

King & Wood Mallesons First Nations Art Award

14 September – 14 October 2023

The third iteration of the King & Wood Mallesons (KWM) First Nations Art Award, hosted by Griffith University Art Museum in Meanjin/Brisbane in 2023, is a biennial Award, with each iteration presented in different locations across Australia where the firm has offices.

Established to promote and encourage the highest standards of First Nations art practice in Australia, the purpose of the KWM Art Award is to acknowledge the outstanding contribution made to Australian culture by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists in urban, regional, and remote areas throughout Australia. Esteemed Bundjalung curator, writer, artist, activist, and cultural advisor Djon Mundine OAM FAHA has been the Award's Patron since 2018.

The inaugural KWM Art Award exhibition was staged in 2018 in Eora/Sydney on Gadigal Country at NSW's Parliament House. In 2021, the second iteration of the Award took place at fortyfivedownstairs gallery in Naarm/Melbourne.

In 2023, the KWM Art Award's First Nations judging panel considered almost 70 entries and 28 finalist works to determine the winners. The judges include Daniel Browning, Bundjalung journalist,

documentary maker, sound artist and writer; Katina Davidson, Kullilli/Yuggera curator, Indigenous Australian Art at Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art; Emma Loban, Kulkalgal/Meriam/Wuthathi writer, curator, researcher, consultant, and award judge; and Warraba Weatherall, Kamilaroi visual artist, lecturer and Doctor of Visual Arts candidate at Queensland College of Art, Griffith University.

The prize pool of \$32,000 comprises four awards: the King & Wood Mallesons First Nations Art Award (\$25,000); the Queensland Local Artist Award (\$5,000); and two People's Choice Awards (\$1,000 each to be announced on 10 October 2023).

King & Wood Mallesons is a top-tier international law firm with a network of offices in Australia, Asia, and around the world. The firm believes it has a responsibility to use its lawyers' mastery of the law for the lasting prosperity of its clients, people, and communities. The firm's work acknowledges and reflects the injustice and legacy that continues to impact the lives of the First Peoples of Australia. KWM's approach is embedded with a deep recognition of the privilege, responsibility, and role it has to play in redressing these injustices.

Curator: Sarah Cox

Adam Gibbs Tjapaltjarri

Pintupi, b.1964 Papunya, NT. Lives and works in Kintore, NT.

Untitled 2022

Synthetic polymer paint on linen

Courtesy of the artist and Utopia Art Sydney

The artist states:

This painting depicts designs associated with Papunya, west of Alice Springs. This site is related to a ngari (honey ant) Dreaming. The fine lines in this work represent both the tracks of the honey ants and the sandhills that surround the site. This place forms part of the Tingari song cycle and events associated with the Tingari cycle are of a secret nature. The Tingari are a group of ancestral beings of The Dreaming who travelled over vast stretches of the country, performing rituals and creating and shaping particular locations.

Adam Gibbs Tjapaltjaarri was born in the west camp at Papunya in 1964, and was part of the Stolen Generation, taken away to Alice Springs. He returned to his parents in Papunya in 1980 and then moved with them to Kintore in 1981. His parents are Yala Yala Gibbs Tjungurrayi and Ningura Napurrula, both important artists. He started painting for Papunya Tula Artists around 1991 and in 2022 his work featured in the exhibition *Irrititja Kuwarri Tjungu I Past & Present Together: 50 Years of Papunya Tula Artists* at Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of the University of Virginia, USA.

Amy Loogatha

Kayardildt, b.1942 Bentinck Island, South Wellesley Islands, Gulf of Carpentaria, QLD. Lives and works on Bentinck Island, QLD.

My Country 2023

Synthetic polymer paint on round plywood board

Courtesy of the artist and Mornington Island Art Centre

The artist states:

My Country is behind Ninyilki, which is where I was born on a saltpan under the ti-trees. You can see Sweers Island from there. My father King Alfred didn't know I was coming; he was with his other wives, dragging grass across the sea to catch fish. It was my aunty who ran to let my father know. My grandmother delivered me, and she cut my cord with a special shell. They thought I would be a boy because I was so big in my mother's tummy. My father put me in a coolamon and carried me all the way to Oak Tree Point, a better place to camp. It was a long way for him to walk carrying me all the way.

I remember getting a message that Aunty Sally Gabori was coming over to Bentinck Island to show us something. She brought one of her paintings and gave it to Ethel. It was beautiful. So, we decided that we would follow Sally and paint too. I got a shock when I went to the Art Centre and saw all my sisters and aunties painting. Now I paint with them.

I remember when I was small, and planes used to fly overhead, we would run and hide in the mangroves. It was fun playing and growing up on Bentinck Island as small girls but that soon changed when they came and took us away and dumped us on Mornington Island in 1946. Life was very hard in the dormitory. We were fed flour with weevils in it, we had to bathe in saltwater and our clothes were made of rough material like the canvas we now paint on. I went out to the mainland to work for a few years on stations before coming back to Mornington and having children. When our land rights came it was great to be free of Mornington Island and return to our home. I took my grandchildren with me to show them their traditional Country and to live on our homeland once again.

Bob Gibson

Ngaanyatjarra b.1974 Papunya, NT. Lives and works in Tjukurla, WA.

Patjantja 2023

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Tjarlirli Art Centre

The artist states:

Bob's work is distinguished by the freedom of his composition and stylistic application of colour, which unfolds at a frenetic and decisive pace. The free brushstrokes and loose lines evident in this painting dance around each other, displaying the distinctive and compelling liveliness of his work. He carves up the canvas, creating wild shapes in an evocative and highly contemporary reinterpretation of Country. Bob enjoys telling the stories from his father's Country around Patjarr and his mother's Country Kulkurta. This work is about two snakes and two men who travelled north to Karrkurinkitja. As the party travelled, some strangers came up behind them and the snakes fled. Then Kurningka (boss of the Tingari men) went looking. The clouds were coming towards them. The snakes were travelling fast, and the water was rising, and the lady snake went in the ant's hole, but the other snake was left outside. Kurningka was saying, 'water is coming closer' but the other snake was too big for the hole. The Kurningka cut the snake and a lot of fat came out.

Gibson was born at Papunya in 1974, before moving with his family to the small community of Tjukurla during the outstation movement of the 1980s. This was a time when many Ngaanyatjarra people moved from government outposts near Alice Springs back into the Western Desert to be closer to their ancestral homelands. Gibson's mother Mary Gibson is also a leading Tjarlirli artist, whose Country is deep in the Western Desert, while his father's Country is on the edge of the Gibson Desert Nature Reserve.

Brian Robinson

Maluyligal and Wuthathi b.1973 Thursday Island, TSI. Lives and works in Cairns, QLD.

Wapi Arai 2022

Vinylcut

Courtesy of the artist and Mossenson Galleries

The artist states:

‘Wapi Arai’ is a phrase from Kala Lagaw Ya, Western Island (Zenadth Kes) language, that means to catch fish. I still recall many of the fishing expeditions I undertook with my late athe (grandfather) Ali Drummond across the waters near my home of Waiben. An average day would begin before the crack of dawn, with the first task being loading the dinghy with all the necessary supplies—especially Scotch Finger and Sao biscuits and the occasional tin of smoked oysters. Piled up in grandpop’s rusty wheelbarrow, these loads were carefully wheeled from his front stairs down the road to where the dinghy was anchored, near the old pearl lugger workshop sheds. We left at high tide, which meant a brisk early morning swim out to the dinghy to ferry it back in. We would then set out across the harbour towards Ngurupai, dodging buoys, beacons, channel markers, dinghies, pearling luggers, and the occasional ferry to cast nets for sardine at the wharf. After catching sardine, we would head off to one of athe’s secret fishing spots—usually in the middle of nowhere—and drop anchor for a couple of hours. This normally provided adequate time to fill the bottom of the boat with reef fish of all sorts and sizes. This was a fisherman’s paradise—the salt air, the wind the water and the smell of the fish. Following this would be a lengthy ride on the bike back to family, friends, and local fish stores across the island delivering the day’s catch. And to think . . . all of this happened before lunchtime!

Cameron Ross

Kaditj b.1966 Alice Springs, NT. Lives and works in Port Augusta, SA.

The White Kangaroo 2023

Synthetic polymer paint on Galicia linen

Courtesy of the artist and Art Mob, Aboriginal Fine Art

The artist states:

In November 1983, I was two weeks shy of turning 17. I was based at Ambalindum Station, east of Yipirinya (Alice Springs). I remember one day riding horses with my cousin; we were horse tailing from noon until 9pm. Just on dark, we stopped for water. After mounting up and riding again for a few minutes in hilly rock country, I saw standing on a ledge a pure white kangaroo. It was majestic, unbelievable. As if in a trance, I just stared for some time. This moment felt special to me. It was like he was waiting for me to arrive. Then I realised this was the Kadatji Man and I best gallop away in a real hurry. I was frightened, not knowing what was going to happen to me. That night I got sick, and within three days I was in hospital in Alice Springs, with boils on both my kidneys. For one month I suffered, the condition for which the doctors had no explanation. They had never seen nor heard of this before. I explained that in our culture the white kangaroo is a Kadatji Man, and he did this to me as punishment for looking at him. Pretty amazing, don't you think?

Ross started painting in 2004 in Alice Springs when he experimented with the pointed end of a wooden skewer, creating patterns and details that displayed a unique, fine pointillist style. He starts his paintings by dotting and outlining the main figures he wants to showcase and then fills in the backgrounds, creating a painting within a painting. Ross believes these figures and shapes are a result of spiritual beings guiding him. He shares the comprehensive stories associated with his works by handwriting them on the back of every canvas. A painting takes him more than six months to paint due to their intricate detail. In February 2021, Ross held his first solo exhibition – *Yipirinya Rainbow Country* at Art Mob in Hobart, Tasmania.

d Harding

Bidjara, Ghungalu and Garingbal b.1982 Moranbah, QLD. Lives and works in Meanjin / Brisbane, QLD.

gurri (Bidjara blanket) 2023

Wool felt, belt, vitrine

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery

The artist states:

Since 2018, I have been returning to my grandfather, Ted Lawton's Bidjara Country, on top of the great dividing range. I have needed to learn how to be on that country, in the open, in the cold months, when temperatures normally drop below zero degrees centigrade for days in succession. There is Bidjara language, recorded in the 20th Century, that names blanket / swag - and in the nuances of the translations, I hear the Bidjara language of cloaks. I used to love this rainbow belt, as a young scene-queen in my 20's, in the Fortitude Valley. For a number of years now, this rainbow belt has held my bedding together, on my return to Bidjara and Garingbal and Ghungalu territories in Central Queensland.

Harding works in a wide variety of media to explore the visual and social languages of their communities as cultural continuum. A descendant of Bidjara, Ghungalu and Garingbal peoples, they draw upon and maintain the spiritual and philosophical sensibilities of their cultural inheritance within the framework of contemporary art internationally. Their work has been the subject of numerous solo exhibitions including *We breathe together*, Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen, Norway (2022); *Through a lens of visitation* (touring), Monash University Museum of Art, Melbourne and Chau Chak Wing Museum, University of Sydney, Sydney (2021-2022); and *Current Iterations*, Institute of Modern Art, Brisbane (2019); as well as group exhibitions, such as *Matter as Actor*, Lisson Gallery, London (2023); *rīvus*, 23rd Biennale of Sydney, The Cutaway, Barangaroo, Sydney (2022); and *Reclaim the Earth*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2022).

Donovan Gilbert

Wajarri b.1974 Mullewa, WA. Lives and works in Wiluna, WA.

Honey Ants 2022

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Yamaji Art Centre

The artist states:

This painting depicts an underground honey ant colony, showing the various different chambers and levels of the nest before the honey is extracted.

Donovan was born in 1974 at Billabalong Station out of Mullewa. He grew up and has lived in Wiluna nearly all his life, attending school at the Wiluna Remote Community School, and Meekatharra District High School.

Fiona Mosby

Kala Kawaw Ya b.1985 Dauan Island, TSI. Lives and works on Moa Island, TSI.

Release 2023

Monoprint, ink on cotton rag paper

Courtesy of the artist and Moa Arts

The artist states:

Release is about letting go of things that bind and hold us down. The bird image depicts freedom and flying above all circumstances in life and walking together embracing and walking in unity.

As a young passionate woman, I am dedicated and committed to being a role model for the younger generations, to use what knowledge I have about culture and tradition to make an impact, to tell the story of an island woman in preserving and embracing our cultural rights. Art is my tool to visually communicate my personal values and beliefs.

As a senior artist, my speciality major is in printmaking—monoprints, linocut, etching, and screen-printing. I have also explored and practised weaving techniques from a young age with my grandmother, which I retell in my art. Through my employment working at Moa Arts, I have also learnt many other invaluable techniques and skills.

Freddy Purla

Anmatyerre/ Alyawarre b.1968 Darwin, NT. Lives and works in Sydney, NSW.

My Grandmother's Country 2023

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Kate Owens Gallery

The artist states:

For me, Country is much more than a place. Country is family, culture, identity. Country is self. I regularly visit my grandmother's Country Atnwengerrp, which lies in a remote desert region northeast of Alice Springs. The Elders have entrusted me with the cultural knowledge and responsibility to care for the land. Maintaining connection to my grandmother's Country is vital for me to pass on important stories to my children, so they know who they are and where they come from. I seek advice from my Elders to make sure I paint this Country in the 'proper way'.

Freddy Purla is the son of artist Barbara Weir, and grandson of the late Minnie Pwerle. He is also the adopted great-nephew of the late Emily Kame Kngwarreye. Surrounded by famous artists and inspired by the success of his extended family, he began painting in 1989. Purla had regularly visited Utopia with his family as a very young child, where they often stayed for long periods before travelling on to Alice Springs or Adelaide. One of his most vivid memories as a child was of the strange-looking creature, the scorpion. Coincidentally, the Scorpion Dreaming was later passed down to him by his grandmother's family. As its sting is often very painful, the scorpion is left undisturbed and always respected. It is rarely seen during the day and only the desert sands display signs of the scorpion's track. Purla's paintings represent the courtship dance between the male and female scorpion. Each scorpion interlocks their pincers together while travelling back and forth in what can only be described as a dance for several hours—sometimes as many as 24 hours! The tracks that are left behind create an artwork on the ground. These criss-crossed tracks are hard to find in the desert. Purla's paintings powerfully represent the energy and vigour of the many movements made by the scorpions in their ritual desert dance.

Jeanette James

Palawa kani b.1952 Launceston, TAS. Lives and works in Hobart, TAS.

Trimanya Krakani Ta (Echidna at Rest) 2023

Echidna quills and kangaroo sinew

Courtesy of the artist

The artist states:

While Jeanette began working in shells, she has extended her repertoire to include echidna quills and other animal claws. Fibre and kangaroo sinew are often used in the stringing of traditional or exhibition work. Her contemporary designs also use shells, echidna quills and eagle claws in keeping with her traditional work. As the artist states: "I have made this work in recognition of my ancestors, who utilised both echidnas and sinew in their everyday life. By repurposing animals that have died, I feel I am giving them respect and paying homage to the animals and their importance to our old people. It takes at least twelve months to prepare the quills. I also harvested sinew. In this piece, the quills are from one animal, which accounts for the even colour tone (as colour tones vary so much between animals). Traditions evolve and I am sure what I do today will become the traditions of future generations, which is very inspiring and makes me want to continue to be inventive.

James continues the tradition of Aboriginal shell necklace stringing as passed on by her family. It is a practice that has continued for generations. Currently, James spends her time designing and making traditional and contemporary shell jewellery.

Highlights of her career include winning the Wandjuk Marika Memorial 3D award at the 2000 National Telstra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards and the Premiers Award for Artistic Excellence at the 2014 Tasmanian Arts and Craft Fair.

Jennifer Herd

Mbabaram b.1951 Brisbane, QLD. Lives and works in Eumundi, QLD.

Window Pain – Portal to the Past 2023

Re-purposed Federation window, vinyl decals and digital print on Dibond aluminium

Courtesy of the artist and FireWorks Gallery

The artist states:

Jennifer Herd's work harks back to her Mother's Country in Far North Queensland. Herd tells her stories of displacement and fortitude not with aggression or vengeance but with the objective of connecting sophisticated imagery and design back to her ancestral home adjacent to the sites of historical massacres. *Window Pain – Portal to the Past* reveals glimpses of frontier resistance too often camouflaged in the nation's narrative. Central to the work are geometric shield designs. These diamond elements are perforated signposts to past skirmishes and the wounds of contested ground. The diamonds work with the composition of the Federation-style window-frame to provide a sharp focal point, channelling one's view to what lies beneath the colonial fabric. Positioning the viewer on the inside looking out invites the viewer to see through a different lens, focusing on Aboriginal perspectives of the colonial frontier, portrayed by the backdrop blood-red warrior image.

These historical figures emerged from the artist's research into the frontier wars in Queensland. A key reference is the etching *Two of the Natives of New Holland, Advancing to Combat* by Thomas Chambers (after Sydney Parkinson) (1773), from the Russell Grimwade collection. The two men in the image are seen brandishing shields and spears in acts of resistance and defiance.

Herd is a current and founding member of the Aboriginal collective proppaNOW. She took up the inaugural leadership position of convenor for Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art at the Queensland College of Art (QCA), Griffith University. In 2003, she won the QCA Graduate Students Prize, and the Theiss Art Prize for her Master of Visual Arts.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

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Judges' comments:

Jennifer is a pioneer, a critical force not only in Queensland but nationally. She is someone who has nurtured the creative culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. She has created the context in which this prize has happened. She is an educator and an artist who feverishly produces art.

This work itself expertly references her own previous artworks within - the pin pricks referencing massacres, the diamond shield designs of her ancestors and the signifiers of early colonial expansion; the famed Queenslander architecture. Together, they share stories of the dark history around domestic servitude by Aboriginal women.

Joanne Currie Nalingu

Gunggari b.1964 Mitchell, QLD. Lives and works in Brisbane, QLD.

Shield Shadows 2023

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and FireWorks Gallery

Joanne Currie's work is elegant and minimal: lines of detail follow river currents that occasionally open in eye-like shapes to invite the viewer to consider the infinite structures and patterns of meaning underneath the watery veil. In her series *River Line* (1998–ongoing), Joanne experiments with new treatments for the building up of grounds, textures, and the finishes of her paintings. The importance of the river as a metaphor is a constant, stemming from her early life living on the banks of the Maranoa River in Mitchell. But Joanne also realises that these are meditative interpretations—as she states: “that river is really a symbol for all rivers, for all people”. Her paintings depict water as an endless flow and universal life source. Along with her distinctive river lines, paint is delicately blended to create an effect reminiscent of morning light—an implicit and glowing confidence to be found and measured day by day. Also in this painting is a mysterious shadowy shield form, floating above the work. The artist continues to reference the Maranoa shield as both a direct reference to her birthplace and to her survival and fortitude through the turbulence of life. As Joanne strives to balance both the spiritual and political, the impact of these works' seeps in slowly, held taught by a filigree of the eddying white lines, and allows us all to be momentarily mesmerised.

The importance of the river as a metaphor is a constant in Currie's painting, as this takes her back to the hardships of her early life living on the banks of the Maranoa River. In 2008, she won the Wynne Prize at the AGNSW and has been a finalist numerous times in the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award. Currie's work is held in numerous private and public collections including QAGOMA and the Museum of Brisbane.

Kumanjayi (Joanne) Napangardi Wheeler

Western Arrernte b.1969-2023 Hermannsburg, NT. Lived and worked in Alice Springs, NT.

Women's Ceremony in the Bush 2023

Synthetic polymer paint on Belgian linen

Courtesy of the artist and Tangentyere Artists

Of this work, the artist states, "Women's Ceremony in the bush. Ladies dancing, two different groups (left and right). Some ladies sitting, singing. Some ladies cooking, kangaroo tail, tea, soup, making damper, next to the (Finke) River. They in the bush, long way from community. Only ladies and young girls, learning young girls, grandmothers, aunties, mothers all show them how. Lots of ladies from different communities, different places, all coming together for ceremony." Wheeler is the great granddaughter of renowned watercolourist Albert Namatjira (1902-1959). She has had a long and celebrated artistic career and joined Tangentyere Artists in 2013. Wheeler holds strong connections to Tjoritja / West MacDonnell Ranges, her mother's Country and to Kaltukatjara, her father's Country. She also retains strong links to Anmayyerr and Luritja Country, frequently travelling for cultural and familial obligations. Wheeler often paints stories of the olden days at Ntaria and Palm Valley, NT, with her figurative landscapes bursting with vibrant colours, fields of dots, rolling ranges, playful animals and animated figures.

Johnathon World Peace Bush

Tiwi b.1974 Darwin, NT. Lives and works in Milikapiti, Melville Island, NT.

The Last Supper and the Big Breakfast 2022

Locally sourced natural earth pigments, ochres on linen

Courtesy of the artist, Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association and THIS IS NO FANTASY GALLERY

The artist states:

For both my Tiwi people and my global family I want culture to be strong. If you don't have culture, you fall and have to fight to reconnect. Without culture we are all lost...I hold the Western and Aboriginal law in my hands for all humankind to be equal. I have to balance both laws. I have been through many obstacles in order for my words to be heard. I hope my artwork gives a glimpse into my strong beliefs of a want for world peace and equality for all humankind: 'This time is your time. It is time for you to talk big. You need to fight to keep culture alive.' I remember my older male ancestors saying this to me. They have all passed away now, but they have left work for me to do...it is important to link the past to the present for healthy future regeneration. Like a chain reaction. To fix up a family tree you have to go down to the roots and into the past. Love is the fruit of good family. I work for a future that is bright and where everything will be alright.

Johnathon's ochre paintings are a unique combination of Tiwi visual culture and his personal views on global politics, religion and cultural heritage. His painting techniques reflect *jilamara* (ceremonial Tiwi body paint design) used to create representations of political figureheads, stories of historical crimes against indigenous people and Catholic imagery that relates specifically to the colonial experiences of the Tiwi. Since a mission was established on Bathurst Island in 1911, Catholicism remains embedded in the colonial experience of the Tiwi people. In many of his works, Johnathon recreates iconic Catholic narratives often from representations by historical western artists and then he combines them with Tiwi cultural designs using local earth pigments collected from Country. The power of Johnathon's work is that it frames these narratives from a Tiwi perspective, celebrating the resilient and ancient living culture to which he belongs.

Keemon Williams

Meriam Mir, Koa, Kuku Yalanji b.1999 Brisbane, QLD. Lives and works in Brisbane, QLD.

Self Portrait (But I always wanted to be one of the Macho Men) 2023

Digital Print

Courtesy of the artist

The artist states:

Self Portrait (But I always wanted to be one of the Macho Men) renders a still-life dramatisation of the interior self and its inheritances from those who've come before. Conversation unfolds between Randy Jones of The Village People, the illuminating philosophy of the late Gordon Bennett, and the artist himself in front of an inimitable Albert Namatjira backdrop. Keemon Williams pays tribute to and celebrates identities of Camp, Queerness, and Indigeneity through Western tropes of 'being.' The 'Cowboy' exists in a world of his own, one that's part fiction, part romance, and part liberation. Keemon has developed a character out of this world that embraces and exalts the tensions of identity to forge a masculinity that prioritises play. He says: "I too always wanted to be that cowboy. To embody macho that was both fluid and fun. Macho in a way that denies the gaze of all other 'men' in the room.

Williams is a queer Meanjin/Brisbane-based artist of Koa, Kuku Yalanji and Meriam Mir descent with disability. He utilises an array of mediums old and new to expand his relationships with location, personal histories, and cultural plasticity and to forge a sense of belonging within all parts of the self. Through installation, photography, ceramics, new media and virtual technologies, he seeks to challenge notions of queerness, Indigeneity and Australian identity.

Williams graduated from QUT's Bachelor of Fine Arts (Visual Arts) program and was subsequently awarded the Hilde Chenhall Memorial Scholarship for Art and given the opportunity to present his graduate work *Heritage Listed* (2019) at the 2020 Hatched National Graduate Exhibition at Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts (PICA).

QLD LOCAL ARTIST AWARD

King & Wood Mallesons First Nations Art Award 2023

Judges' comments:

This photographic work is a visual disruption. It has cheek, it is camp, and it is courageous. Aboriginal art needs disruptors and here, clever, witty decisions have been made by Keemon accessing a whole other language. The global pop references are a bold, uncompromising statement and the judges recognise that. It is a celebration of black, queer joy.

In awarding Keemon this Queensland award, it is an encouragement to the artist that this practice is going in the right direction and his instincts are right.

Kim Napurrula

Pintupi b.1960 near Kiwirrkurra, WA. Lives and works in Kiwirrkura community, WA and Kintore, NT.

Untitled 2022

Synthetic polymer paint on linen

Courtesy of the artist and Utopia Art Sydney

The artist states:

This painting depicts designs associated with the rock hole site of Marrapinti, west of Pollock Hills in Western Australia. A large group of ancestral women camped at this rock hole before continuing their travels further east, passing through Wala Wala, Kiwirrkurra and Ngaminya. While at the site, the women made nose bones, also known as marrapinti, which are worn through a hole pierced through the septum. These nose bones were originally used by both men and women, but are now only inserted by the older generation on ceremonial occasions. As the women continued their travels east, they gathered edible berries known as kampurarrpa (desert raisin) from the small shrub *solanum centrale*. These berries can be eaten directly from the plant but are sometimes ground into a paste and cooked on the coals as a type of damper.

Napurrula is the widow of former Papunya Tula artist George Tjapanangka (1950-2021), and the sister of Bobby West Tjupurrula. Her father Freddy West Tjakamarra (1932-1994) was one of the original Papunya Tula Artists. Napurrula completed her first paintings for Papunya Tula Artists in 2002, at which time she was an occasional painter; today, however, she is a regular artist with the company.

Louise Daniels

Palawa b.1960 Ulverstone, TAS. Lives and works in Ulverstone, TAS.

Colonial Stain 2023

Synthetic polymer paint and found charcoal on linen

Courtesy of the artist

The artist states:

Hundreds of years old, these oyster shells have fallen from their midden in Tebrakunna, in the far northeast of Lutruwita (Tasmania). *Ostrea angasi* is the native estuarine oyster that was abundant across Lutruwita prior to colonisation, but the beds were destroyed by the settlers within one hundred years. Long ago, these oysters were enjoyed by my ancestors, whose discarded shells formed the middens in the Little Musselroe Bay sand dunes today. Ongoing storms have visibly eroded the dunes, causing the shells to tumble down to the pristine beach. Bleached white over time, many oyster shells still contain ash from the fires of the Old Ones, and plant matter holds it together. The ocean reclaims these fallen shells, completing the tidal cycle so long after their harvest. Our families shared the shellfish around their campfires for thousands of years. Then sealers arrived to plunder the natural wealth of Bass Strait. They caused great suffering and misery, and many were cruel. They shot our men and stole our women and girls. The blood of our men flowed red into that beautiful white sand, until finally there was none left to spill. This work represents the tragic and irreversible colonial stain of those events on my people and our history.

Daniels holds Bachelor of Contemporary Arts (Honours) and Master of Education Studies (Intercultural Communication and Education) degrees from the University of Tasmania. She is a published researcher and many of her recent studies and artworks explore her connection to her Palawa ancestors who endured the brutal colonisation of Lutruwita. Her art practice includes landscape paintings, charcoal drawings and figurative wire sculpture. She gathers charcoal on Country and uses it to draw on paper, canvas, and linen, where the natural material merges and strengthens the relationship between narrative, place, medium and artwork.

Mary Dhapalany

Yolŋu b.1950 outstation Gulpilul, near Ramingining in Arnhem Land, NT.
Lives and works in Ramingining, NT.

Twin Mat 2023

Pandanus weaving

Courtesy of the artist and Bula'Bula Arts

The artist states:

Mary Dhapalany is a master weaver who creates her woven elements using pandanus from the surrounding Ramingining bush. Her work embodies the traditional knowledge of the Yolŋu Nation. The plant material is worked and treated in the ways passed on from ancestors and in so doing, she recreates and identifies with sacred ceremonial objects that connect Yolŋu to each other, to their past, their Creative Beings and to their Country. For this piece, Mary has created a 'twin' mat. Mary is the twin sister of the late David Gulpilil, and this piece represents the unending spiritual bond she has with him.

The artist is a proud Mandhalpuy woman, who has been a practising artist for four decades. Her weaving artwork is representative of traditional craft passed down through generations of women weavers in her family. The 70-year-old artist uses natural dyes, extracted from earth pigment or plant roots, to colour the pandanus leaf (gunga) used in her work. Through her career and accolades, she has made Yolngu weaving visible on national and international stages.

Dhapalany's weavings are much sought after and she was recently invited to represent Australia in the Aichi Triennale, Japan and in the Craft Masters Asia Pacific Program, China. She was part of the team who won the Community Collaboration Award and Fashion Design Award at the 2020 National Indigenous Fashion Awards for her collaboration with MAARA Collective designer Julie Shaw.

HIGHLY COMMENDED

King & Wood Mallesons First Nations Art Award 2023

Judges' Comments:

This extraordinary work resonated with the judges for the deft weaving practice that is visible and the backstory that led to its' creation. A 'twin mat' representing two embryonic forms that stand for the artist and her late brother is not only technically flawless, it is also innovative in the way it bends the medium to the will of the artist.

Matilda Nona

Kala Lagaw Ya b.1974 Thursday Island, Torres Strait Islands, QLD. Lives and works on Badu Island, Torres Strait Islands, QLD.

Garaz 2023

Lino print

Courtesy of the artist and Badu Art Centre

The artist states:

The fish traps that the Torres Strait Islanders used were built by our ancestors thousands of years ago. Each fish trap belonged to different families to use and look after. The stone-wall fish traps that were built to trap marine animals are the largest structures built by First Nations peoples and are visible from the air. These traps were designed to be most effective at mid-tides. They were also used for cultural ceremonies, where our younger men and women were taught the ways, signs, and readings of the tides to best catch seafood for family and community. The circular patterns in my image represent the rocks that makes the garaz (fish trap). At the bottom of the image is a pattern of a local vine we call sazi and the marking outside the garaz represents our low tides. Sazi is crushed with a rock to create a milky sap, which is then soaked in the sea water within the trap. This action takes the oxygen out of the water, trapping the fish in the garaz, which float to the surface of the water for us to gather. I truly believe that these First Nations' traditional structures should be culturally listed and that our families need to maintain these culturally important practices.

Nona's works on paper are dynamic depictions of the cultural life and traditions of Badu Island. Through her ambitious and large-scale linocuts with intricate patterns, she explores and engages with Torres Strait Islander culture, history and tradition from new and innovative perspectives.

Nyinta Donald

Pitjantjatjara b.1946 Bloodwood Bore on Angas Downs Station, NT. Lives and works in Alice Springs, NT.

Sorry business at Kaltukatjara 2023

Synthetic polymer paint on Belgian Linen

Courtesy of the artist and Tangentyere Artists Aboriginal Art Centre

The artist states:

Sorry business at Kaltukatjara. Sad times. Families gathered, sitting down. Families came from far and wide. I am there with my family too. Pastor at doorway of the church. We are all mourning the passing of my aunty together, singing, praying, loving her. Palya.

Donald's figurative paintings depict the transition of the 'old days', 'in-between days' and 'new days' of her Country at Kaltukatjara (Docker River) in the Northern Territory—a firsthand documentation of her community's lived experience pre- and post-European arrival in Central Australia.

Donald also paints stories informed by her spiritual beliefs, exploring the intertwining of Indigenous spirituality with her upbringing on the Areyonga Lutheran Mission.

She joined Tangentyere Artists in 2016, previously painting with the Ngurratjuta Art Centre, and remains an active member of the Central Australian Women's Choir.

Her work is held by the Art Gallery of South Australia, Artbank and in the Slattery Collection. She was winner of the Stories Prize in the Advocate Art Award (2021), highly commended in the Macquarie Emerging Artist Prize (2019), and a finalist in the Vincent Lingiari Art Award (2021) and Blake Prize for Religious Art (2018).

Paula Savage

Kala Lagaw Ya b.1982 Moa Island, Torres Strait Islands, QLD. Lives and works on Moa Island, Torres Strait Islands, QLD.

Troller Boat, 2022

Linocut, ink on cotton rag paper

Courtesy of the artist and Moa Arts

The artist states:

Troller boats are usually seen in our waters in the western, central, and eastern part of the Torres Strait. The eastern edge of the top end of the Great Barrier Reef has deeper waters, it's usually known for great fishing and diving. Business is taken place where the divers sell the day's catch to the trollers and then pack them to send down south and overseas to bigger and wider market.

My name is Paula Savage, I'm from Kubin Community, Moa Island in the near western cluster of islands in the Torres Strait. I was born here on Moa Island and am a resident in the community. I come from the Serganilgal clan group from the village of Dabu on Moa Island, and the Kaurareg Nation of Muralag and Kiriri.

Art was my interest from such a young age and during high school I studied visual arts and commercial arts. After leaving school I pursued other job careers. In early 2017 I became a member of Ngalmun Lagau Minal Art Centre (Moa Arts) in Kubin Community to take up my passion for visual arts again.

A lot of my interest in art is in weaving, lino printing, tie-dying, fabric printing, drawing, carving, and jewellery making.

My artworks are based on my cultural heritage, stories in traditional knowledge, techniques and styles. I like to express my art based on our everyday lifestyle, including our cultural laws and customs.

Ray Midjandi and Rona Rubuntja

Mirarr/West Arrente b.2000 Darwin, NT. Lives and works in Jabiru, NT.
Panangka/ Western Aranda b.1970 Alice Springs, NT. Lives and works in
Hermannsburg, NT.

Black Speed 2023

Terracotta and underglaze

Courtesy of the artists and Marrawuddi Arts and Culture and Hermannsburg Potters

Black Speed is the outcome of a collaboration between Ray Mudjandi of Marrawuddi Arts and Culture and Rona Rubuntja of Hermannsburg Potters. It represents Ray Mudjandi's latest superhero story, inspired by his recent research trip to Western Arrente Country, where he met with his father's family for the first time. During this trip, Ray travelled to Hermannsburg Potters, where he was drawn to using clay as a medium. He developed a working relationship with Rona, where they developed this collaborative sculpture. Together, Ray and Rona hand built the vessel, developing the story, and then Rona finished the underglaze painting. This story focuses on a Bininj kid who receives superpowers after touching a rock that fell out of the sky (which happened to be from Devil's Marbles). After touching this rock, the Bininj kid suddenly becomes fast and powerful when playing basketball—which is directly referenced on the handmade vessel.

Realiu was his name before Black Speed. Mealiu is the cousin brother.

Black Speed is black, yellow and orange, he's got big nose like Bininj, like this one.
—Ray Mudjandi, 2023

Mudjandi, from Mirarr and Western Arrente clans, is an artist living in Djibiorrk in Kakadu National Park. He was born in Garramilla/Darwin and grew up between Djibiorrk and Katherine. As a young child he experienced and overcame several serious health conditions, which has informed his creative practice. As a teenager, Ray was mentored by Western Arnhem and Kakadu National Park senior cultural artists Graham Rostron and Abel Naborlhborlh. He then began working with arts therapist and artist, Damien Kamholtz.

Rubuntja is the niece of famous watercolourist and elder Wenten Rubuntja (1923-2005). She joined the Hermannsburg Potters in 1998 and has since established herself as one of the most prominent senior artists of the group, participating in over 20 exhibitions in Australia and internationally, including the highly acclaimed exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria, *Our Land Is Alive: Hermannsburg Potters for Kids* in 2015/2016.

Reggie Uluru

Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara b.1939 Paramita, near Indulkana, SA. Lives and works in Mutitjulu, NT.

Wati Ngintaka (Perentie Lizard Man), 2023

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas

Courtesy of the artist and Walkatjara Art

The artist states:

This is a straight story, from the Tjukurpa (Creation Time), and nobody can change that story. This is about the Ngintaka... it's an old story, taught by my father and my grandfather. I'm happy doing this painting because I'm explaining my story. People will see the story of what I'm trying to tell in the painting. My history, my culture, I'm teaching my culture through this painting. I feel proud to teach young ones about Country, my Tjukurpa, our learning stories, about family ancestors, how to find waterholes and best tucker. Show them the right way, connection to culture how my father taught me long time ago. I now live at old people's (aged care) in Mutitjulu, where I paint Wati Ngintaka (Perentie Lizard Man).

I was born in Paramita near Indulkana in the bush and was given my name at Todd Morden Station. As a boy I was grown up by my sister in the nearby station Amuroona, then as a young man in Mimili. I spent much of my working life as a stockman in the northern lands of South Australia before returning to my father's country, Uluru. I was strong from hard work on horses, but my brother Cassidy was quicker. Mostly we looked after cattle, and sometimes camels. Had to be careful as they were mean...bite you.

Reggie is tjilpi Yankuntjatjara, a Yankunytjatjara speaking senior Aboriginal man from the Central Desert of Australia. As a well-known Traditional Owner of Uluru, Reggie took part in the official handback by the Australian Federal Government in 1985. He worked as a ranger in the jointly managed Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park before becoming a tour guide with Anangu Tours. He has taught countless visitors his ancestral lore and is a leading elder in Mutitjulu community and senior singer for ceremony at Uluru.

Richard Bell

Kamilaroi, Kooma, Jiman, Gurang Gurang b.1953 Charleville, QLD. Lives and works in Brisbane, QLD.

No Tin Shack 2022

HD single-channel video, colour, sound, 7 minutes 29 seconds

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery

The artist states:

My family lived on a small plot of land that I believe was part of an Aboriginal Reserve on the outskirts of the outback town of Mitchell, Queensland. I still remember the day a large vehicle pulled up outside, then a man loudly knocked on our front door. He was the Booringa Shire Council Health Inspector—a pallid white man, dressed in a pressed white shirt and dark blue tie accompanied by grey shorts and knee-high whitish socks. The wide-brimmed hat he wore did nothing to hide his arrogance and air of superiority to which I took an instant dislike. He told my mum to pack our belongings so that Council could demolish our home. We were stunned, to say the least as we had no letterbox, of course we received no notice to vacate. Our home had no running water, electricity, or sewerage. The Sergeant of Police asked my mother if we had anywhere to move to and she replied that we did hadn't. He turned to the Health Inspector and instructed him to stop the proceedings because we didn't have anywhere to go. I could see that he was very disappointed, which cheered up my brother Marshall and me, if only momentarily. He stormed over to his car and sped off into town. Sometime later, he reappeared to recommence his dirty work. We found out later that there were no vacant properties in Mitchell at that time. However, there were two condemned houses. Mr Health Inspector apparently arranged for one of those houses to be uncondemned, where we didn't live happily ever after. Uncondemned. Is that even a word?

Richard Bell, 7 October 2022

|WINNER

King & Wood Mallesons First Nations Art Award 2023

Judges' comments:

An autobiographical short film, *No Tin Shed, 2023* represents a critical turn in the artist's approach. In turning the gaze inward, Bell has produced a document that honours his lived experience of an unrecorded act of state violence in a truth-telling. The artist's eye is apparent even in stills from the film, that are tightly-composed, beautiful and cinematographic. Overlaid with a soundtrack that is spare and evocative, *No Tin Shed* is a deeply personal work in which the artist lays himself bare – that alone deserves greater recognition.

In winning this award it resonates with all issues around sovereignty, regarding access to land, alienation to land and from society. It shares a lived experience in line with national themes of truth-telling; especially those recent histories that remain conveniently untold. In fact, it is evocative of the lived experience of many Indigenous people.

It is a sharp, short, gut punch.

Ryan Presley

Marri Ngarr b.1987 Alice Springs, NT. Lives and works in Brisbane, QLD.

Party Popper (Heart Stopper) 2022

Graphite and gold pencil on Arches paper

Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery

The artist states:

PARTY POPPER (HEART STOPPER) is a pencil drawing depicting feminine hands firing off a round from a taser. Tasers, also known as stun guns, are said to be non-lethal weapons, and are widely used by the Australian police force. There have been a multitude of taser brutality incidents since their inclusion into the weaponry of the police force. Taser charges have been found to be strongly linked to heart rhythm problems, sudden cardiac arrest, and death. When tasers are fired, they release a confetti-like burst. These circular stamps are printed with the identification numbers of the charge cartridge shot. The taser logo on the drawing has been offered as an electrified heart.

Presley's father's family is Marri Ngarr and originate from the Moyle River region in the Northern Territory. His mother's family were Scandinavian immigrants to Australia.

His practice wrestles with themes of power and dominion—in particular, how religion and economic control served colonialism and empire building over time, and the representation of its customs and edifices in our everyday lives. Presley holds a PhD in Visual Art from Queensland College of Art, Griffith University, 2016.

Sally M Nangala Mulda

Arrernte/Luritja b.1957 Titjikala, NT. Lives in Abbott's Town Camp by the Todd River and works in Alice Springs, NT.

Two woman, two man, two story 2023

Synthetic polymer paint on Belgian linen

Courtesy of the artist and Tangentyere Artists

The artist states:

Sally paints about her life, the people, and events she observes daily as a resident of one of Alice Springs Town Camps. As the title of the work indicates, it depicts two women and two men at dinner time. The women are eating damper with honey jam, while the two men are talking about sickness. There is a dog sleeping.

Tangentyere Artists represents residents of Town Camps, the name used for the eighteen Aboriginal housing associations in Alice Springs. Established by Aboriginal people as a not-for-profit organisation, the art centre fosters the creative aspirations of Town Camp artists, who are an important voice in our national conversation. Town Camp residents live under some of the most challenging conditions in Australia. Despite this, or because of it, the art centre has given rise to a unique brand of visual storytelling.

Mulda's figurative paintings of bold fluid movement, layering of colours and cursive descriptive text candidly depict lived experiences within this camp. She lays bare her reality, cataloguing domestic scenes; cooking damper and talking story, alongside insights into life since the 2007 Northern Territory Intervention; police pouring out grog and people camping in the riverbed. Mulda paints her stories with personal and political honesty.

Solomon Booth

Kala Lagaw Ya b.1981 Darwin, NT. Lives and works on Moa Island, TSI, QLD.

Mindfulness 2023

Monoprint, ink on cotton rag paper

Courtesy of the artist and Moa Arts

The artist states:

Modern times has shown that plastic bags are detrimental to the environment and may often be mistaken for jellyfishes, which are a food source for marine predators, such as the waru (green-sea turtle). Waru can be found throughout the waters of Zenadh Kes (Torres Strait Islands) and has been a part of our peoples' diet for thousands of years. It is important why we should look after our environment, for the sustainability of our people and our future generations. This artwork is also an analogy for us to be mindful of what we are consuming as well both physically and mentally but also on a spiritual level to live a fruitful life in today's modern world. Solomon resides in his motherland of Kubin Village on Moa Island in the beautiful Torres Strait, located between mainland Australia and Papua New Guinea. He has lived here since he was 15 years old. Solomon spent his early years in Darwin in the Northern Territory and finished his schooling in Townsville. As a child he had a fascination with art and drawing. Solomon was the founding Committee member for the Moa Arts - Ngalmun Lagau Minaral Art Centre, a role he takes seriously and with great pride and purpose.

Teena McCarthy

Barkindji b. 1962 Perth, WA. Lives and works in Sydney, NSW.

Sorrow 2023

Mixed media

Courtesy of the artist and Art Atrium

'WHERE HAVE ALL THE CHILDREN GONE?'™

We can no longer escape
Into the truth of Bush Mary
we're non virgin,
Used by the Carnal.
SHE is everybody.
Bush Mary Blood.
SHE has no voice.
SHE comes out of the bush.
Bush Mary arrives
From the dark
SHE slides outa the light
SHE returns to the meat.
SHE is a single mother
With a bush
SHE is the fucking Holy Ghost!

Poetry from Teena McCarthy's book of poetry *Bush Mary*, published by Cordite Publishing, Melbourne.

McCarthy is a visual artist and poet who works predominantly in painting, photography, and performance art. She is an Italian/Barkindji woman, who is a descendant of the Stolen Generations. McCarthy graduated in 2014 from UNSW Art & Design with a Bachelor of Fine Arts.

McCarthy was the Winner of the inaugural King & Wood Mallesons Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Prize in 2018; a finalist in The 70th Year Mosman Art Prize at Mosman Art Gallery, 2017; a finalist in the NSW Parliament Aboriginal Art Prize 2015 & 2014; and was commissioned to paint the cover of the UNSW Law Faculty's Reconciliation Action Plan 2013, a painting that was later acquired for the UNSW Collection.