



Alice Wexler

Title: Code-switching and survivance: Art made under occupation in Australia's Northern Territory

Domestic violence, social dysfunction, poverty and alcoholism led the Australian Government to declare the NTER intervention (Northern Territory Emergency Response) in 2007, which meant a re-colonizing of the Northern Territory. Indigenous self-governance and local control in these areas ceased under the NTER intervention, including indigenous bi-lingual education. This humanitarian crisis ushered in a new era of child removal, which has tripled in the Northern Territory since 2000. Art making consequently became a primary form of resistance.

Art making at the Tangentyere Art Centre began in 2008 when the artists were invited by the Sydney Birrung Gallery to make works for an exhibition about *home*. This theme was the first time that a town camp aesthetic was conceived, inspired by the complex relationship that the artists had with the subject of home: its contingency, marginality and uncertainty. It led to the investigation of and experimentation with local materials, such as the ubiquitous tin, hubcaps, exhaust pipes, and other detritus of town camps, turned into jewelry and sculptural paintings. In other words, these works became the material culture of occupation. In this presentation I will show the artworks of new desert artists from this Art Centre, as a response to the collision with white consumer culture and the demoralization of re-colonization.