Above: Robert Waites, USQ visual arts student.

“My Self-portrait uses found objects of a wooden post and six pieces of bark. I created a cultural signpost that points in the direction to different traditional countries. This signpost outlines my genealogy, my family tree and connections and relationships I have two traditional countries. The signpost also signifies a tree. A cultural tree has a variety of cultural values and functions. They have a sacred status and are significant to identity”.

Our Languages Matter:
An exhibition for NAIDOC 2017
at Artsworx, USQ.
Co-curated by Dr. David Akenson and Dr. Robyn Heckenberg

Gawaimbanna-gu, ngaaha, miilbumanha mayiny ngalanbumarra ngaaminya
Welcome, behold, be amazed as our people make a light to see and listen and think.

Acknowledgement: Mandaang warrayaan ngurang Giabal and Jarowair Nhurranbaang
Acknowledgement: Thank you that we can stand in this place on Giabal and Jarawair Country.

Our Languages Matter is the theme of NAIDOC Week for 2017.

This NAIDOC exhibition is the second in a recent series curated by David Akenson from the School of Arts and Communication. The present exhibition is co-curated by Robyn Heckenberg, who is Wiradjuri. This means the second and present exhibition has been joined in curatorial collaboration with the College for Indigenous Studies, Education and Research (CISER) and the School of Arts and Communication for 2017 NAIDOC Week. As a NAIDOC Art show it displays Southern Queensland Indigenous art talent, both from the point of view of local tradition, but also from the traditions of those who at present call this part of Queensland home. David and Robyn felt privileged to be part of this showcase.

Our Languages Matter exhibition 2017 provides a cohesive overview of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander position in relation to the location of language and the relatedness of language connection to many aspects of our environmental, geographical, biological, cultural, spiritual and intellectual knowledges and practices.

Each artist acquaints the viewer with an aspect of language and the connections integral to belonging to Country as related through story-telling and the narrative inherent in symbol making. At the same time as projecting a cohesive voice
regarding an Indigenous standpoint on the transmission of knowledge, the exhibition also reflects the diversity of Indigenous Australia demonstrated through visual dialogue. This comes from a number of language groups: Gunggari, Djiribul, Ngugi Waka Waka, Arrernte, Wiradjuri, Kooma, Kamilari, Mardigan, among others are represented.

Communication through one’s mother tongue, one’s inherent language, is an audible signifier by which we can be led in a direction of revelation regarding our own particular knowledge systems. Language in effect locates us to time and place (including situating people within a metaphysical topography and cultural milieu). This kind of positioning not only discusses spiritual connection, but commonplace knowledge regarding life’s daily customs. Within this realm members of a language group are tied together through kinship: the historical and contemporary bloodlines, which engage our social realities, behaviour and interconnectedness regarding aspects of living, value systems, links to Country and ways of being. Language matters because language holds the nuances of all of our lifeways.

To begin, Robert Waites’ inspired journey telling, directs us to all points of the compass, and as we are drawn in we are directed away, beyond ourselves: Kunja, Kamilari, Muruwari, Mardigan, Kooma, Budjiti: each language name and the pointer’s direction holds promise of a unique narrative of knowledge and tradition, an excursion to a cultural paradigm. All points of the compass, promise potential and possibility.

We invite you to participate and enjoy this exhibition. USQ offers an appreciation towards those artists who have generously participated in this showcase. The range of contexts are as diverse as the artist’s language groups themselves. Landscape and story regarding totemic relationships, and those of animal species in nature, are treated with raak, and x-ray techniques, sculptural techniques and striking contemporary abstract language.

It is fair to say the exhibition portrays a certain luminescence (ngalanbumarra: making light), within its dialogue. Congratulations to all those involved, and this is the beginning of an unfolding of what will become a strong NAIDOC tradition between the Indigenous art community of Southern Queensland and University of Southern Queensland.

Curatorial statement: David Akenson and Robyn Heckenberg.
Angelina Parfitt Eastern Arrernte woman
Title: Ngkwarle Untyeyampe
Medium: Acrylic on Canvas (50x60cm)

Angelina Parfitt Title: Athe-theke
Medium: Acrylic on canvas (50x50cm)

Anthony (Boy) Turnbull
Titles: "Early Birds" - As the sunrises in the Queensland outback near a Billabong

Anthony (Boy) Turnbull
"Cave Paintings" - Aboriginal Artwork created on a cave wall.
Brolga's at Play in Spring" - (2) Brolgas play around in the early morning spring, with their wings in full display

Anthony (Boy) Turnbull
"Eagle Story" - As the eagle soars high in the sky, it can tell the many stories of what's happening below; carved in 1993 from a Camphor Laurel tree.)

Anthony (Boy) Turnbull
Early Morning Desert Spy" - As the sun rises in the early morning desert, a Goanna hiding up a Gum Tree spies on a nest of Emu eggs waiting for the right moment, but the Emu's see him and watch his every move.

Anthony (Boy) Turnbull
"Spirits of the Outback"

Central Desert Women:
Title: Decorative bead collection
Judy Kirby (Gunggari woman from Mitchell, QLD)
Titles: “Woman’s gathering Camp”

Judy Kirby “Mens Hunting Group”
Medium: Acrylic on stretched canvas

Karen Crombie McGrady
Title; “Diamantina Flooding” 2015 [explanation on next page]
Medium: Acrylic – water base – stretched canvas –
50cms/40cms

Karen Crombie McGrady
Title: “Patricia” 2015 Medium: Acrylic – water base – stretched
canvas – 90cms-60cms.

Karen Crombie McGrady
Title: “Day-Light” 2014
Medium; Acrylic – water based stretched canvas – 90cms-
60cms.

Robert Waites:
Title: “My Self Portrait”, 3-D wood and paint. [on cover]

Robyn Heckenberg Wiradjuri
Title: “Darngidyal” – Father who Begets 2017
Medium: Acrylic on paper; 3-D sculpture.
Dimensions variable

Tracey Bunda Ngugi Wakka Wakka woman
Title: Bush Bag BC (Before Cook)/AC (After Cook)
Medium: Palm frond, jute and acrylic on gum nuts
One Story: 
Diamantina Flooding by Karen McGrady

My inspiration for this painting comes from the love that I have for the channel country. 
When it rains at home, the heavens open, throwing litres upon litres of rain and it covers the desert, making it near impossible to travel into the outback. And it creates small rivers branching off the main river, until it looks like my painting. 
Giving it the name “the channel country”

What once was dry is now flooded and it set’s in until it has all dried out, sometimes taking up to a month to fully dry out. 
The flora and the fauna thrive for a while. And the desert is covered in reds, yellows and many shades of purple flowers. 
It is a spectacular sight to behold. 

The wildlife converges all over the area and it is a rich, abundant and full of different species of animals. 
Frogs that have been buried in the sand for years, fish also, to flying pelicans, birds, the cattle get fatter, the donkeys fur gets thicker due to fresh grass. 

But for me the flood waters are stunning, simply because of the extreme amount of water and the area that it covers. 

Into a basin like landscape, the water flows, filling up the dry channels. 
And it happens every 10/15 years, sometimes even 20 years apart. 
There is nothing in the world like it.

Karen Crombie McGrady 
Contact Details; email crombiekaren69@gmail.com
Diamantina Flooding
Above: Central Desert Women:
Title: Decorative Bead Collection

POSTSCRIPT:
As a local Indigenous South East Queensland Exhibition, this is a lively and successful showcasing of local artist’s work. The show presented a great forum for local artists to express representations of themselves and community within the social milieu of language and contemporary cultural practice, here presented through the visual arts.

Above: Robyn Heckenberg: Darngidyal

Above: Eagle Story made from Camphor Laurel Tree by Anthony (Boy) Turnbull.
About the official NAIDOC Poster for 2017 –

The 2017 poster is by Joanne Cassidy of the Wiradjuri nation, who grew up in Redfern, and now who lives at Ingram, and works at Mungalla Station with her husband who has Native Title in that area.

“Language means a lot to every culture. If there was one thing I could wish for, it would be to learn my language.” Joanne said. [source http://www.naidoc.org.au/joanne-cassady-winner-2017-national-naidoc-poster-competition].