



Recollections

The GCS Gallery is delighted to partner with Artbank to present **Recollections: First Nations women artists** from the Artbank collection.

Recollections brings together a selection of works by First Nations artists from the Artbank collection. With a focus on women artists, these artworks trace generational experiences across time and place, linking traditional and contemporary expressions of artistic practice.

Curated by Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay artist, curator and educator Dennis Golding, *Recollections* draws connections from artists from across Australia's vast landscape and through generations of lived experience. In this selection of artworks we see landscapes and experiences change from desert to city to saltwater and beyond, yet each artwork shares the memories of the women who came before it and the knowledge, strength and responsibility they knowingly passed down.

Artbank is an Australian Government program that has directly supported living Australian artists for more than four decades of operation. Since opening in 1980 Artbank has grown to be one of the largest and most diverse collections of contemporary Australian art in the world. Our unique leasing scheme brings Australian contemporary artworks to the public in boardrooms, foyers and homes across the country.

The Artbank collection is especially proud to include some of the best examples of contemporary Indigenous art in Australia. Artbank endeavours to continue to support First Nations artists to tell important stories through their art. Artbank is privileged to play a small part in sharing these stories with Australia and the world.

The Grace Cossington Smith Gallery presents this exhibition to further embed Abbotsleigh's commitment to diversity within the school environment. Abbotsleigh highly values its partnerships with Yalari and the AISNSW Waratah Project. Yalari is a not-for-profit organisation that offers quality, secondary education scholarships at leading Australian boarding schools for Indigenous children from regional, rural and remote communities. The Waratah Project has laid foundations of how plans of change can be put into practice to better support our First Nations students. *Recollections* provides a unique opportunity for conversation around the issues and narratives presented by First Nations women artists.



Dennis Golding *Curator*

Recollections brings together a selection of works by First Nations women who trace generational experiences across time and place that links memory with traditional and contemporary expressions of artistic practice. Each of the artists' work extend stories of strength, resilience, cultural practice and caring for knowledge and children.

As a kid growing up in the inner-city suburb of Redfern, I remember being surrounded by large scale paintings made by my mother and grandmother. These paintings varied from different mediums such as canvas, textiles and everyday objects. *Recollections* reminds me of the stories my mother and grandmother painted that were centred around their own experiences as Aboriginal women. I remember seeing silhouettes of women who were depicted from a different time and landscapes. These works featured mothers sitting down with their children sharing food and water. Upon reflection, I grow more understanding that these paintings share continued practices through generations of women who nurture their children and pass down their knowledge. My mother handed me the



paintbrush at four, and since then the brush has transformed into a very powerful tool that allows me, like many other Indigenous artists, to re-write histories and reclaim stories from our own perspectives.

Julie Dowling is a Badimaya First Nations woman and artist. Her style of work draws mainly from Western traditions of portraiture while contextualising portraits with Indigenous Australian influences of Papunya Tula dot painting techniques. By using Indigenous and non-Indigenous expressions of artistic practice, Dowling is challenging the categorical boundaries between life experience, culture, race, class and histories.

Sharing truthful narratives of place, history and culture is a key motivation in Dowling's work. To unveil these truths, Dowling uses portraits of herself, ancestors, family and people who share common experiences to remind the viewer of Aboriginal custodianship and their survival. Sharing is also a common theme within Dowling's practice. The artist paints only when family and people are around her which reflect the shared experiences of Aboriginal culture and community. Dowling explains:

'I don't do paintings without people around, I don't feel like the work's accomplished anything unless it's been through the mill of the family.' (Dowling, 2005)

Dowling's 1999 painting *The Ungrateful* refers to the children who were stolen from their families by government authorities and 'adopted' into white families. I'm intrigued by the myriad of ways a viewer can perceive this painting, primarily because the work invites you to look directly in the eyes of the young children as they look back at you. Dowling allows the viewer to 'see through our eyes, as oppressed peoples, to have compassion and respond humanely, and to celebrate our survival (Dowling, 2005). Beyond this, I was drawn to Dowling's practice and particularly this painting because there are many layers and qualities that are used to provoke the audience to feel an emotion that is somewhat confronting about Australia's history.

The Ungrateful is a reminder of the Stolen Generations during the 1950s, 60s and 70s in Australia. Dowling reflects on this colonial past because the trauma is carried through new generations which then becomes a part of our history and contemporary experiences as First Nations people. This is called trans-generational trauma. Dowling has linked the experiences of her ancestors with First Nations people today, in which the process of removing Indigenous children from their families continues through foster care systems and juvenile detention.

Dowling is fearless, honest and shows great strength in her work to share truthful narratives. The artists paintings are visual

recounts of memory, experience and history that speaks through contemporary life which often critiques social and political climates of her people.

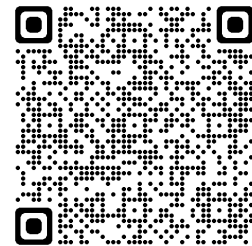
Many artists in this exhibition, like Dowling, practice art to share truths and stories that connect them to their family, ancestors, and Country. The artworks are visual reflections that are healing, strengthened, bold and accessible. They are multi-layered with realities that connect past with the present and future of First Nations cultural identity.

Dennis Golding April 2022

Bibliography

Dowling, C. (2005). *Julie Dowling: Biography*. Retrieved from National Gallery of Australia: <http://nga.gov.au/Exhibition/NIAT07/Detail.cfm?MnuID=7&SubMnuID=1&BioArtistIRN=18776&IRN=32619> [accessed July 3, 2012]

Dowling, J. (2005). *Interview with Julie Dowling*, sound recording. (J. Bannister, Interviewer).



Digital catalogue



Foyer

Dhuwarrwarr Marika

Makassan swords and long knives, 2019, natural pigments on stringybark, 204 x 81 cm

Rhonda Sharpe

Me, the Echidna Woman, 2019, soft sculpture, 104 x 35 x 30

Judy Watson

The Confetti of Empire, 1995, mixed media, 241 x 150 cm vessel with shells, 2006, pigment, pastel, charcoal, oil crayon and varnish on canvas, 193 x 103.5 cm

Room 1

Violet Petyarre

Ntange, 1991, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 168.5 x 63.5 cm

Karla Dickens

Dancing Hounds, 2013, drawing, found fabric, pencil, synthetic, polymer paint and adhesive on board
Howling Comrade, 2013, drawing, found fabric, pencil, synthetic, polymer paint and adhesive on board
Walking the Dog, 2013, drawing, found fabric, pencil, synthetic, polymer paint and adhesive on board

Karla Dickens

Pound-for-pound #8, 2019, aluminium, vintage mattock handle, waxed linen thread, cotton string, steel pulleys, emu feathers, 102.5 x 123 cm

Rea

rea:code – Cue Play, 1998, digital cibachrome print, 143 x 65 cm

rea:code – She Breaks, 1998, digital cibachrome print, 143 x 65 cm

Serena Bonson

Wangarra 1 and 2, 2014, natural earth pigments and synthetic fixative on stringybark

Dorothy Napangardi

Karntakurlangu Jukurrpa – Salt on the Mina Mina, 2002 (series of four works), synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 24 x 32 cm

Room 2

Marrnyula Mununggurr

Djapu Design, 2018, earth pigments on stringybark hollow pole, 217 x 17 cm

Banduk Marika

Guya and Bapi, 1985, linocut, 59 x 43.5h

Marrma Miyapunu Ga Mjaririmala, 1985, linocut

Lorna Fencer Napurrurla

Spring Water, 2000, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 152 x 103.5 cm

Julie Dowling

The Ungrateful, 1999, synthetic polymer paint, oil and gold on canvas, 102.5 x 123 cm

Therese Ritchie

Cry, 2005, digital print, 70.5 x 167 cm

State of Origin 1, 2005, digital print, 70.5 x 167 cm

Kitty Kantilla

Tunga (bark basket), 1997, natural earth pigments on bark, fibre string, 72.5 x 39 x 26 cm

Kitty Kantilla

Pumpuni Jilamara (Good Design), 1998, screenprint, 64.5 x 84.5 cm

Room 3

Megan Cope

The Blaktism, 2014, time-based work, high-definition digital video, duration: 8:04 mins

Iwantja Women's video project, with Kaylene Whiskey

Kungka Kunpu (Strong Women), 2021, time-based work, single-channel video, duration: 8:04 mins

Jazz Money

Crush, 2021, time-based work, single channel video, duration: 4:04 mins

Tracey Moffat

Up in the Sky #12, 1997, photolithographic offset print, 90.5 x 135 cm

Up in the Sky #25, 1997, photolithographic offset print, 90.5 x 135 cm