

CENTRE FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN SOCIETY AND CULTURE

INTANGIBLE MEMORIES OF THE SENSES:

Milpirri as experimental ceremony in Central Australia

JENNIFER BIDDLE

Thursday, September 21, 2017 • 2:00 p.m.

Hall Building, 7th Floor, H 767



PHOTO: Peter Eve

Youth in Red Group *Milpirri* Tee-Shirts, *Milpirri* 2012 (left to right) Lianna Napurrurla Patterson, Daswyn Jakamarra White, Teerasita Nakamarra Lewis ã Lajamanu Community and Tracks Dance Company, Photograph by Peter Eve. <http://tracksdance.com.au/milpirri-kurdji>

ABSTRACT

This presentation explores the experimental, public, Warlpiri ceremony *Milpirri* as an art of necessity and survival. *Milpirri* began in 2005 as the result of one of the first youth suicides in the community of Lajamanu in the Northern Territory. Directed and conceived by Wanta Steve Patrick Jampijinpa, in intercultural partnership with TRACKS Dance Company, *Milpirri* combines Jardj-Warnpa with hip-hop, break-dance and high theatrical design. Radically embedded and embodied, *Milpirri* strategically mobilises what are highly subjugated, barely legible and deeply vulnerable place-based energetics that bind people to place through practice. Orchestrating perceptual experiences and qualities of attachment that are themselves under occupation, *Milpirri* activates ecological and physiological memories of the senses in new trajectories of tradition that do not yet exist. As Jampijinpa writes of *Milpirri*: *It was an unseen thing and now it is a seen thing*. This paper explores the vital material revelations of *Milpirri* as remote avant-garde in settler colonial Australia today.

This public lecture is co-sponsored by the Centre for Sensory Studies and the University Research Chair in Computational Media & Indigenous Future Imaginary

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SPEAKER BIO

Jennifer Biddle is Director of Visual Anthropology, Senior Research Fellow at the National Institute for Experimental Arts (NIEA), University of New South Wales (UNSW) in Sydney, and a Visiting Professor at Concordia University for the Fall term 2017. She has worked with northern Warlpiri for over two decades, and more recently, artists and art centres across the Central and Western Desert of Australia. Her interdisciplinary research spans Indigenous languages and vernacular literacies; translation; theories of embodiment; sensory formations and radical cultural aesthetics; trauma, memory and predicaments of occupation and experimental ethnography. Her recent book *Remote Avant-garde: Aboriginal Art under Occupation* (Duke UP 2016) models new and emergent desert aesthetics as an art of survival.

