

By Tamika Grant-Iramu

Since I was young I have always been intrigued by the intricate patterns that can be found within minute areas of native flora. I investigated what was close to me on the ground; the bark, roots, succulents and other small plant life. Growing up from this foliage were the trees, their branches interweaving and extending, seeming so far away and unreachable. Reflecting back on what made me most curious as a child, it was the interconnectivity apparent in all of this wild life. The repetition of rich colours and patterns evident in the plants of my inner-city suburban backyard captured my attention as I explored and learned. *Carving Memories: propagation by roots* focuses on a motif of minute flora that emerged from my childhood curiosity and began to translate into my creative expression. Over the past eight years I have unintentionally experimented with the inclusion of this motif in drawings, paintings and prints only recently realising its reoccurrence in my emerging arts practice. I have used this installation of prints as homage to this particular motif of nature that has influenced and inspired me as I continue to explore and creatively express my personal connection to Brisbane's natural environment.

Influenced by nature in its smallest form I hope that the large scale of my work brings into focus these minute aspects of the natural environment that often go unnoticed. When people look at my work I'd like them to get lost in the line and patterns that make up the imagery, stepping back to view the whole but also to engage in a more intimate way when they move in close to explore the detail.

“Natural scenery employs the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it; tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it; and thus, through the influence of the mind over the body, gives the effect of refreshing rest and reinvigoration to the whole system.”¹ – Fredrick Law Olmstead (American landscape architect)

Many of us have experienced emotional fulfilment from viewing or being physically present within natural environments². By incorporating organic imagery that holds both strength and fluidity, my artwork aims to be inclusive of all communities of people as our connection to nature is relatable. The growth and interconnectivity seen in the repeated imagery of *Carving Memories: propagation by roots* reflects the constant change of feelings, memories and relationships in my life. While my artwork comes from my own stories, I hope it also encourages people to find their own meaning in the work and to make sense of the imagery in their own way.

A tree is a form with a 'purpose', undergoing many challenges that allow it to develop and turn into something new³. My relationship with the process of carving corresponds to the ongoing development that a tree and other flora endure. The constant randomness that arises from the directions in which I carve my repeated

patterns allows newly discovered forms to grow from something that preceded it. There is an importance in the connection between the artistic process and myself as the medium, as it allows a new dialogue to come into play. Similar to my other current works, *Carving Memories: propagation by roots* utilises the tools and the physicality of linocut printmaking, a method where the physicality of carving becomes meditative and immersive.

This physicality of carving combined with the immersive and organic nature of the process has not only allowed me to realise the artworks in my more recent bodies of work, it has also revealed a distinct connection to my Torres Strait Islander heritage. Brought up in Western communities, I have struggled with notions of identity and my creative practice has played a central role in connecting with indigenous culture. My passion towards printmaking and a deeper connection to my heritage has encouraged me to explore expression through carved line as a way to represent story, place, memories and relationships.

Reference:

1. Bratman, G.N., Hamilton, J.P., Daily, G.C., "The impacts of nature experience on human cognitive function and mental health," *The Year in Ecology and Conservation Biology*: 124.
2. Bratman, G.N., Hamilton, J.P., Daily, G.C., "The impacts of nature experience on human cognitive function and mental health," *The Year in Ecology and Conservation Biology*: 120.
3. Ball, P, "Branches", *Nature's patterns: a tapestry in three parts*: 131.