

About the Lead Artist

Sharyn Egan is a Nyoongar artist and curator living on Whadjuk boodja in Western Australia.* She began her art career at the age of 37 when she enrolled in a Diploma of Fine Arts at the Claremont School of Art in Perth. She completed this in 1998 and continued her education at Curtin University, first with an associate degree in Contemporary Aboriginal Art in 2000, followed by a Bachelor of Arts (Arts) in 2001. She has also been awarded a Certificate VI in Training and Education and has worked as an art lecturer, curator and art facilitator in schools, community groups and health organisations.

In recent years Sharyn has been awarded several prestigious and prominent public art commissions, including at the Perth Stadium, Elizabeth Quay, Yagan Square, Wadjemup Rottnest Island and the Scarborough Beach Redevelopment. She is a frequent exhibitor and invited artist at Sculpture by the Sea, Bondi and Cottesloe.

With the themes of her work being informed by the experiences of her life as a Nyoongar woman, Sharyn works in a range of media including painting, sculpture, woven forms and site-specific installations, often choosing materials such as oils,

ochres, resins and grasses that connect to the boodja near her home in the southern suburbs of Boorloo / Perth's lake system. Her woven works include traditionally styled contemporary forms and baskets, as well as sculptural forms often based on flora and fauna that have totemic significance for the Nyoongar people. Her practice explores her experience growing up in New Norcia and comments on the associated trauma, emotions and deep sense of loss and displacement experienced by Aboriginal people.

"We all come from the same atoms. We are the carers of everything. As humans we are the ones with the opposable thumbs and have more responsibility to take care of all creatures and our shared environments. Plants and animals are our family, our brothers and sisters. Having a totem connects you to land, to earth. You are related to nature in the same way you are related to family."
Sharyn Egan, artist.

*Nyoongar boodja (land) comprises of 14 different Nyoongar groups across the south-west corner of Western Australia, from Jambinu / Geraldton on the west to Kepa Kurl / Esperance on the south coast and including the Binjareb and Whadjuk peoples of the Rockingham area.



Rockingham Arts Centre
11 Kent Street,
Rockingham

Gallery opening times:

Wednesday – Sunday
10am – 12.30pm
1pm – 4pm

Contact:

(08) 9527 0734
artscentre@rockingham.wa.gov.au
rockingham.wa.gov.au/exhibitions



The City of Rockingham values your feedback.

Please scan the QR code to complete a short survey. Thank you.

Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Rockingham acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this land, the Binjareb and Whadjuk Nyoongar peoples and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of Aboriginal communities and their cultures, and to Elders past and present.



Wirn Boorongur – Spirit Totem

All artwork images from *Boorongur 2022*
Sharyn Egan in collaboration with The Art Gallery of WA.
Photo: Rift Photography

Sharyn Egan, Deni Egan and James Egan
Wednesday 8 July to Sunday 19 July 2026



Wirn Boorongur | Spirit Totem

Boorongur means totem in Nyoongar. Boorongur can be a natural object, plant or animal that is inherited by members of a clan or family as their spiritual emblem. Boorongur links a person to the universe - to land, air, water and landmarks. People do not own their Boorongur, rather they are accountable for them. Each person has a responsibility to ensure that their Boorongur is protected and handed down to the next generation.

Wirn Boorongur | Spirit Totem is a collaboration between Nyoongar artists Sharyn Egan, James Egan and Deni Egan which invites children and families to think about multi-species relationships and care for environments where human and non-human species cohabit.

Visitors are encouraged to consider a personal plant or animal totem that has meaning for them and contribute to the creation of families of small meadow hay and wool creatures. This shared space is designed to inspire quiet conversation, rest, creativity, and imagination, while offering an opportunity for audiences of all ages to engage with Nyoongar culture.

Stay a while and learn about the significance of animal totems and the importance of looking after Country and your totem. Weave your own totem with meadow hay and wool through binding and wrapping techniques in a hands-on experience and learn more about Nyoongar culture. Join Sharyn, Deni and James, visit often to see the growing family of totems.

Acknowledgments

Sharyn Egan has shared her knowledge with Rockingham Arts Centre staff and volunteers to engage audiences to sculpt with raffia and wool. She has overseen the language used in the sharing of Nyoongar cultural material, the stories shared, and material practices taught in the creation of objects that can represent totems.



From left to right: James, Sharyn and Deni Egan

