as a collaborative contemporary conversation about the place of creative practice within the broader research culture. It presents research as material thinking in action; as a symbolic representation or zeitgeist of the phenomenal: as a swelling, discursive feedback loop to inspire the scientific imagination anew.

*In the Loop* showcases work by multimedia research artists and academics Vanessa Berry, Clare Cooper, Wade Marynowsky, Alex Mesker, Terry Pelarek, Selina Springett, Clinton Walker and Danielle Zorbas across sound, video, drawing, installation and live performance.

We are delighted that Rhonda Davis and the Macquarie University Art Gallery have been so forthcoming in supporting us.

**TERRY PELAREK, SELINA SPRINGETT  
AND DANIELLE ZORBAS**  
Curators

# Creative research

*Creation is all about mediators. Without them nothing happens. They can be people – for a philosopher, artists or scientists; for a scientist, philosophers or artists – but things too, even plants or animals... Whether they are real or imaginary, animate or inanimate, you have to inform your mediators. It's a series. If you're not in some series, even a completely imaginary one, you're lost. I need my mediators to express myself and they'd never express themselves without me: you're always working in a group, even when you seem to be on your own.*<sup>1</sup>

The art museum space is an ever-changing and ever-expanding structural and intellectual site that potentially harnesses infinite possibilities for transformative action that demonstrates visual research as discourse. At Macquarie University, the creative endeavours of Higher Degree Research candidates are storming new pathways into the academic arena using the exhibition process as the gateway for thesis expansion, for contestation and for making processes that are not easily

<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze, 'Mediators', *Negotiations 1972–1990*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1990, p. 125.

categorised, time to pause, relapse and regenerate what is necessary to engulf what has been missed – in other words, no stone is left unturned within this process.

The exhibition vehicle represents a significant way in which creative outputs can be supported and nourished to inform and expand theoretical research and writing. The historical latitudes that underpin cultural production have informed and supported the creation of an exhibition such as *In the Loop*, set within the framework of current values and conditions. It provides a hypothetical test case, a match to the set of conditions that gave rise to each artist's creation, one without constraint, one without institutional power and one that holds value to examining and probing competing narratives.

The exhibition space as a physical and experimental entity offers a discursive practice that gives rise simultaneously to a micro and macro view of the underlying concepts and theories that propagates both a fragmentation and construction that is taking place. In this way, *In the Loop* conditions the viewer into varying levels

of practice that accordingly reconciles and at other instances contradicts with the logical intentions of the original premise of the exhibition – a prime instance of research as active and discursive that can be mediated and accommodated to suit varying set of conditions, now and within the future.

The standard curatorial conditions and structures of the museum are put aside in favour of negotiating a collective model whereby artists, curators, consultants, technical support team are all equal team players within the constructive framework. This hybrid co-productive model mediates the space under more flexible and favourable conditions. As a performative-driven exhibition, *In the Loop* by its very nature augments practice as seeking further questions rather than offering any resolutions. Its dialectic is what brings life and energy to the space with its conversational edge open to public scrutiny that in turn, may affect and inform the practitioner about new possibilities and research pathways.

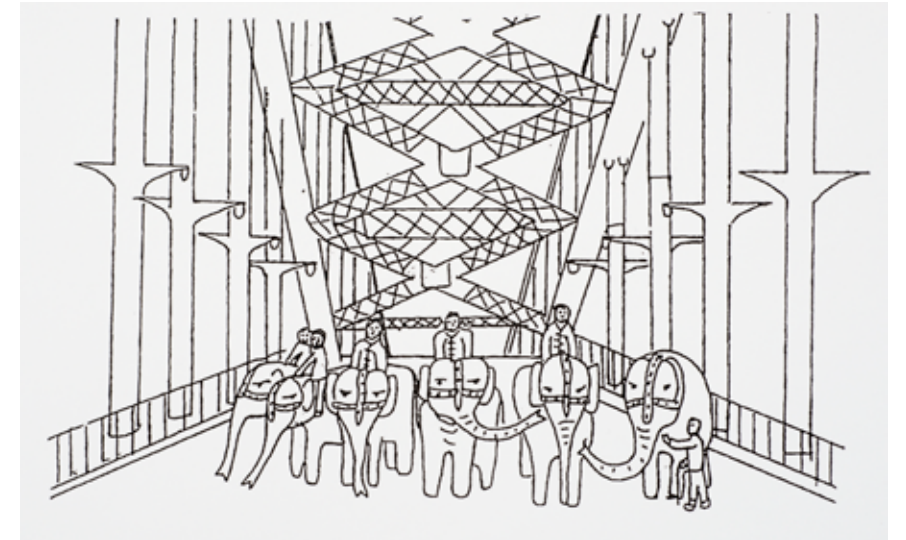
**RHONDA DAVIS**

# Vanessa Berry

*Sydney Elephants Map* forms part of Vanessa Berry's *Mirror Sydney* project. *Mirror Sydney* combines experimental cartography with texts with a focus on overlooked, unusual, and curious elements in the urban landscape, and the encounters, histories and mythologies which shape them.

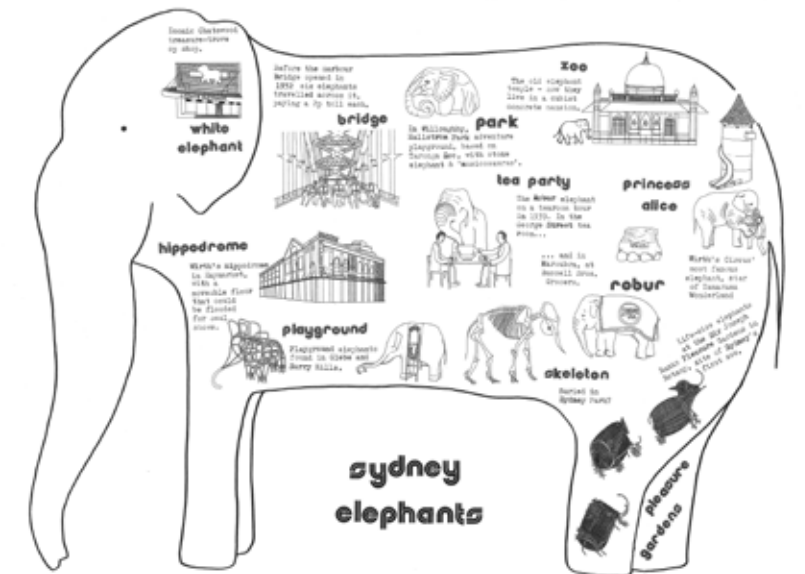
The collection of these stories proposes a re-imagination of the city – considering other ways of understanding and inhabiting it beyond its dominant narratives. The creative potential of mapping is increasingly used by contemporary artists and writers in challenging existing narratives. Maps allow the representation of a constellation of elements, linked directly to place and with multiple trajectories and readings across them. For all its novelty, a Sydney of elephants describes a city of introduced species, at once integrated in, and at odds, with the land. This theme runs throughout Sydney's colonial history, a history of impositions and migrations.

Vanessa Berry is a writer, visual artist and PhD researcher in Media at Macquarie University. She is the author of two nonfiction books, and her visual arts work has been exhibited in major Australian galleries and includes creative cartography, zines, and collaborative mapmaking and walking projects. Her *Mirror Sydney* blog project can be found at [mirrorsydney.wordpress.com](http://mirrorsydney.wordpress.com).



**TOP:**  
Vanessa Berry  
*Sydney Elephants Map* (Detail)  
2015  
digital print  
118.9 x 84.1 cm  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**BOTTOM:**  
Vanessa Berry  
*Sydney Elephants Map*  
2015  
digital print  
118.9 x 84.1 cm  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite





# Clare Cooper

Clare Cooper's stamped situational schematics are designed from a limited graphic palette of 5 rubber stamps. The works are comprised of various seating arrangements positioned in relation to an instrument, depicted here by a pedal harp. An elastic spatial floor plan and instructions for both performer and audience are outlined in detail on each design. These works are graphic scores of musical compositions and social studies of the porous relationship between audience, performer and context.

Chris Abrahams is a pianist with The Necks and a long-time collaborator of the artist. The work *Chris Abrahams, Randwick* in this current exhibition is the first in a series of biographical portrait films or "sound biopics". Cooper plaits the subject's domestic soundscape, to where he lives and works, with that of Abrahams' improvisation on the DX7 synthesiser – highlighting the influence of context upon his sonic vocabulary.

Cooper's primary practice-based research for her PhD has been through her *Mapped Intimacy* series. These designs combine her interest in context, mapping, graphic scores and audience instruction and have enabled her to experiment with varying degrees of control over temporal, spatial and social contexts of her performances over the past 12 months. The 5th composition in the series, *Mapped Intimacy #5: University*, will be drawn directly onto the wall as part of the *In The Loop* exhibition.

Website: [gutstring.net](http://gutstring.net)

Clare Cooper has been an active member of the Australian arts community since she co-founded in 2001 *the NOW, now* festival of spontaneous music & experimental film. Her current projects explore context, futuring and speculative design applied to performance, composition, creative community organising, improvisation, graphic scores, filmic portraiture and general survival.



**TOP:**  
Clare Cooper  
*Wreck* (Auckland)  
2015  
stamped ink on paper  
59.4 x 42 cm  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**BOTTOM:**  
*Mapping Scores*  
wall drawing  
2015  
Performance based scores  
Interactive wall drawings using stamps  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



# Wade Marynowsky

*Stairway to Heaven* was commissioned and presented by the National Gallery of Victoria in 2014 for Marynowsky's survey exhibition *Nostalgia for Obsolete Futures*. The song 'Stairway to Heaven' by Led Zeppelin was literally flipped on its head as various musical instruments were released that transversed the National Gallery of Victoria's staircase creating a non-determinist audio-visual composition. Multiple cameras recorded the sequence of events, referencing the famous Odessa steps montage of Sergei Eisenstein's film *Battleship Potemkin*. Eisenstein believed that film montage could create new ideas or have an impact beyond the individual images. The research brings this concept into the digital age, by allowing a network of computers to randomly montage the video sequences together. It's an exploration of chance operations in music, by allowing instruments to make music by coming down stairs, and then allowing computers to re-compose.

The research is situated in the field of experimental audio-visual performance and composition within the context of the visual arts (sound art). The project investigates the musical capabilities of a grand staircase by exploring the notion of chance operations in music – a notion foregrounded by 1960s avant-garde composer John Cage. Cage also proposed that all sound, silence and noise can be musical. The project revisits these concepts both physically and digitally through both a live and mediated performance.



**ABOVE:**

*Stairway to Heaven*

2014

four channel HD video, audio, custom built software,  
four computers, four LCD monitors, sound

Duration: endless

Courtesy of the artist

# Alex Mesker

Mesker's work *Schrödinger's String* is a generative audiovisual piece exploring the sonification and visualisation of waves. The work is generated on the fly, whereby different wave shapes and patterns are generated and auralised, while imagery is constructed by plotting the relationship between the audio channels in 2D space. The same data is used to create the sound and the images. It varies from slowly, evolving harmonic relationships and lissajous curves, to abrasive noise – each with their corresponding visual equivalents.

It is altered in unexpected ways by the very act of observation.

Alex Mesker is a digital artist working with sound and image. His interests lie in computer aided composition, electronic and generative music, sound synthesis, data art, live visuals and human computer interaction. Alex teaches 'MUS 302: Sound, Image and Interactive Media' at Macquarie University and also in a number of other media and music units that centre around the computer's role in creative processes.



**ABOVE:**

Alex Mesker  
*Schrödinger's String*  
2015  
audiovisual projection  
350 x 200 cm  
Courtesy of the artist

# Terry Pelarek

*Clank* represents and expresses the sonification of the formation of iron oxide on metallic objects; their changes in colour, shape and texture over time. The work explores the principles of interactivity, spontaneity, immediacy and continuum in sound installations, and seeks to initiate a sonic discourse with the observer.

Aural observation alone has no impact on musical progression, whereas gestural participatory action is rewarded by sonic mellifluous fusion with the soundtrack. On a pressure sensitive floor, and with impact sensitive metal tubing, the individual participant is able to exercise a musical contribution, as well as being able to control the amount of generated audio feedback, blending and merging sounds with the sonic landscape that is *Clank*.

So, the choice is yours; either participate, or simply observe and let the music take its natural course.

Terry Pelarek is a musician, sound designer, live looping artist and a creative practice PhD candidate, researching gesture based sound production.



**ABOVE AND RIGHT:**  
Terry Pelarek  
*Clank*  
2015  
installation  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



# Sleina Springett and Alex Mesker

*Rivers, of course, are metaphors for time – and nature, and for history, all of which, are irreversible processes. The hydrological cycle however is cyclical.*

## ROBERT HASS

*In the Current* forms one layer of a palimpsest of works about the Cooks River in Sydney generated as part of a creative practice PhD at Macquarie. Unglamorous and unlovely the Cooks River has been altered beyond recognition in the last two centuries by the gaze of non-indigenous peoples. Through misappropriation, mismanagement and channelling, the river has largely been turned into a drain and is now amongst the most polluted rivers in Australia. Based on the cosmopolitical proposal of French theorist Isabelle Stengers *In the Current* seeks ‘to “slow down” reasoning and create an opportunity to arouse a slightly different awareness of the problems and situation mobilising us.’

It asks the viewer to consider their place in relation to the river, and not only how their presence and actions have a direct effect, and continuing relevance within political ecology. What this work seeks to explicate is the proposition that there is no identity of practice independent of its environment and our own position, as well as that of non-human actors must be considered in terms of co-existence, and our collective becoming.

Water is collected from various points along the stretch of the Cooks River.

Selina is a current creative practice PhD student here at Macquarie. Her work explores plays on ways of representing environmental and social issues through mostly sound based installations, community radio and public art works. These have been shown locally and internationally, such as the *Dubble Radio* festival in Sweden and have won a number of awards and commissions including the International Women’s Day Art Prize, Cooks River Art Prize, Wildflower Art and Garden festival Sculpture Walk Art Prize, Leichhardt EcoFest, Art on the Greenway and Bankstown Arts Centre *Crosscurrents* Residency.



## ABOVE:

Alex Mesker and Sleina Springett  
*In the Current*  
 3m by 2m  
 2015  
 audiovisual projection and reel to reel  
 Courtesy of the artists

# Clinton Walker

Part of the ‘polyphonic present’ is obviously the polyphonic past: remembering, not forgetting, the songs, the singers, the stories. Sometimes, these drop-out of the loop. Sometimes they never even got into it. *Deadly Woman Blues: Great Black Women of Australian Music, 39 Portraits*, is a work in progress, part of a larger project expected or hoped to eventually produce a book, film and soundtrack album. I have produced a great many drawings over the last couple of years, and continue to do so, which will eventually form part of the basis for a book. It is old skool: black and white, linework, the magic of cross-hatching. My background comes from comics, Pop art, bubblegum cards, cheesecake and rock’n’roll. Along with jazz, blues and soul – which is what most of these Deadly Ladies specialised in. Maybe you’ve heard of a couple of them, maybe actually even heard some of them, but most I suspect not. Most are lost to history. *Deadly Woman Blues* is designed to bring them back, into the loop.



**LEFT:**  
Clinton Walker  
*Deadly Woman Blue* series  
Barbara Virgil (jazz singer, early 1960s, from USA)  
2012–2014  
Series of 40 drawings  
ink on paper  
30 x 21.2 cm  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite

**BELOW:**  
Clinton Walker  
*Deadly Woman Blue* series  
‘Sideshow Jenny’ (Cunningham’s 1883 Circus Troupe, from Palm Island)  
2012–2014  
ink on paper  
29.7 x 21 cm  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**BELOW:**  
Clinton Walker  
*Deadly Woman Blue* series  
Trude Aspeling (jazz singer, from South Africa)  
2012–2014  
ink on paper  
28.1 x 21 cm  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



**BELOW:**  
Clinton Walker  
*Deadly Woman Blue* series  
Connie Mitchell (pop-EDM singer, b.1976, from South Africa)  
2012–2014  
ink on paper  
28.5 x 21 cm  
Photography Effy Alexakis, Photowrite



# Danielle Zorbas

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*freediving* is a study of vessels of natural technology engaged in play. Fluid, elemental plastic and plant flesh in wired, animalistic entanglement phase transition, transparent and screened. Desirous nodes of glowing filaments shapeshift through detritus of synthetic and organic excess, regenerating in ecstatic connection and consumption, navigating integrated circuit wilderness, negotiating surface tension.

Danielle Zorbas is a video artist, creative practice PhD candidate, researching fluid identity through contemporary screen natures. Informed by the story of cinema and gallery black box/white cube tropes, her art looks to an absurdist freedom control within data currency, algorithmic mimesis and interface intimacy. Her work has been selected to screen at *safARI*, Sydney, *IS THIS ART?*, dLux Media Arts & Arterreal Gallery, Sydney, *Revelation International Film Festival*, Perth, *Demons Mouth Gallery*, Oslo and *The Picture Show*, NYC. She is co-curator of cinema installation Island Salon for Underbelly Arts 2015, is assistant editor for Screen Bodies Journal, Berghahn Books and has been published by *Dissect* journal.



**ABOVE:**

Danielle Zorbas

*freediving*

2015

HD video

Duration: 5 minutes 15 seconds

Courtesy of the artist

# List of works

**VANESSA BERRY**

*Sydney Elephants Map*  
2015  
digital print  
118.9 x 84.1 cm

**CLARE COOPER**

*Amidst* (Auckland)  
2015  
stamped ink on paper  
84.1 x 59.4 cm

**CLARE COOPER**

*Assess* (Auckland)  
2015  
stamped ink on paper  
59.4 x 42 cm

**CLARE COOPER**

*Counsel* (Auckland)  
2015  
stamped ink on paper  
59.4 x 42 cm

**CLARE COOPER**

*Deference* (Auckland)  
2015  
stamped ink on paper  
84.1 x 59.4 cm

**CLARE COOPER**

*Study* (Auckland)  
2015  
stamped ink on paper  
84.1 x 59.4 cm

**CLARE COOPER**

*Test* (Auckland)  
2015  
stamped ink on paper  
59.4 x 42 cm

**CLARE COOPER**

*Inquiry* (Auckland)  
2015  
stamped ink on paper  
84.1 x 59.4 cm

**CLARE COOPER**

*Wreck* (Auckland)  
2015  
stamped ink on paper  
59.4 x 42 cm

**CLARE COOPER**

*Chris Abrahams, Randwick* (Sydney)  
2014  
video + stereo sound  
Duration: 3 minutes 47 seconds looped

**CLARE COOPER**

*Mapping Scores*  
wall drawing  
2015  
Performance based scores  
Interactive wall drawings using stamps

**WADE MARYNOWSKY**

*Stairway to Heaven*  
2014  
four channel HD video, audio, custom built software,  
four computers, four LCD monitors, sound  
Duration: endless  
Originally commissioned by the National Gallery  
of Victoria for the survey exhibition *Nostalgia for  
Obsolete Futures*

**ALEX MESKER**

*Schrödinger's String*  
2015  
audiovisual projection  
350 x 200 cm

**TERRY PELAREK**

*Clank*  
2015  
installation

**ALEX MESKER AND SELINA SPRINGETT**

*In the Current*  
3m by 2m  
2015  
audiovisual projection and reel to reel

**CLINTON WALKER**

*Deadly Woman Blue* series  
2012–2014  
Series of 40 drawings  
ink on paper  
16x12.5 cm each

Fanny Cochrane Smith  
(traditional singer, 1834–1905, Tasmania)

‘Sideshow Jenny’  
(Cunningham’s 1883 Circus Troupe,  
from Palm Island)

Bessie Flower  
(church organist, 1851–1895, from Albany)

‘Stringband Sarah’  
(banjo player, c. 1900, Brisbane)

Annie Koolmatrie  
(ballad singer/composer, 1950s, from the Coorong)

Georgia Lee  
(jazz singer, 1921–2008, from Cairns)

Betty Fisher  
(singer, *Amateur Hour* winner 1946, from Darwin)

Merri Sisters  
(vaudeville singers and dancers, 1920s,  
from Cummeragunja)

Molly Sebastian  
(Bangarun Orchestra, 1950s, Derby Leprosarium)

Joyce Johnson  
(singer [centre], 1926–1982, with cast members  
of Melbourne’s first Moomba show, 1952)

Gladys Bropho  
(singer and harmonica player, 1937–2005,  
from Perth)

Bettie Fisher  
(jazz-blues singer, 1939–1976, from Sydney)

Barbara Virgil  
(jazz singer, early 1960s, from USA)

Heather Pitt  
(folk/jazz singer, d. 1995, from Cairns)

Kath Walker  
(poet/song lyricist, 1920–1993,  
from Stradbroke Island)

Inez Amaya  
(showband singer, 1960s, from New Zealand)

Marcia Hines  
(Queen of Pop, b.1953, from USA)

Veronica Rankine  
(saxophonist, No Fixed Address, early 1980s,  
from Adelaide)

Essie Coffey  
(country singer/songwriter, 1941–1998,  
from Brewarrina)

Trude Aspelung  
(jazz singer, from South Africa)

Josie Boyle  
(singer/songwriter, b. 1941,  
from Mount Margaret, WA)

Maroochy Barambah  
(opera/EDM singer, b.c. 1950s, from Cherbourg)

Lois Olney  
(jazz-blues singer, b. 1963, from Perth)

Christine Anu  
(saltwater soul singer, b. 1970, from Cairns)

Deborah Cheetham  
(opera singer, b. 1964, from Cummeragunja)

MC Trey  
(rapper, from Fiji)

Little G  
(rapper, from Melbourne)

Delmae Barton  
(singer and didgeridooist, b. 1943, from Brisbane)

Connie Mitchell  
(pop-EDM singer, b. 1976, from South Africa)

Jessica Mauboy  
(pop singer, b. 1989, from Darwin)

Ursula Yovich  
(singer-actor, b. 1978, from Darwin)

Leah Flanagan  
(singer-songwriter, from Darwin)

Kylie Auldist  
(soul singer, from Broken Hill)

Fannie Numamardird (Boraloola Songwoman, 2012)

**DANIELLE ZORBAS**

*freediving*  
2015  
HD video  
Duration: 5 minutes 15 seconds





**MACQUARIE**  
University

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