dreams nursed in dark-ness

dreams nursed in darkness

Curated by Elizabeth Day and Claire Taylor

Artists: Vernon Ah Kee, Zanny Begg, Behrouz Boochani & Arash Kamali Sarvestani, Dennis Carriage, Carla Cescon, Megan Cope, Debra Dawes, Elizabeth Day, Destiny Deacon, Karla Dickens, Mireille Eid (formerly Astore), Anne Ferran, Trevor Fry, Arielle Gamble, Sarah Goffman, Helen Grace, Anne Graham, Alana Hunt, Karrabing Film Collective, Warwick Keen, Rosemary Laing, Ricky Maynard, Ian Milliss, Anna Mould, Marziya Mohammedali, David Nolan, Sue Paull, Stanislava Pinchuk, Sha Sarwari, Julie Shiels, Cassie Sullivan, Abdullah M I Syed, Gordon Syron, The Longford Project (Elizabeth Day, Anna Gibbs, Julie Gough, Noelene Lucas), Leanne Tobin, Kawita Vatanajyankur, Warlukurlangu Artists. Plus works from the NSW Department of Corrective Services art collection and the Boom Gate Gallery.

Foreword

Australia's colonial history is deeply intertwined with the establishment of institutional systems of incarceration. From 1788 to 1868, over 162,000 British and Irish convicts were exiled to Australia, regardless of the severity of their crimes. The foundation of the young nation was laid upon the arduous labour of these convicts, emblematic of life within the penal colony.

By 1860, as the influx of transported convicts was nearing its end, a prison was constructed in Wollongong. Located on the southern side of the former Court House and Police Station, near the intersection of Harbour Street and Robertson Street, the Wollongong Gaol had a relatively brief existence, ceasing operations in 1915 and demolished soon after. However, the archaeological remnants of this structure have been preserved beneath the current buildings.

When colonial buildings such as these are preserved in the present, they are often repurposed either as repositories of historical knowledge or as sites of cultural production. The Hyde Park Barracks exemplifies the former, while the sandstone gaol of the National Art School represents the latter. These sites, once marked by violence and trauma, have become important instruments for education and creativity, enabling the reinterpretation and reframing of the past for both current and future generations.

Dreams Nursed in Darkness is a significant exhibition that contributes to the historical record through the regenerative and truth-telling power of art. It is through art that these narratives of darkness can be illuminated. Curators Elizabeth Day and Claire Taylor have curated a landmark exhibition on Dharawal land that underscores the vital importance of empathy and care. The exhibition features work by some of Australia's most prominent contemporary artists, contextualised alongside pieces created by inmates, courtesy of the NSW Department of Corrective Services.

Yard No. 2 Wollongong Gaol.
From the collections of Wollongong City Libraries and the Illawarra Historical Society - P12795

I would like to express my gratitude to the co-curators for their passionate and scholarly approach to this subject matter. Together, they have developed a deeply compelling project that recuperates colonial narratives of capture in the pursuit of care. Most importantly, I extend my thanks to all the participating artists for sharing their work and their vision. Each work on display is a glimpse of a waking dream.

Daniel Mudie Cunningham
Director, Wollongong Art Gallery

Karla Dickens, *In The Can* from the series *A Dickensian Circus*, 2019, mixed media, 89 x 30 x 30 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Station Gallery. Photo: Mick Richards.

Reconcile This

In for drunk and disorderly,
Mulrunji died, in prison, on Palm Island
At the hand of those whose role of guardian
Was so shamefully neglected
Neglected because in judicial terms
The word guardian translates
To 'Duty of Care'
But in that powerhouse of white power
Duty of care is ignored
The guardians are absolved
Of responsibility to this philosophy
They beat him senseless, his precious body
Battered, broken and left to
The reapers' outrageous habit

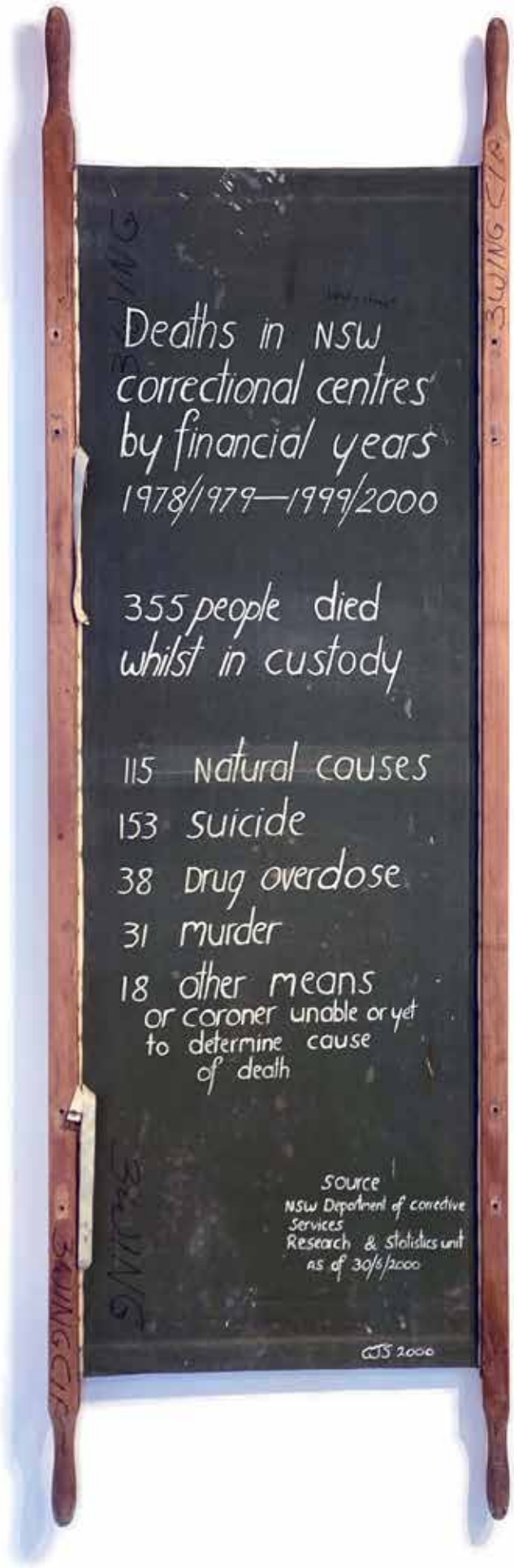
There was never going to be an investigation
An explanation, a why.
Not until the family, the community,
Gathered in heartbroken solidarity
To protest loudly and clearly

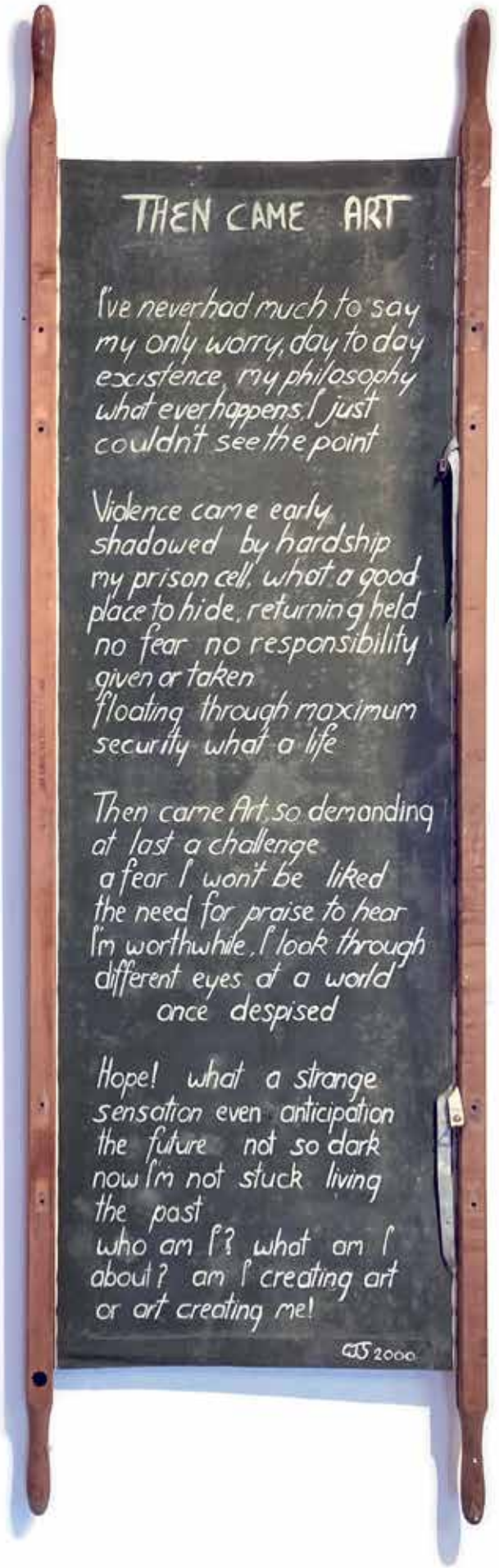
And try to win some ground
And when it did come
The inquiry was into
The so-called 'Palm Island Riots'
Not the death of Mulrunji,
No dollars for a Blackfella's beating.
No guilt on the part of the police
The police investigation themselves
Was only ever going to have one result.
And they seem to have got it

But the business is not yet over
The blue-shirts have not yet won
Justice will only be served
When the hurley-burley's done.

In for murder on ten counts
Sentenced to a lifetime inside
The cocky and smug drug thug,
The self-styled
Al Capone of Melbourne,
Died in prison after a vicious beating
At the hands of another crazed inmate
And immediately three investigations are launched
Respect is given to the family,
Millions of dollars are thrown at
The investigations
And all the resources authorities can muster
Are made available to assist the inquiries
Moreover, leading Melbourne barristers
Jockey for poll position to represent the family
It seems that even after a life
Committed to a nether world where hideous
Acts of violence and murder
Define the norms of every day life
You can still command respect.
It must be a privilege to be white.

Aunty Barbara Nicholson (Wadi Wadi)





The Workshop

Unsure of their capacity
To write a verse or two
Their focus remained on another path
Some said they were just
Painting nice pictures
And that the craft room
Gave them respite
From the dreariness
Of a six by eight room
Locked and barred.
'Just follin' in time'
They said.

They said too that the pictures
Were without stories
Yet in each one
Discernible threads emerged
Threads that connect
The many separate elements
Of their composition
And whole stories were revealed.
Seeing this, I encouraged each artist
To trace those threads
And see for themselves
That these paintings
Were more than just pictures
They were indeed a visual story
And that if they could paint the story
Then they could write it.

The lads applied increased diligence
To their paint, brush and canvas
Unwittingly they painted
Pictures gleaned from somewhere
In their cultural memory
Pictures that told stories
Stories of heartache, love, despair
Pictures that evoked
Tales ancient and sacred
Tales that fortify them
In this darkest of spaces
Yet they considered themselves lucky
For they knew
That when you've nothing else
You've still got your Dreaming.
They got their Dreaming.

Aunty Barbara Nicholson (Wadi Wadi)

Aunty Barbara Nicholson, 'Reconcile This', originally published in *Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre*, Volume 2, South Coast Writers Centre, 2014, pp. 50-51.

Aunty Barbara Nicholson, 'The Workshop', originally published in *Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre*, Volume 1, South Coast Writers Centre, 2013, pp. 32-33.

Chris ---, *Deaths in Custody, Then Came Art*, 2000, ink on prison hospital stretchers, 229 x 68 cm each. Collection of CSNSW.

Waking Dream

We do have to start.
Start what?
The only thing in the world worth starting:
The End of the world, for Heaven's sake.
Aimé Césaire

What dreams emerge from darkness? One answer: the dream of a world without prisons or police power, which is to say the dream of a world beyond the compulsions of the capital relation, which is to say the dream of a world that has overthrown the shackles of colonial domination. Another answer: the dream that haunts us, which is to say the terror of the repressed returning, which is to say the unresolved trauma that accompanies a world forged by whips and chains and walls and blood. The freedom dream and the nightmare are the dialectic of the prison, that infrastructure of punishment and exclusion so central to liberal imaginings of law and order. The former cannot be understood without recourse to the latter.

Let's begin with the dream that haunts us. The settler colony of Australia was established as a penal colony for the British to dispose of a rapidly expanding criminal population arising from industrial capitalism. The process of separating people from access to the means of subsistence, in rendering them dependent upon a wage for survival, was a massive operation of police power. It pushed people into newly industrialised cities where criminalisation became a central mechanism for compelling workers to participate in their own dispossession. The indigent and the 'unproductive' encountered the force of the police and the confines of the prison. Faced with overflowing prison hulks moored on the banks of the Thames, the British established the colony of New South Wales as a dumping ground for its surplus populations, seizing the territory from clans of the Eora nation whose sovereignty remains unbroken. Police and prisons are one foundation upon which this nation uneasily sits.

What has followed is a story of ongoing dispossession in which the settler state must reiterate its illegitimate claim to possession each and every day through shifting forms of racialisation that play out in policing, law, policy, culture, discourse, and infrastructure provisioning – in short, via every available means. This includes the continued expansion of the carceral system in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for 33% of the current national prison population despite representing approximately 3.2% of the total population, and where at least 568 First Nations people have lost their lives while in custody.[1] The racial logics of the contemporary prison are nestled inside a general logic of expansionism that has seen overall rates of incarceration grow by 130% since 1985 despite a corresponding decline in serious crime rates over the same period.[2] Contrary to the common-sense notion that prisons respond to rates and patterns of crime, the prison is more accurately conceptualised as an infrastructure that enables the reproduction of colonial and capital relations. The circular logic of the prison means that people are more likely to come into contact with it when they lack access to infrastructures – such as housing, health, food, education – that can sustain life, while the prison is presented as an efficient solution to this very absence. As the abolitionist activist Debbie Kilroy writes, 'prisons have become the default response for homelessness, mental illness, drugs and alcohol, poverty.'[3] In neoliberal economies, the expansion of prisons goes hand-in-hand with the dismantling of social infrastructures.

The devastating enumeration of First Nations deaths inside and the staggering rates of incarceration serve as a material marker of the unresolved and repressed violence of colonisation that haunts and structures the settler colonial imaginary. The expansion of carceral systems return us to the coercive origins of the colony as a project of containment, dispossession, and immiseration that cannot be detached from the capital relation that governs how we continue to live and die. Haunting,

Cassie Sullivan, *we are all complicit here*, 2021, string and net, 165 x 74 x 900 cm. Commissioned by Constance ARI for the exhibition *The Pink Palace: From Isolation*. Courtesy of the artist.

Zanny Begg, *Doing Time*, 2015, digital video with sound, 9:24 mins. Courtesy of the artist.

writes Avery Gordon, 'is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life… it is an animated state in which a repressed or unresolved social violence is making itself known, sometimes very directly, sometimes more obliquely.'[4] The dark dream of the prison cannot but return us to the colony's violent point of origin.

To be haunted is not necessarily to be condemned but to strive to follow ghosts into the past in order that we might reach for a different future. The freedom dream is the other side of the carceral equation. This dream, written from sites of containment and constraint, manifests as the promise of a world in which the prison and, by extension, the police no longer make sense. It is a revolutionary dream that requires, as Ruth Wilson Gilmore teaches us, 'that we change one thing: *everything*.'[5] More concretely it is a dream that requires us to reimagine what justice and security mean, to build a society where everyone has access to the things they need in order to survive (and thrive) regardless of their capacity to contribute to the social store. It is a dream that must think beyond our existing languages. Our dreams must move in excess even of terms like freedom, which derives its meaning by negating the freedom of the enslaved and the colonised. Art appears to assist us with this task, not as something that stands apart from those struggles to transform the world but rather as that which emerges from within them. Such art is capable of refracting the dynamics and intensities of abolitionist movements back to us in order that we might feel the shape of our comrades when we feel like we have lost them, or so that we might understand the relation between the horizon we reach for and the ground we stand upon. The art of abolition reminds us that the world, like the work of art, is *made*, and in this contingency lies the promise that it can be made anew.

The nightmare and freedom dream form the impossible contradiction that animates our struggle, the former exerting a pressure that demands we imagine, and build, something new. It is from dreams nursed in darkness that the promise of a different world arises. To nurse this dream is to care for it such that it can be sustained in the face of the expansion of the prison system, the entrenchment of law and order politics, the naturalisation of colonial capitalist order. Nursing is often figured as a maternal instinct but the practice of care requires a type of vigilance if it is to go beyond the privatised logics of the state. Our freedom dreams require us to reappropriate expansive kith and kin relations beyond the family as a reproductive unit that has become yoked to the circuits of capital accumulation. Art is one site in which we might nurse dreams that cultivate a shared imagination which must remain grounded in the material realities of the here and now. But abolition is not simply a dream, as Tabitha Lean tells us 'abolition is a verb' and so we must roll our sleeves up and get to work.[6]

Andrew Brooks

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Prisoners in Australia, January 25*, 2024. Available at: https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/prisoners-australia/latest-release; *Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population summary, July 1*, 2022. Available at: https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/australia-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-population-summary; Australian Institute of Criminology, Deaths in custody in Australia, 2024. Available at: https://www.aic.gov.au/statistics/deaths-custody-australia

2 Andrew Leigh, *The Second Convict Age: Explaining the return of mass imprisonment in Australia*, 2000. CESifo Working Paper No. 8163. DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.3555590

3 Debbie Kilroy, Tabitha Lean, Andrew Brooks and Astrid Lorange, 'Abolition is a Verb', 2021, in *Infrastructural Inequalities 2*. Available at: https:// infrastructuralinequalities.net/issue-2/abolition-is-a-verb/

4 Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 2008, University of Minnesota Press.

5 Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Change Everything: Racial Capitalism and the Case for Abolition*, 2024, Haymarket Books.

6 Kilroy et al., ibid.

Out of Sight/Site

Dreams Nursed in Darkness presents an array of creative practice by people who know incarceration first hand and artworks that respond to Australian carceral contexts, past and present. Crystal McKinnon asserts that 'It is vital to understand detention, incarceration, and other forms of custody as central to colonialism', and that it is important to consider the breadth of the *carceral continuum* in the Australian settler colonial context. The selection of works in this exhibition aims to follow thematic threads enmeshed in that continuum, which McKinnon describes in the Foucauldian sense as an 'interconnected network of institutionalised spaces' but contests that this network spans sites and non-sites 'as seemingly diverse as prisons, refugee camps, debt structures and households'.[1] The works in this exhibition traverse criminal justice, mental health and immigration detention systems; structural inequalities that place people at risk of entering those systems or keep them returning; and contexts where the carceral seeps into the everyday. In the context that the carceral state structures what the public can see and not see regarding prisons—and renders people invisible—the practices of artists who reach into those spaces to bring them to light have an urgency, a necessity.

In his review of Vernon Ah Kee's *The Island*, Andrew Brooks argues that the national mythology of the penal origins of colonial settlement in Australia romanticises 'the production of a national identity grounded in a white imaginary'. He goes on to explain that Australia continues to be underpinned by a carceral imaginary that remains crucial to the project of nation building, indexing the prison as 'an infrastructure that remains central to the project of maintaining, naturalising, and disciplining the settler state'.[2] In the curation of this exhibition the co-curators take an inside-out approach to examine Australia's 'thing' about prisons in an attempt to interrogate rather than reinforce a national identity embedded in the origins of the settler state, reflecting on the violence that stems from there and haunts Australia still. In doing so, the exhibition aims to prompt questions about the carceral as a key condition of colonialism, and create space to consider how it continues to enact racial violence.

For co-curator Elizabeth Day, whose studio practice attempts to unravel the conjunction of the prison on the landscape, the image of the colonial prison defines a disastrous meeting place of British and First Nations law; a marginal space that is still unresolved. Just as the forceful acquisition of Country ignored pre-existing First Nations law that had effectively prevailed for thousands of years, institutionalisation has been used as a key instrument in the removal and displacement of First Nations people: the fall-out being trauma impacting across generations and the over-representation of First Nations people incarcerated today. A number of works that reference these contexts and the disproportionate risk of harm Indigenous people face in the criminal justice system are situated in Gallery 1, where the exhibition foregrounds First Nations perspectives. These works are important in their unflinching truth-telling and assert the resilience and endurance of Indigeneity despite the structures and technology of imprisonment.[3] Among the artworks by non-Indigenous artists in Gallery 1 are those that examine structural failures of incarceration; artworks that open up space to consider care, restitution and reparation rather than punishment and control; and creative actions calling for reform.

The title for this exhibition comes from a line in Jean Genet's 1946 novel *Miracle of the Rose* secretly written in isolation on paper intended for making bags in a prison labour program. The first manuscript for his earlier novel *Our Lady of the Flowers* was confiscated by guards as an unsanctioned use of the paper, and destroyed. His prison writings on that paper can be thought of an act of refusal against being a productive, economic unit for the prison creating profit for the institution but far more importantly, writing was the author's way of resisting the solitude and brutality of custody. *Miracle of the Rose* can be read as an account of prison life informed by his experiences in a penal colony as an adolescent and later in prison as an adult, mixing past and present, dreams and desires, and glimpses of beauty in the most unlikely subjects. The phrase encapsulates our aim to survey creative acts of resistance that assert the humanity of incarcerated people in the face of dehumanising systems.

The contemporary equivalent is Behrouz Boochani's extraordinary works created clandestinely on Manus Island with a mobile phone. While incarcerated in the Australian offshore immigration detention facility between 2013 and 2017, he secretly wrote *No Friend But the Mountains: Writing from Manus Prison* in a series of single text messages translated from Farsi by Omid Tofighian. Similarly, for the film included in this exhibition *Chauka: Please Tell Us the Time*, he shot the footage on his phone and worked remotely with Netherlands-based Iranian filmmaker Arash Kamali Sarvestani, sending him individual pieces of footage via slow, intermittent internet connection to create the film. This is one of a number of artworks in Gallery 2 that relate to Australia's recent border control policies, including offshore and indefinite detention. These works beg us to consider Australia's treatment of asylum seekers, which in Richard Flanagan's words, 'strips lives of meaning' and imprisons people 'without charge, without conviction, without sentence'.

Within this exhibition, the works by David Nolan also only exist as a result of tireless concealment. Drawings were considered contraband. The etchings in this exhibition are based on sketches he did in jail that would have been destroyed if found by custodial guards. Both the drawings and the milk cartons his installation is made from were painstakingly smuggled out. His works establish a dialogue about the support of practice inside.

Jenny --- (with others), *Our Voices Together*, 2024, acrylic on canvas, 4 panels, 60 x 50 cm each. Courtesy of the artist and Boom Gate Gallery.

The Mann Tatlow Gallery predominantly features artworks from NSW Corrections' art collection and the Boom Gate Gallery by current and formerly incarcerated artists. Inspired by Nicole Fleetwood's writing, our curation aims to 'contest dominant frameworks of aesthetics, criminalisation, and imprisonment [and instead assert] affective possibilities of belonging, collectivity and subjecthood from positions of unfreedom'.[4] The works are testament to ingenuity and a flourishing of creativity inside, when supported. Some are expressions of cultural knowledge and reveal the prevalence of sharing and reclaiming culture. Others represent the day-to-day minutiae and repetitiveness of prison life; or are responses to deprivation, abuse and cruelty inside. These perspectives rarely have a public platform. Nicole Fleetwood reminds us that, 'To make art in prison is to create under the conditions of scarcity of resources, lack of control over one's environment, immobility, constant surveillance, and a combination of sensory deprivation and sensory overload, depending on where one is housed'.[5] She argues it can also be transformative in giving meaning and value to those who can practice: 'art in prison is a practice of survival, an aesthetic journey that documents time in captivity, a mode of connecting with others',[6] and, 'prison art practices resist the isolation, exploitation and dehumanisation of carceral facilities'.[7]

Interspersed throughout the exhibition, several works reference structural inequity and systemic contexts. These speak to some of the conditions that place people at risk of entering the criminal justice system: 'Imprisonment has become the response of first resort for far too many of the social problems that burden people who are ensconced in poverty. [...] Homelessness, unemployment, drug addiction, mental illness, and illiteracy are only a few of the problems that disappear from public view when the human beings contending with them are relegated to cages'.[8]

The Mercury Gallery is set up as a dedicated screening room presenting a range of video works including works by Zanny Begg, Alana Hunt, and Karrabing Film Collective. These works are central to the exhibition in considering how the carceral state reaches into all our lives, and how bound up in Australian identity the carceral imaginary is whilst also asserting otherwise possibilities. Nicole Fleetwood argues that it is important in considering the imaginary that it, 'refers to both the act of creation and what has been created... In the imaginary resides the appearance of new possibilities of social organisation and political action'.[9]

The works situated in the gallery lobby frame the broader exhibition with references to racial injustice, deaths in custody, community connection/fragmentation, and assert art as an important form of truth-telling. The many thematic threads that follow through the rest of the exhibition call us to account about structural failures of incarceration, systemic economic and racial injustices, and our complicity. Collectively, the artworks describe an important culturally contested arena, where many deeply unanswered social questions remain.

It ought to be possible to build movements in defense of prisoners' human rights and movements that persuasively argue that what we need is not new prisons, but new health care, housing, education, drug programs, jobs, and education. To safeguard a democratic future, it is possible and necessary to weave together the many and increasing strands of resistance to the prison industrial complex into a powerful movement for social transformation.[10]

Elizabeth Day and Claire Taylor

1 Crystal McKinnon, 'Enduring Indigeneity and Solidarity in Response to Australia's Carceral Colonialism', *Biography*, vol 43, no 4, 2020.
2 Andrew Brooks, 'Vernon Ah Kee: The Island' [review], *Running Dog*, Feb 2020, accessed online: https://rundog.art/the-island-vernon-ah-kee-part-one/
3 Russell Marks, catalogue essay for Ricky Maynard exhibition at Bett Gallery, 2023, accessed online: https://www.bettgallery.com.au/exhibitions/307-ricky-maynard-no-more-than-what-you-see-1993-2023/
4 Nicole Fleetwood, *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, 2000, Harvard University Press, p 31.
5 Ibid, p 58.
6 Ibid, p xxxiii.
7 Ibid, p 3.
8 Angela Davis, 'Masked Racism: Reflections on the Prison Industrial Complex', *Indigenous Law Bulletin,* vol 4 no 27, 2000, accessed online: https://www5.austlii.edu.au/au/journals/IndigLawB/2000/12.html
9 Nicole Fleetwood, ibid, p 158.
10 Angela Davis, ibid.

Vernon Ah Kee

Vernon Ah Kee is a contemporary Australian Indigenous artist. His practice critiques embedded racism and racialised (state) violence. Ah Kee draws out connections between the atrocities of the mission system of last century and the return to arbitrary detainment and confinement in this century, with reference to police brutality and deaths in custody in *Tall Man* 2010, immigration policies in *The Island* 2018, and the NT Intervention in the text-based work *Intervention Invention* 2012, which is in this exhibition. The Intervention asserted exceptional levels of governmental control over the lives of Aboriginal people, rather than designing initiatives with communities on how to address underlying poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, housing shortages and unemployment. According to former senator Patrick Dodson (Yawuru), it imposed levels of government coercion elsewhere only encountered in prison:

*In the absence of any consultation with affected communities or any real debate … the Government took control of communities, compulsorily acquired land and imposed administrative and statutory management over people's lives that no other Australians, free from prison, endure.**

Ah Kee's word play lays bare colonial practices and language that cannot be dismissed as in and of the past but asserts their contemporaneity. His plain black and white bold text remains incredibly ambiguous: it can be read as celebrating Indigenous inventiveness or implying the intervention was an invented pretext for punitive measures.

Vernon Ah Kee, *Intervention Invention*, 2011, etching and aquatint on Velin Arches paper, 40 x 50 cm. Collection of Wollongong Art Gallery. Image courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery. Photo: Bernie Fischer.

* Patrick Dodson, *The NT Intervention and Human Rights* published by Amnesty International, p20, accessed online.

Behrouz Boochani and Arash Kamali Sarvestani

Chauka, Please Tell Us the Time was filmed on a mobile phone from inside Manus Island detention centre by journalist and Manus Island detainee Behrouz Boochani. The footage was shot clandestinely and smuggled out of the detention centre via slow, intermittent internet connection. Boochani collaborated in secrecy with Iranian-Dutch filmmaker, Arash Kamali Sarvestani, to produce this film.

The result offers audiences a rare glimpse into life behind the security gates for hundreds of asylum seekers whose lives were precariously held in limbo at the time. The film offers first hand accounts of mistreatment, intimidation and the psychological strain that many detainees experienced day to day in indefinite detention. The testimonies recount the abuse and violence detainees suffered.

The film weaves together shots of everyday life in the facility, underpinned by a pervasive sense of threat, with interviews and observations of other detainees. Some of the most confronting accounts expose conditions in a much-feared solitary confinement unit called Chauka. Like Behrouz Boochani's award-winning book *No Friend But The Mountains* (written on his mobile phone in detention), *Chauka: Please Tell Us the Time* is a poetic call to action that gives a voice to silenced perspectives and lays bare conditions that break lives.

Behrouz Boochani & Arash Kamali Sarvestani, *Chauka: Please Tell Us The Time*, 2017, documentary film, 90 mins. Courtesy of the artists.

Zanny Begg

In 2014 I spent four months visiting Reiby Juvenile Detention Centre, working with 14-15 year old boys in a series of workshops and projects that led to the filming of *Doing Time*. The film is an exploration of the experience of time through the eyes of four young people who have been forced to prematurely confront its gravity. Prison is often described as a 'black hole'. It's an apt metaphor; prison is a place where little light of public scrutiny shines. Yet the way this metaphor is used misses the powerful density of black holes, their role in shaping everything around us. Some of us may never go inside prison, but to use this metaphor a little more scientifically, if prisoners are in a 'black hole' prisons shape everything about the world outside. These kids may be 'locked away' from public view yet none of us can resist the gravitational pull of what Angela Davis calls 'the prison industrial complex'.

The national rate of Aboriginal juvenile incarceration is 29 times that of non-Indigenous young people.* Once inside Reiby it was devastating to see nearly all the boys I worked with were Aboriginal. Most described jail as somewhere they actually got schooling, fed, and a place to sleep. Yet all were emphatic 'you don't want to be here', it was a place of loneliness, isolation and fear.

Doing Time's storyboard is in two parts: a reality sequence where the boys provide glimpses of their daily rituals, and a dream sequence where the boys experiment with alternate ways of experiencing this reality. The gaps in between are small, but in this tiny gap lies a power of possibility, as Tupac Shakur once said; 'reality is wrong, dreams are for real'.

*Prisons do not disappear problems, they disappear human beings.***

Prisoners is a single-channel film originally realised as a looped video installation at the Pumping Station, commissioned by Deakin Public Art Commission. The site was the location for the infamous 1986 Blackmoore prison riot, in the TV series *Prisoner*. Glenda Linscott, who played Rita Conners, the chief protagonist in the riot, revisits the site to re-create iconic scenes from the TV show alongside interviews and performances from women who have lived experience of incarceration. Prisoner was one of the most popular series in Australian television history running for over 690 episodes and developing a huge fan base in Australia and overseas. Scenes from the show are recreated from the artist's memory allowing the script to fragment as it fuses with personal biases. Deliberately blurring the 'invisible line' between documentary and fiction *Prisoners* explores the mythologizing of the prison industrial complex within Australian culture.

*Once the aura of magic is stripped away from the imprisonment solution [...] what is revealed is racism, class bias and the parasitic seduction of capitalist profit within a system that [...] devours the social wealth needed to address the very problems that have led to spiralling numbers of prisoners.***

Zanny Begg (with A---, J---, C--- and P---), *Doing Time*, 2014, digital video, 9:24 mins. Camera: Josh Heath. Audio: Jon Hunter. Music: Kate Carr and Pedro Butler from Us Mob. Colourist: Yanni Kronenberg. Commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre in 2014 for the exhibition *The List*. Courtesy of the artist.

Zanny Begg, *Prisoners*, 2023, public artwork commissioned by Deakin Public Art Commission with support from the Create NSW Commissioning Program, 24:36 mins. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Hugo Begg.

* According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-detention-population-in-australia-2023/contents/summary

** Angela Y. Davis, *Are Prisons Obsolete?* 2003.

Carla Cescon

This new work commission adopts its title *Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)* from a psychedelic rock song performed by 'The First Edition', released in 1968. Said to reflect the LSD experience, the song was intended to be a warning about the dangers of using the drug and grew to be associated with the 1960's counter culture.

My version of *just dropped in (to see what condition my condition is in)* relates to my experience working with people who live with chronic psychiatric illness. At times it feels like a psychedelic experience as I watch, listen and help divert the unnecessary risk of falling into the health or judicial systems. I act as a link between self-confinement and participation. The installation aestheticises the experience that is my everyday, overshadowed by the spectacle of recent scary and disorienting events that read like a 1950's Sci-fi novel, in which we have all experienced levels of isolation and the reach of the state to restrict our freedom. Simultaneously, we are pressed into new connections with these experiences because as a society we are extremely adaptive. In this context, the self-image of art as a social good is collapsing under the weight of capitalist dysfunction. The installation is a 3-D collage that mobilises various symbolic figures and objects—a visual illustration to literary devices like dichotomies, metaphors and idioms.

Carla Cescon, *Just Dropped In (To See What Condition My Condition Was In)*, 2024, painted marine plywood, hanging wire, 200 x 200 x 200 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Megan Cope

Megan Cope is a Quandamooka artist (Minjerribah, North Stradbroke Island/Moreton Bay in South East Queensland). *Untitled (barracoon)* was originally commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre for the exhibition *Another Day in Paradise*. This was one of six commissions accompanying Myuran Sukumaran's portraits painted during his incarceration in Indonesia, prior to his execution. The exhibition considered human rights, the nature of incarceration and the death penalty.

Untitled (barracoon) traces the etymology of barracoon as a means to locate systematic failures that are predicated on race and to connect these histories globally and locally. The barracoon, from barraca meaning soldiers' tent and later becoming a structure in which African slaves and convicts were housed during the Atlantic slave trade, is said to be an origin for the racial slur Coon, a term that also found its way to the shores of Australia. *Untitled (barracoon)* references the systemic violence and racism Aboriginal people experience daily and more broadly within institutions such as Don Dale, and reflects on the structures and institutions of intergenerational trauma and terror both disseminated and perpetuated on black bodies. The floor mat and roof thatch in the installation are woven from legal documents serving the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the judicial review from the Indonesian Supreme Court.

Megan Cope, *Untitled (Barracoon)*, 2017, bamboo, jute, shredded legal documents from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the Indonesian Supreme Court judicial review, PVA, 250 x 320 x 245 cm. Campbelltown City Council Art Collection. Image courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery. Photo: Document Photography.

Debra Dawes

The foundation for *At Her Majesty's Pleasure* was a body of correspondence between Debra Dawes and her nephew Dylan over an eighteen-month period while he was in prison. Over time the significance of these letters to both of them grew. This point of connection helped the young man cope. Dawes asked if she could make a body of work from them and he agreed.

Each panel transcribes an excerpt word for word from a letter, following the idiosyncrasies of Dylan's script, phrasing and spelling. This reiterative process amplifies the words, and perhaps their meaning, albeit contained within the frame of the paper as an artificial constraint to the words, echoing Dylan's physical confinement. They offer an insight into his experience of jail: how hard he found conditions there, what it felt like, and how most of the people he encountered inside had not only got (or found) themselves in trouble but were deeply troubled people, for whom jail was another ordeal to endure.

The individual works in this exhibition are some of the more than 100 pieces Debra Dawes made. Collectively, they are an intimate portrait of a young man who had never written extensively before finding a voice, taking solace in doing so and finding the courage to share his story more widely.

Debra Dawes, *At Her Majesty's Pleasure*, 2010-2011, Indian ink, gesso, mulberry paper, 112 x 76 cm each (52 works), installation view at Tamworth Regional Gallery, 2017. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Farina Fotographics.

Elizabeth Day

Mycelia are the omnipresent fine root systems that thread over the landscape, an interconnected web that Paul Stamet describes as a modulating system whereby nutrients can traverse forest floors from say a place of abundance to one of neglect. Democracy is implied in the branching, rhizomatic root forms.

Growing in the dark, mycelia live on dead matter and transform that into new life. They use the same processes that help them obtain food to break down toxins. Fungi represent the fruit of such underground networks. The large hanging work installed in the lobby is a drawing with string of these mycelial root structures suggesting the utopian possibility of community structures that might keep people out of gaol. The intricate knots and interconnections are an image of the entanglement of our lives with each other, with others in our community, with others beyond, with our environment, with our histories, with our forebears.

During the course of the exhibition, Day will facilitate workshops at Wollongong Art Gallery with participants from a range of local schools and Coomaditchie's Ngaramura project, a supportive pathway assisting young Indigenous people to re-engage with education through a cultural learning framework. Their artworks will contribute to the evolving installation.

Elizabeth Day, *Mycelia*, 2017, mixed media installation, dimensions variable. Installation view at Articulate Project Space. Courtesy of the artist and Mais Wright Gallery.

Elizabeth Day

Parramatta Female Factory Wall at Wollongong Art Gallery is one of a series of colonial prison 'walls' that Day has 'drawn' from unravelled opportunity shop garments and muslin. They are part of her ongoing series that addresses the 'prison on the landscape' as a yet unresolved meeting place of British and Indigenous law. She has produced several other works (including *Myco Logic* at Cumberland Hospital and Parramatta Justice Precinct, curated by Claire Taylor) that reference the area of the Parramatta River where there remain many sandstone buildings that are reminders of the traumatic incongruousness of the British arrival on Indigenous traditions and law. That stretch of the river is still, like parts of Tasmania where Day grew up, redolent with pain, and the psychiatric and prison buildings stand as evidence of the malaise that the colonisers brought. Day includes in the wall text works here that are responses to that history.

The work began with an experience working at the Bethel Orphanage that led Day to do a residency at the Centre for Solar Voltaics at Newcastle University. She wanted to investigate the possibility of 'detecting' via an electron microscope the subatomic particles that might hold memories of the painful colonial past. One of those nano images (showing one atom thick carbon atoms) is included in these framed blocks that equate the dimensions of some of the sandstone blocks around that site. She constructs here a simulation of the imprint of the asylum solitary confinement wing on the high asylum yard wall in front of the Psychiatry building, within the Parramatta Female Factory precinct. Other buildings now stand on the site of the Female Factory, but the solitary confinement wing left it's impression on the yard wall that it used to transect. The drawing of the wall is pieced together from individual blocks that are textile works, created from unravelled op-shop jumpers, some with layers of muslin and stitching, referencing care and repair. These haunted and haunting 'drawings' are not only inscriptions, but are uncanny, cryptic, abject and activist performances that reflect on trans-generational trauma. Their texts can be read through the distressing history of the site: 'Did anyone ask why she was angry, It was passed on from generation to generation, Migratory highways were blocked.'

This iteration of the colonial prison walls is brought together here with a section from her previous grass carpet series dating back to Artspace, 2000. The current work, *The Law Is Not Always Just*, involves a technique that Ann Finegan has described as, 'a kind of underground or unconscious writing on the underside of grass—the roots which like the unconscious are usually hidden or repressed. Growing turf from seeds the grass is grown on plaster casts (in mirror writing in the manner of typecasting) when the grass is peeled back the text appears in the readable form'. She describes these as 'thin skins of language on an ancient country'.* The image shows an earlier version of this work at Cockatoo Island in the exhibition *Drawing Lines in the Sand*, 2012, curated by Claire Taylor. This is a section of a large 'drawing' using the plastic barrier technology that references the idea of bureaucratic delineations, that now cover this country.

Elizabeth Day, *The Flow of Form: There's a Reason Beyond a Reason. Beyond That There's a Reason (1797 Parramatta Gaol)*, 2023, unravelled op-shop garments, muslin, felt, 2600 x 650 x 5 cm irregular. Commissioned by Carriageworks for *The National 4: Australian Art Now*. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Zan Wimberley.

Elizabeth Day, *The Law Is Not Always Just*, 2010, dried grass roots, bollards, hazard tape. Installation view in exhibition *Drawing Lines in the Sand* on Cockatoo Island, 2012. Courtesy of the artist. Photo: Claire Taylor.

* Ann Finegan, 'Rhizomatics and Micro Circuits of Power' in Elizabeth Day: Discontinued Narratives of Migration, 2017, p 55.

Destiny Deacon

MCA Australia: *Escape* looks in part like the detritus of a child's outdoor game, abandoned mid-play. The baby dolls that Destiny Deacon has hung from wire mesh fencing are regular characters in her photographs. Deacon often uses dolls as surrogates to dramatise issues in contemporary politics, particularly as they relate to Australian Indigenous people, culture and history. Relationships set up between dolls and violence enacted upon them can powerfully represent conditions in the wider world. Reminders or remnants of childhood, they can also be used to both act out and amplify both historical and contemporary experiences. Deacon's documentation here of what appears to be a childish escapade in *Escape* broaches the pressing issue of Indigenous rates of incarceration, which are among the highest in the world and are increasing.

Through the simple imagery of two dolls situated on either side of a fence *Escape* addresses the alarming fact that a child born into an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Island community is more likely to end up behind bars than a child born into a non-Indigenous community. Aboriginal deaths in custody and the detention of young Aboriginal people has profound and negative consequences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lives and communities, which reverberate through generations. Whether the dolls in *Escape* are playing out a prison break, breaking out of a stereotype or escaping their destiny is open to interpretation. Either way, Deacon suggests the hope that there is a way out; without advocating—as is her understated and jocular style—what that way might be.*

* MCA Australia Collection reference reproduced with permission, accessed online https://www.mca.com.au/artists-works/works/2019.5/

Destiny Deacon, *Escape*, 2017, lightjet print, 127 x 102.3 x 4 cm framed. Collection of Museum of Contemporary Art, purchased with funds provided by the MCA Foundation, 2019. Image courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney, © of the artist.

Mireille Eid (formerly Astore)

Tampa was a sculpture and performance about the plight of some Middle Eastern refugees in Australia. The artwork referenced the incident where refugees fleeing wars and persecution in a small leaking boat were intercepted by Australian Armed Forces following their rescue by the Norwegian ship Tampa and their attempt to seek asylum in Australia on 29 August 2001. The refugees were redirected and detained in a refugee camp in Nauru, out of sight and away from Australian soil.

The performance and sculpture took place from 30 October to 16 November 2003 as part of the annual exhibition Sculpture by the Sea at Bondi, Sydney. The artwork acted as a dichotomy between the sense of freedom and grandeur the individual experiences at the beach and the imprisonment refugees faced as a result of their trust in the most basic form of humanity at that seashore. The sculpture was a scaled version of the MS Tampa and signified the beginning of how the seashore turned refugees into prisoners of inhumanity. The performance consisted of myself waiting for my release. I would arrive each morning at 10am, enter my prison and stay there until 6pm. The 'point of view' of the caged was central to the performance.

Mireille Eid, *Tampa - When Gazes Collide*, 2003, digital print, 24 x 34 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

The inversion of the gaze as an illustration of the active versus passive vision of the incarcerated was critical. As such, each day at 10am, 12pm, 2pm and 4pm, I took photographs from within my prison. The prints in this exhibition are a selection of them.

Karla Dickens

Lucky Bastards
I could spin you a sales pitch
one you have heard
as long as you can remember
yet choose to forget
a pitch to sell a country
stolen by foreigners, sold to more

God's Own Country
A spin to comfort and build national pride
draw attention to iconic landscapes
unique Australianism
in backyards lighting barbies
reinforcing values of mateship and "a fair go"
for all things homegrown

The Lucky Country
But I'm not selling, I'm already sold
I love this land, its waratahs
and pouch babies
the first people of the world
the old folk: the wise,
those of the earth and the skies
the native-born

Unlucky Bastards
A sunburnt day has a dark night
a flip side: the B-side, the rear end
it's a white darkness
along with Peter Pan, 'Straya has
sewn on a shadow
of arrogant entitled denial

Aussie Pride
Mining culture, robbing stars
belittling beloved wisdom
misunderstanding essential truths
squandering its luck and raw beauty
waving the flag for second-rate fools

Reclaiming Patriotism with Jingoism
Anti-refugee fears breed like fungi in
wet heat
breast feeding white policies
celebrating dishonour
Donald's horn is still honking loud
forever misquoted

Wake up Mr Australophile

Karla Dickens, *Strapped by the Love of Money*, 2020, canvas straightjacket, appliqué, mixed media, 150 x 66 x 5 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Station Gallery. Photo: Mick Richards.

Anne Ferran

The initial prompt for this work was Anne Ferran's accidental encounter with a group of 38 photographs, taken decades before, of female patients in a Sydney psychiatric hospital. Each woman had been photographed individually, in the style of a portrait, but all other information about them had disappeared. They raised troubling questions: *What happened to these women to erase their histories and identities? Can it be ethical to draw attention to them now, or even to look at them at all?* By returning to them again and again in her work, Ferran suggests that there can be no clear or final answers.

For *1-38*, 2013-2024 performers were asked to hold up individual lengths of dyed and painted felt, as if presenting them to the camera. The colours of the felt and the painted white lines are a nod to the women's worn and felted garments, but the hope is that they might do more. Shield their bodies, for example, from prying eyes, or send cryptic signals or declarations out into the world. Or they might simply be insisting on a right to be seen, and thus to be remembered.

Anne Ferran's broader practice investigates the margins, gaps and silences of colonial history, uncovering what scattered evidence there remains from structures of social control—such as prisons, workhouses, women's home and former asylums—to manifest the past's active power in the present.

Anne Ferran, *1-38*, 2013-2024, 3-channel video installation, duration 10:29 mins. Performers: Victoria Hunt, Linda Luke. Video editing: Gary Warner. Courtesy of the artist and Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

Trevor Fry

New Concepts in Corrections is a speculative rumination on abject architecture and punitive models of justice. The new body of work is a satirical sci-fi imagining of how corrections might look in the future. The drawings imagine the creation of giga and tera-max prisons, structures where incarceration has gone mad. Contemporary trends towards mass internment are evident in mega gaols that have already been built in the real world. CECOT in El Salvador has a claimed capacity of 40,000 inmates housed in brutal conditions, and other countries are anxious to follow suit. It's possible that very soon CECOT will seem unexceptional. The exploration and colonisation of space will open up new opportunities for the expansion of the mega-max model, leading to the creation of escape-proof carceral planetoids or the terra nullius surfaces of the Moon or Mars being exploited to hold unlimited numbers of prisoners.

Parallel to the speculative architectures illustrated in the drawings runs a loose narrative that reveals operational aspects of receiving and accommodating inmates, and follows a group of officials planning and touring the new facilities.

Trevor Fry, (detail) *Prototype Teremax Prison 2*, 2024, graphite and watercolour on Arches paper, 42 x 59.4 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Arielle Gamble

In August 2016 The Guardian published The Nauru Files, leaked incident reports written by staff in Australia's detention centre on Nauru between 2013 and 2015. These files detail 2,116 separate incidents, including many cases of assault, sexual abuse, self-harm, child abuse and abhorrent living conditions endured by asylum seekers and refugees in the care of the Australian Government. In the absence of media access to the island, Arielle Gamble and Daniel New initiated the project: *All We Can't See: Illustrating the Nauru Files*, inviting artists to illustrate these stories through creative expression, using art to shed light on all we can't see. Arielle's work is one of two from that project represented in this exhibition (see also Anna Mould). Her work was made in response to the following file:

27 SEPTEMBER 2014

INFORMATION

Incident: **Complaint**

Downgraded: **Unknown**

I was informed by [REDACTED] that during the protests last night, he witnessed Wilsons guards being inappropriate towards other asylum seekers. He revealed that when an asylum seeker slashed his neck, other rushed to his aid. They were stopped by Wilsons guards who stood in a circle around the hurt asylum seeker. They then started to tease the asylum seekers about their desire to go to Australia, and told them "you will never be let out of here".

Arielle Gamble, *You Will Never Be Let Out Of Here*, 2018, appliqué, 30 x 30 cm, unframed. Created for the project *All We Can't See: Illustrating the Nauru Flles*. Courtesy of the artist.

Sarah Goffman

Planned Cell is an imagined cell based on the true dimensions of a Western prison cell but occupied with a cardboard toilet based on Claes Oldenburg's sculpture *Toilet (Hard Model)*, 1966, and including a copy of Giovanni Battista Piranesi's *The Pier with Chains* early 1770's from his *Imaginary Prisons* series of etchings.

On the worktable/bench I've made a cardboard imaginary work studio, contemplating the art process as similar to being incarcerated. Artists talk about preparing for a show as 'art gaol', meaning they can't go out and have to work on their show. I see prisons as ghastly horrific places but inside the mind is limitless, full of possibilities. I reorient and transform through my gaze.

Using found cardboard to build the structure exploits the consumer shells of mass manufactured items, converting them into what is essentially a home without the freedom. The Western expectation of housing and security is under scrutiny: what are our needs? how much more mansion do we need/want? I see this cell as a secure yet humble residence, the warmth of cardboard overlooked by consumerism at the same time as being used as a bed for someone sleeping rough. As an artist this dilemma occupies me and has for many years.

Sarah Goffman, *Maquette for Planned Cell*, 2024, cardboard 3-d collage, approx. 30 x 45 x 30 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Helen Grace

In 1976 Violet and Bruce Roberts were convicted of the murder of Eric Roberts, Violet's husband and Bruce's father, at Pacific Palms near Taree in regional New South Wales. By 1980 the public outcry against the injustice of their conviction and imprisonment, after years of domestic abuse, was spearheaded by Sydney activist group Women Behind Bars. Violet and Bruce's release from jail on 15 October 1980 turned on the recognition of the defence of provocation (no longer allowable) in cases of murder where there had been long-term domestic violence; it led to changes in the New South Wales Crimes Act.

Artist Helen Grace photographed the protests staged in Sydney by Women Behind Bars between July and October 1980 drawing attention to Violet and Bruce Roberts's case. The campaign included vigils, marching through the streets of Sydney carrying a continuous scroll with thousands of signatures petitioning Parliament, and a presence in Macquarie Street outside Parliament House.

The campaign was successful in no small part due to the creativity and creative acts of the protesters throughout the campaign. Because public protest has its own dramaturgical structures, developed by participants, it deserves to be seen as part of the history of performance art, though its own aims are primarily political.

Helen Grace, *Justice for Violet and Bruce*, 1980/2022, digital print, 37 x 50 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Anne Graham

My work has always been in response to places and to the people who inhabit them. I have worked in goals, hospitals, retirement homes and various city interstices between city buildings occupied by transient residents. My time working in correctional institutions in education roles made me very aware of the anxiety and stress confinement causes to inmates. The sculptural installation *Walking, not Falling* draws attention to this. Walking, pacing is a meditative activity it stimulates and regulates the heart, it controls rhythmic bodily activity, it reduces stress. In confined circumstances humans (and animals) occupy time by pacing. It is a relief. I observed many inmates constantly pacing the yards.

The installation is comprised of two metal stands that resonate with the design of gaol windows. These structures support broken sandstone blocks from Colonial demolition sites. They stand in as fragments of institutions and the huge walls of gaols and asylums. Some of the sides of the rock are enclosed with layers of coloured felt suggesting the deep strata the rock was once part of and ruptured from. This references not only the convict labour that hewed the blocks but also the destruction of Country and immense social upheaval these institutions are built on. Set back at a distance approximating the length of a prison cell, are a set of steps that stand on a felt runner. Cast wax feet on the steps and felt stand in for footprints, walking, pacing inspired by the notion of walking as a meditation.

Anne Graham, *Walking, not Falling (work in progress)*, 2023-2024, mixed media, 110 x 150 x 280 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Mais Wright Gallery.

Karrabing Film Collective

The Karrabing Film Collective uses the creation of film and art installations as a form of Indigenous grassroots resistance and self-organisation. The collective opens a space beyond binaries of the fictional and the documentary, the past and the present. Meaning 'low tide' in the Emmiyengal language, karrabing refers to a form of collectivity outside of government-imposed strictures of clanship or land ownership. Shot on handheld cameras and phones, most of Karrabing's films dramatise and satirise the daily scenarios and obstacles that collective members face in their various interactions with corporate and state entities. Composing webs of nonlinear narratives that touch on cultural memory, place, and ancestry by freely jumping in time and place, KFC exposes and intervenes into the longstanding facets of colonial violence that impact members directly, such as environmental devastation, land restrictions, and economic exploitation.

Day in the Life (2020) charts an ordinary day in a small rural Indigenous community in which nothing quite works and the authoritative hand of the government is an always constant, shadowy presence over the community. The film illustrates the ways in which the community's everyday lives are shaped by external influences and constraints and by their insistence on going forward with the ancestors.

Karrabing Film Collective, *Day in the Life*, 2020, HD digital video, 31:42 mins. Courtesy of the artists.

Alana Hunt

This exhibition presents three works by Alana Hunt: *Between Home and the Police* (2017), *Between Neighbours and Nations* (2017) and *Surveilling a Crime Scene* (2023). At the time of making these works, Alana Hunt lived on Miriwoong Country and shot these works near her home, in and around the town of Kununurra in Western Australia, the state with the highest rates of incarceration for Aboriginal people in Australia. Her works are enacted with a measured calm that unsettles the familiar and unravels relationships between histories of colonial violence and the persistence of that violence under the surface of the everyday. They are full of what Elizabeth Povinelli describes as 'otherwise' possibility, disturbing the dominant way of seeing social, political and economic order; creating other ways of seeing. In all these works, the calm suburban familiarity undoes our sense of the 'outback'.

Between Home and the Police and *Between Neighbours and Nations* (both 2017) were originally created for the exhibition *Landing Points* co-curated by Dr Hayley Megan French and Dr Lee-Anne Hall at Penrith Regional Gallery and the Lewers Bequest. In *Between Home and the Police* we follow a silent, haunting journey through the town, with a slow, mesmerising pace through streets that are uncannily unpeopled. The route starts at Alana's then home and ends at the town's police station, a route Lee-Anne Hall describes as 'made familiar by colour.' The calm and quiet belie the question how you see this route, the ambiguity of how terrifying this route might be: whether you are seeking the help of the police or whether any encounter with the law carries the threat of violence. *Between Neighbours and Nations* depicts details of fences in the town. Its quiet detachment speaks to demarcations of enclosure: ours and yours, public and private, the assertion of property overlaid on Country, and of national borders and Australia's offshore prisons. Hunt does not show us the homes built on stolen land or the lives unfolding behind the fences. The fences themselves suggest invisible social boundaries, divisions within communities and marked disparities of wealth and equity.

Surveilling a Crime Scene examines the materialisation of non-indigenous life on Miriwoong Country—through the town of Kununurra, and its surrounds. This work speaks through agendas of development and colonisation and leisure, coursing through our lives and the places we hold dear. A blown up mountain becomes a dam wall that drowns a world while being celebrated by tourists; a mirror of society that is never held to account; the great promise of a food bowl is now filled with inedible products like cotton and sandalwood; and the unending maintenance of it all. Of our lives, and our homes, on someone else's land. In the work, Alana's narration meters, builds and circles back: *Everyone talks about stolen cars and not about stolen country... It is easy to view the fault lines of the past with indignation. Much harder to see the present. Harder still to see oneself... They say you can judge a society by its tallest building. Here the tallest building is the police station and courthouse.*

Alana Hunt, *Between Home and the Police*, 2017, digital video, 21:00 mins (no sound). Courtesy of the artist.

Alana Hunt, *Between Neighbours and Nations*, 2017, digital video, 9:30 mins (no sound). Courtesy of the artist.

Alana Hunt, *Surveilling a Crime Scene*, 2023, Super 8mm film, 21:58 mins. Supported by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund and the Sheila Foundation's Michaela and Adrian Fini Artist Fellowship. Courtesy of the artist.

Warwick Keen

In 2018 Orana Arts engaged me to teach wood-carving skills to men incarcerated at Macquarie Correctional Centre, near Wellington, NSW. When I arrived the gaol was in total lockdown so we developed a community project with Orana Arts and Wellington Local Aboriginal Lands Council. During our meeting, the Lands Council's Acting Supervisor produced a cardboard box containing 3 metal objects. When he opened the box I felt a strong spiritual presence in the room. The irons came from a farming property where they were once used to chain Aboriginal 'slaves' to a fence, preventing them from escaping their forced labour impositions.

The sculptures from this project were made at Nanima, where the community Work Team were based, using their workshop. Community members from the reserve there could drop in to participate and a group of elders swapped stories over several visits. My design for *INCARCERATION #1* was a chain-link pattern derived from the shape of the irons. The design for *INCARCERATION #2* was angled chevron lines representing Aboriginal people and culture, intersected by vertical and horizontal lines referencing prison bars. These works revive the practice of tree-carving to mark significant places: signposts for burial poles and carvings for initiation ceremonies when people came together. At Nanima the poles stand 4m high, marking the site of Australia's longest-running Aboriginal mission and atrocities carried out there.

Warwick Keen, *INCARCERATION #1 and #2*, 2018, public artwork / wood carvings at Nanima, Wellington, NSW, 400 x 40 x 40 cm each. Courtesy of the artist.

Rosemary Laing

welcome to Australia depicts a large carceral barrier that fills the entire width of the picture plane; as a landscape the barrier sits in place of the horizon, blocking any view or distance. The image is framed with no entrance or exit visible and the fencing 's corner is close to the centre of the image so the seemingly impenetrable fence recedes in either direction without a sense of how far it might continue. The fence's apex situates the position of the camera as outside of the enclosure looking in but no one is visible on either side of the fence. Laing's use of twilight—ambiguous whether dawn or dusk—reinforces the complexity around the visibility of who is incarcerated there and who is kept out to avoid light being shed on what goes on there.

The location is Woomera Immigration Reception and Progressing Centre, a notorious Australian immigration detention facility in South Australia that opened 1999 and closed 2003 due to public pressure over extreme heat, overcrowded conditions and human rights abuses. Laing photographed the centre in 2004 just after its closure and around the time the High Court of Australia confirmed the constitutionality of indefinite mandatory detention of non-citizens (a decision recently overturned), ushering in a new era where asylum seekers were detained further out of sight, offshore, and potentially (punitively) held indefinitely.

Rosemary Laing, *welcome to Australia* from the series *to walk on a sea of salt*, 2004, C type photograph, 83 x 146.3 x 6.5 cm framed. Collection of Monash University Museum of Art. Image courtesy of the artist and Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne.

The work is one of the series *to walk on a sea of salt*. The series title mobilises the Country the carceral boundary is situated on and challenges the white imaginary that views the surrounding area as empty desert. While the detention centre can be thought of as a site of removal where the settler state asserts its sovereign borders, Laing affirms a different sovereignty: that which was never ceded by the land's Traditional Owners. She draws a direct connection between the threat and use of carceral violence to 'control immigration' and the violent acquisition and enclosure of land from First Nations Australians. In doing so the work powerfully encapsulates carceral colonialism in Australia.

Ricky Maynard

Ricky Maynard (Ben Lomond and Cape Portland/ Big River peoples) made the series *No More Than What You See* in 1993. During visits to four South Australian prisons, he worked with Indigenous inmates to document aspects of their lives there. The series was made in response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. Ricky Maynard: 'If you are Aboriginal you are 15 times more likely than a non-Aboriginal to spend time in jail. I felt it was important for a Koorie photographer to record some aspects of what was happening to our people at this time. After all, the Australian government spent millions of dollars and produced hundreds of pages of reports, but little that Aboriginal people could relate to. It seemed to me that a few strong images had the potential to convey more than all those words'.*

Three decades since the commission's recommendations were made, *No More Than What You See* seems more urgent: more than 500 First Nations people have died in custody and Indigenous incarceration rates have risen not reduced. Each image is the result of a unique collaboration that sheds light on the experiences of the people who make up these numbers. The selection of prints in this exhibition includes some of the most confronting from the series but also others that open up space to consider the creativity, resilience, dignity and defiance of Maynard's collaborators.

Ricky Maynard, *Untitled* from the series *No More Than What You See*, 1993, gelatin silver fibre prints, image 32.3 x 48.2 cm, paper 40.6 x 50.8 cm. Collection of Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, purchased with funds provided by the Coe and Mordant Families, 2010. Image courtesy the artist and Bett Gallery, Hobart.

*Ricky Maynard quoted in 2023 Bett Gallery solo exhibition essay by Russell Marks, accessed online bettgallery.com.au

Ian Milliss

In the mid 1970s I was active in a number of prison reform groups. We had considerable successes that were then slowly destroyed by waves of opportunistic politicians and cynical dishonest media. Being vicious to those in prison is an easy way to pretend to be 'tough on crime' without ever dealing with the causes of crime, causes which are in fact fundamental features of our social system. The vast majority of crimes that put people in prison can be traced back to inequality and its uncountable effects and what politician wants to reduce inequality? Where would they find wealthy party donors without inequality?

This work – its posters, zine and linked online resources – asks the question, if our present prisons are not working, forever remain universities of crime, how do we fix them? What good are 'better' prisons if most of those in the system should simply never be there? How do we end the revolving door of recidivism? What are the alternatives to prison? What can be done to ensure that the criminal justice system makes the lives of both the victims and perpetrators better rather than worse?

Ian Milliss, *Section of Study for Systemic Error*, 2024, digital collage. Courtesy of the artist.

Marziya Mohammedali

Marziya Mohammedali is an academic and multidisciplinary creative practitioner. They focus on working for social justice through narratives of dissent, identity, migration and transition. Marziya has photographed several protest movements across a wide range of issues. They say:

'As a settler-migrant on stolen land, I photograph protest movements from the spaces in-between, sitting at the intersections of multiply minoritised identities and troubling the idea of what it means to be a contemporary witness.

My work centres on how people at the margins perform acts of resistance, representing the quiet moments as well as the loud ones. I do this as a way of creating space for otherwise unheard voices to be amplified and recognised. Through this piece, I share my experiences as a witness to resistance, bringing issues around police brutality and deaths in custody to public attention.'

Marziya Mohammedali's new work commission is a banner print that brings together images from multiple protests they have attended and photographed over the last ten years and which relate to incarceration, detention and social justice.

Marziya Mohammedali, detail of work in progress on *Protest Banner: No Justice No Peace*, 2024, digital collage. Courtesy of the artist.

Anna Mould

In August 2016 The Guardian published The Nauru Files, leaked incident reports written by staff in Australia's detention centre on Nauru between 2013 and 2015. These files detail 2,116 separate incidents, including many cases of assault, sexual abuse, self-harm, child abuse and abhorrent living conditions endured by asylum seekers and refugees in the care of the Australian Government.

In the absence of media access to the island, Arielle Gamble and Daniel New initiated the project: *All We Can't See: Illustrating the Nauru Files*, inviting artists to illustrate these stories through creative expression, using art to shed light on all we can't see. This project is online and has also been presented through 3 exhibitions.

Anna Mould: This work imagines the fear of a feverish and sleep-deprived child. Overgrown, sticky-legged monsters crawl out from the darkness of the jungle to scuttle over small, sweaty bodies night after night, after night. The satin ribbon binding was given to me by a friend, a leftover from a well-loved blanket. In the sky, the all-seeing Southern Cross is formed by five shells found on an idyllic beach in Australia—shores that so many people have been so desperate to reach.

Anna Mould, *Fever Dream*, 2018, embroidery and appliqué on child's blanket, 60 x 80 cm. Collection of Dr Candice Bruce. Image courtesy of the artist.

TYPE OF INCIDENT:
CONCERN FOR MINOR
05 AUGUST 2014
RISK RATING: MINOR

Clients complained to SCA worker that cockroaches have crawled over him throughout the night and his children are not sleeping due to fear of the bugs

David Nolan

Every day we make seemingly small decisions that have the power to change the course of our lives. In 2002, David Nolan (Wiradjuri) made an error of judgement that would have an immeasurable impact on his future. One mistake was the catalyst for a chain of events that would see him behind bars. In gaol Nolan rekindled his childhood love of art and went on to create a series of drawings that captured his surroundings, acting as an imprint of prison life. Strict routines and random searches made the simple act of creating a difficult task. Custodial guards (screws) kept record of every possession in a place where even drawings were considered contraband. Based on those drawings, this suite of etchings are the result of Nolan's tireless effort to conceal what for us are everyday items.

Nolan reflects on his time in prison as not simply a holding yard for those who have made bad decisions, but an institution that tries to break rather than rehabilitate. It can turn a bad situation into something even worse. Through all of the hardships Nolan faced he didn't get pulled into a cycle of crime and punishment—instead he made a new life for himself. As an artist he is naturally gifted. These etchings are more than an embodiment of his talent, they are a testament to his resilience; a celebration of a man who was a victim of his circumstances and has gone on to make the most of his life.

David Nolan, *detail of Number 31*, 2012, etching aquatint on Velin Arches 300 gsm paper, image 25.5 x 47 cm, paper 40 x 60 cm. Collection of Wollongong Art Gallery. Image courtesy of the artist and Wollongong Art Gallery. Photo: Bernie Fischer.

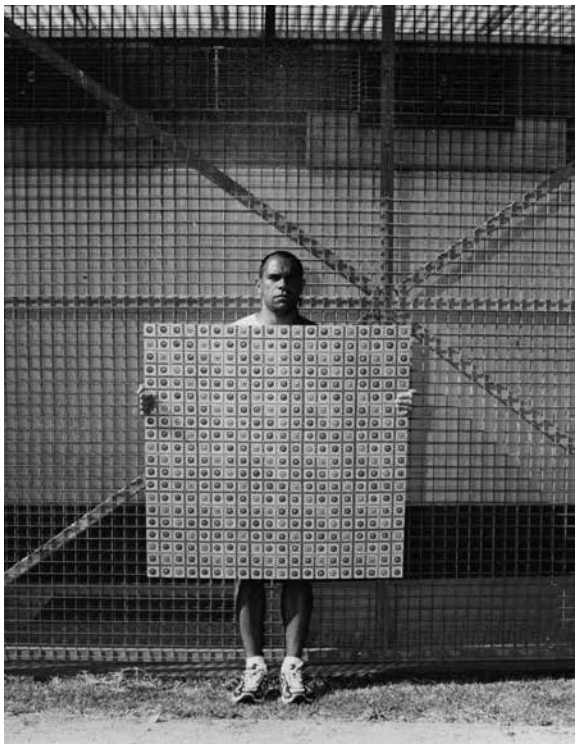
Extracts from *Inside Story: David Nolan* by Shari Lett in *Caring for the Incarcerated*, exhibition guide, University of Wollongong. Reproduced with permission.

Sue Paull

In 1986, I began working at the Long Bay Correctional Complex, where I established and coordinated a formal art program. During my first years there, I became aware of the rate at which the prison environment was changing. I felt a sense of urgency to record those changes. Over the years the photographic project expanded to include documentation of other prisons in New South Wales. Different facets of the prison environment were recorded. I was conscious of the complexities and contradictions of enclosed spaces, and their idiosyncrasies as social sites.

My view of the prison is as much about people as the particularities of place. As well as portraits, workplaces and records of social events, I photographed affective mark-making in signage, ornamentation and other human interaction. The photographs included construction, prison wings, yards and other enclosures, and confiscated contraband. Some photos recorded spaces at night, the human element conjured by its absence.

In 1998 I established The Art Unit, a full-time intensive art program for inmates. The Art Unit pioneered the concept of a multidisciplinary visual arts studio where inmates from different security classifications could work side by side. Ten inmates participated in the program at any one time. My photographs in this exhibition are of some of the participants who attended this program, proudly showing their artwork.



Sue Paull, *Herman with his untitled painting: The Art Unit, Metropolitan Special Programs Centre, Long Bay Correctional Complex*, 2003, silver gelatin photograph, 31 x 20.5 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Stanislava Pinchuk

The Wine Dark Sea tells the story of the leaked Nauru and Manus Island cables alongside Homer's Odyssey. Engraved into the marble works, near-identical phrases have been taken from both sources, and their protagonists swapped—Odysseus becoming [REDACTED], and vice versa. *The Wine Dark Sea* speaks to the Odyssey's primary question of hospitality—how we treat our visitors, and what that says about us, rather than our guests. Of what it means to be in seemingly permanent exile, shuttled from island to island in despair, with only the distant prospect of reaching home.

While Homer's Odyssey is embraced as the first 'migrant novel' and key foundation of global literature—we are perhaps unwilling to do so for the near-identical narratives of exile on our doorstep. Odysseus' story of 10 year exile, like those illegally detained for 9+ years in Australia's off-shore migrant detention centres, is one of continuous displacement—moving from island to island, with an unknown prospect of reaching home.

The texts of both the leaked condition reports of illegal off-shore detention and the great epic of oral poetry have been shaped by multiple authors and contributors, and covering many subjects—eventually falling to credit under one umbrella, be it Homer or Transfield. *The Wine Dark Sea* interrogates such fragmentation of narrative, with its form referencing the vernacular architecture of Homer's alleged tomb on the island of Ios, Greece, comprised of stones stacked and arranged by visitors over millenia. Pinchuk's sculptures are likewise re-arranged and re-interpreted by guests with each showing, without a final form—akin to the process of story-telling itself.

Stanislava Pinchuk, *The Wine Dark Sea*, 2023, engraved marble, enamel, dimensions variable. Courtesy of the artist and Ames Yavuz. Photo: Jessica Maurer.

Sha Sarwari

Silent Conversation is an installation and an ongoing participatory work that attempts to engage the public to participate in expressing their view on the issue of refugees. The first time the artist enacted this work, three thousand blank postcards were dropped in letterboxes in the suburbs of Brisbane. The postcards invited residents to write their view and send it back to Sarwari. Out of three thousand postcards, twelve were sent back. The installation on the ground is comprised of blank postcards referencing the postcards Sarwari did not receive back. Despite not receiving any postcards, Sarwari thinks the conversation is still ongoing but in silence. During subsequent exhibitions, some postcards have been returned. These are displayed in this exhibition on the wall. The face side of the postcards is an image of a boat Sarwari made from collected Australian newspaper articles relating to refugees, asylum seekers and immigration detention. Sarwari white-washed the outside of the boat and wrote the story of his journey coming to Australia: why and how he ended up in Australia. He wrote it without editing, whatever he could remember. It was written in Hazaragi language.

Ashes to Ashes is an accompanying video that documents a performance Sarwari did where he burnt the boat on the shore as the sun sets. The video endlessly loops backwards and forwards relating to being stuck in time and stuck in limbo, having left but not arrived.

Sha Sarwari, *Silent Conversation*, 2014, postcards, Australian hardwood, 15 x 300 x 300 cm. Courtesy of the artist.

Sha Sarwari, *Ashes to Ashes*, 2015, digital video, infinite loop. Courtesy of the artist.

Julie Shiels

For almost a decade (2005-2014) Julie Shiels transformed hundreds of abandoned objects on local streets with stencils of quotations and truisms. Making use of discarded items and Incidental text, these ephemeral works poetically explore impermanence, the passage of time and the tensions accompanying gentrification. Often made in response to Julie's daily movements around her suburb, these site-specific interventions were prompted by the chance discovery of a dumped piece of furniture or by conversations with residents, be they established, precarious or itinerant. Both the people and the objects told stories that reveal the specificity of a local urban culture through the complex layering of diverse groups and their interactions.

Julie's texts reference graffiti and stencils, without imposing an indelible mark on public or private property, and the fonts she employed, blurred the boundary between conventional advertising and street art. A deliberate allusion to corporate branding situated the work between the guerrilla and the authorised, with the intention of disrupting viewers' acceptance of commercial interests in the visual landscape as ordinary or natural. Over the years as this incidental project gained its own momentum, the content developed and the relationship between site and material changed. What remained constant, though, was an overarching concern with the precariousness of life and its circumstances.

Julie Shiels, *Will you catch me when I fall - Foster St* (detail), 2008, digital print, 51 x 76 cm (detail). Courtesy of the artist.

Cassie Sullivan

Cassie Sullivan is a lutruwita/Tasmanian Indigenous contemporary Artist. Her works in this exhibition were originally created during a Constance ARI project with Risdon Prison, curated by Tess Campbell and Maria Blackwell, in 2020-21.

see you next week uses ambient audio recorded throughout the prison environment. The sound piece has been layered and built to explore the pressure that the prison system can play on overwhelming the senses. It is an attempt to convey the feeling of being introduced to the prison for the first time and the flood of oversaturation, enclosure and anxiety that experience can induce.

In *we are all complicit here*, each piece of orange thread represents an inmate in Risdon Prison (672) stuck in isolation; physically, mentally and/or from particular life experiences such as intergenerational trauma and lack of resources. The audience can move freely through the installation, representing my experience as an artist within this project and the brief and intimate connections with the inmates left behind after each visit. There is a fragile beauty in our paths crossing and separating. I imagine the way the same generational threads are weaved into the prison system over and over, embedding stories there, encasing entire families. There is a complex layering of gratefulness at being able to experience this project, interacting with these inmates and the guilt that I carry for being able to leave. We are all complicit here.

Cassie Sullivan, *we are all complicit here*, 2021, string and net, 165 x 74 x 900 cm. Commissioned by Constance ARI for the exhibition *The Pink Palace: From Isolation*. Courtesy of the artist.

Abdullah M. I. Syed

Mapping Kala Pani کالا پانی investigates Australia being multiply-coded as kala-pani, a phrase from Indo-Aryan languages which translates to 'black water', but with broad cultural meaning for diasporic identity. In South Asia the phrase is painfully connected with crossing the seas to faraway lands of no return, causing a loss of social respectability and identity. It also denotes places such as former British penal colonies reputed for slavery-like brutality. These precursors to contemporary black sites (such as Manus Island, Nauru, Abu Ghraib, Guantánamo Bay) also created the connotation of *kala-pani* as a sentence worse than death, conditions reserved for freedom fighters during British colonial rule.

The installation incorporates an image of a found Australian map progressively degenerated through repeated photocoping. Each sheet bears unique black ink marks and is stamped 'file closed' in red from Syed's performative actions echoing a bureaucrat, politician, clerk, jailer and judiciary. This symbolises the colonial ritual of a sentencing judge by breaking the pen's nib after signing a death warrant, signifying the irrevocable nature of the decision. The grid of maps is punctuated with intricately made prison shackles crafted from 24K gold-plated shaving blades, marked with the brand 'Astra' (the star) as guidance. The installation is a poetic reflection on the socioeconomic condition of 'life' within the increasingly all-encompassing spectacle of decline of empathy and unchecked political power. It symbolises the resilience, hope, struggles and scars minorities, refugees and asylum seekers endure in Australia.

Abdullah M. I. Syed, details of work in progress on *Mapping Kala Pani*, 2024, Indian ink and stamp on paper photocopies of found Australia map, 24K gold-plated shaving blades, metal and Perspex, dimensions variable. Image courtesy of the artist and Gallery Sally Dan Cuthbert. Photo: Abdullah M. I. Syed.

Gordon Syron

Uncle Gordon Syron is a Biripi/Worimi painter, respected Elder, educator and political activist. Much of Syron's work reflects his anger and frustration at the oppression and the dispossession he experienced as a result of his imprisonment. His historically-significant painting *Judgement by His Peers* was painted in 1978 while he was in Long Bay Gaol and credits art as saving his life and sanity while he was in prison. He was convicted for murdering his uncle's adopted son. Syron maintains this was a land rights case and his actions were tribal retribution for betrayal over the inheritance of the family dairy farm. He painted *Judgement by His Peers* in response to his trial: 'This painting is my most meaningful work. It is the story of my life. This trial happened to me. I challenged the jury system of Australia. I asked that I be judged by my peers and your peers are your equals. I asked to have one or more Aboriginal persons on my jury. One lawyer said that I wasn't black enough to be black and the other lawyer said that I wasn't white enough to be white. They then argued this point in front of me for sometime. Both my parents were Aboriginal. It was such an insult to me and my family. I was judged by an all-white jury. (If you are a pink fella then according to British law and now Australian law you are entitled to have a pink person on the jury).

Gordon Syron, *Judgement By His Peers*, 1978, oil on canvas, 75 x 105 cm. Image courtesy of the National Museum of Australia.

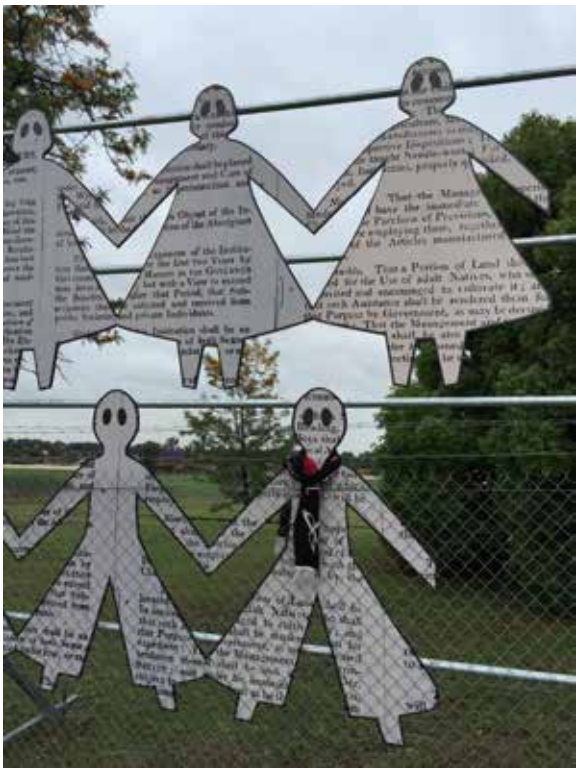
I served a life sentence.' Vivien Johnson described this painting as 'perfect symbolism for the failure of the criminal justice system to deliver justice to Indigenous Australians.'

Gordon Syron quote on artist's website gordonsyron.com
Vivien Johnson, 2007, Design & Art Australia Online daao.org.au

Leanne Tobin

The work by Dharug artist Leanne Tobin in this exhibition is from *Clean, Clad and Courteous* (2015), a public art project co-commissioned by the MCA's C3West program, Blacktown Arts Centre and Urban Growth NSW on the site of the former Blacktown Native Institution (1823-1828). The institution replaced Parramatta Native Institution (1814-1823). Both were residential schools for young Aboriginal children and the first colonial sites where Aboriginal children were forcibly removed from their families and institutionalised. The artwork comprised two large-scale rows of figures—girls and boys—that resemble paper dolls. Tobin's use of cut-outs emphasises the removal of the children from their families, heralding the beginning of the imposed separation from Country and culture. Excerpts from the institution's *Rules and Regulations* are used. Former C3West Senior Curator Anne Loxley describes this as an overprinting that 'graphically symbolised the extreme imposition of colonial ways onto the children'.* As the artwork resembles paper dolls, they also can be read as if they have been cut out of the *Rules and Regulations* in an act of defiance or resistance. Loxley also describes how Tobin references spirit Ancestors through her rendering of the faces of each figure having only eyes: the missing mouths symbolise the silencing of the children's voices and loss of language. In responding to the Blacktown site and its history, it is significant that Leanne Tobin is a direct descendent of Maria Lock, the first enrolled student of the Native Institutions.

*Anne Loxley 2016 accessed online: mca.com.au



Leanne Tobin, *Clean Clad and Courteous*, 2015, installation view, Blacktown Native Institution Corroboree, 2015, Oakhurst NSW, co-commissioned by C3West on behalf of Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Blacktown Arts Centre on behalf of Blacktown City Council and UrbanGrowth NSW. Image courtesy and © the artist.

Kawita Vatanajyankur

Kawita Vatanajyankur is a Thai-Australian artist whose video-based performances explore the ways in which the human body, in particular the female body, is positioned within capitalist and consumerist frameworks. Her work often addresses the hidden labour behind domestic and commercial work by using her own body as an instrument to undertake a series of repetitive tasks, testing her own physical and psychological endurance.

In *The Scale of Injustice*, Vatanajyankur displays three different actions of labour in a single channel video that lasts nearly 8 and a half minutes. Her repeated figure is set against a crimson red backdrop installed within an artificial field. In the video work, she stands in place of scale pans—her body is the suspended carrier of the baskets—and the core structure or pillar of the scale. As the carriers, her body is attached to baskets, weighing continually falling piles of cotton seeds. When the scale is imbalanced, Vatanajyankur's body smashes onto the ground. The collected cotton seeds are repeatedly bounced off from the containers and the performance appears trapped in a continuous cycle with the baskets never full and yet needing to be filled, hence the labour of the broken scale continues. Vatanajyankur's pose in the focus point of the picture frame is inverted: the artist performs a handstand, which she struggles to balance and maintain. In this exhibition Vatanajyankur's *The Scale of Injustice* opens up space to consider a range of gendered and racialised injustices, contexts in which exploitation and marginalisation proliferate, and where the breaking point of global political systems might be.

Kawita Vatanajyuankur, *The Scale of Injustice*, 2021, 4K digital video, 8:30 mins. Courtesy of the artist and Nova Contemporary.

The Longford Project

The Longford Project is a group of artists (Elizabeth Day, Anna Gibbs, Julie Gough and Noelene Lucas) who have intersecting family roots in Longford, Tasmania. The project represents a new way of linking history and story, of addressing historical amnesia and personal not-knowing.

These works map the crime scenes created by the colonial dispersal of people, ideas, ways of life, plants, animals, goods and money from England across the map of Empire. The focus is on a series of secondary dispersals to particular colonial 'crime scenes'—from England to Norfolk Island, then to the Norfolk Plains and finally to the Lunatic Asylum, New Norfolk (1827– 1859), later the Hospital for the Insane (1859–1915).

Connections between the colonial occupiers of the Norfolk Plains and New Norfolk ran deep: both groups were sent to these places on the closure of Norfolk Island penal settlement where these people would all have known each other. They were almost all originally convicts or jailers who were former members of the NSW ('Rum') Corps. The culture of the penal system ran deep in them, their families and their descendants. Granted land on the Country of Aboriginal First Nations, they were thereby turned into an occupying force, defending, enclosing and forever changing the nature of what they henceforth saw as their land. They were quickly joined by various 'free settlers' who also arrived in both areas, some already extremely wealthy, others finding ways to enrich themselves in colonial society, many taking up and enclosing further massive land holdings on Indigenous Country.

The first series of films investigate murder and violence on the Norfolk Plains, each of the four short films projected on the sides of a crime scene tent and taking a particular incident to examine from its own unique angle: the shooting and attempted murder of Indigenous woman Dalrymple Briggs by Jacob Mountgarrett in 1825, the murder of Joseph Edward Wilson by John McKay & John Lamb in 1837, the violent murder of Ellen Moriarty near the Railway Inn in Longford in 1867, and the alleged murder of Captain Thomas Hammant by George Cox in 1832. There are also family connections between some of these stories and some of the artists.

Drawing on case files and other research, the second series of four short films focuses on the fates of four women sent to the Asylum from the Norfolk Plains and the life stories that led them there. The Asylum was in some ways an extension of the penal system, an instance of the colonial crime scene. Inmates were held apart from and sometimes out of sight of family and community until they were released, or died. Treatment of inmates varied according to the prevailing wisdom of the day and the whims of those in charge at any given time. Nevertheless, women in colonial times could be highly resistant and resilient to a violent patriarchal culture. Of necessity, they often invented their own ingenious ways either to survive in it or to escape from it.

The Longford Project, *Crime Scene*, 2019-2024, video installation, 250 x 300 x 300 cm. Installation views at 2019 exhibition *Crime Scene*, Longford Town Hall and 2024 exhibition *Dispersal Sites*: *Past Due* at Willow Court, New Norfolk. Courtesy of the artists.

The Longford Project

Julie Gough
Crime Scene: On Saturday 16th July 1825, between 5 and 6 pm, one of my ancestors, Dalrymple Briggs, ran, crying Murder, from a hut located beside what was then termed the Lake River, on what is now Brickendon estate, near Longford. Dalrymple was about, in her own words, 12 years of age. Little is known of her early life, so these eyewitness accounts, the impetus for this film work, stands as key testimony. Now held in the National Library of Australia, Manuscripts section, they are invaluable in any attempt to piece together not only what happened that day, but to contribute to some understanding of her life and frontier times before and after this brutal event. Dalrymple survived to raise 13 children. In 1841 Dalrymple miraculously successfully petitioned the Colonial Government to return her mother home from exile in horrendous conditions at Wybalenna, the Aboriginal internment camp on Flinders Island. Nearly 200 Tasmanian Aboriginal children were taken to live with colonists in the first 40 years post British invasion of this island, irrevocably changing its future and our Aboriginal demographics. Their lives are little known, most perished young, or otherwise 'disappear'. Perpetually missing, they are spectres, not to be overlooked or erased. To remain haunted is to remember, and I keep seeking them, these hidden figures of history.

Reason: The Grounds / The Basis / Origin / Source / Inherited / Root Cause / Foundation Story / Blame / Cause / The Hold / Legacy / Birthright / Tainted / Contaminated / Unsound / Disturbed.
Years ago I was quietly passed a story typed in 1947 by a man born in 1885 in northern Tasmania, by one of his descendants. This was Testimonial Truth-Telling, which has gained no ground as a normative practice on our island. 1557 words specify a massacre of Tasmanian Aboriginal people, by named colonists, at a named place. Few evidentiary documents outlining deliberate annihilation have surfaced. This account reveals how well practiced 'settlers' were in ambushing Aboriginal families' camps at night, aiming to kill everyone. Researching this murderous family, a daughter of a perpetrator was located.
--- (1841-1920) 'admitted' to New Norfolk Hospital for the Insane in 1897, remained until her death. She claimed 'many people were trying to injure her.'

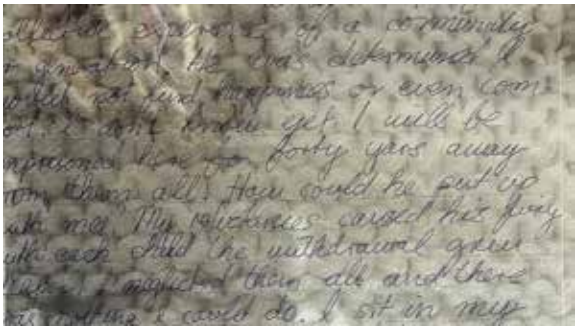
Elizabeth Day
Cold Case is a short text film, based on research in Trove of court records and newspaper clippings on the extremely violent murder of Ellen Moriarty near the Railway Inn in Longford in 1867. It seems that there were many unresolved questions that have not entirely gone away surrounding the conviction of Daniel Connors.

The Silent Story of Mary U is based on the life of a woman who was sent by her husband in the 1850s to spend the rest of her life at the New Norfolk Asylum. There are few records of her life upon arrival, except for the handwritten records that were made of the monthly visits to her room. Every month one of the superintendents wrote cursory statements 'No Change', 'The Same,' 'No Change', 'No Change'... conjuring a dreadful life of mute immobility. The text in this piece is a fiction based on scant facts remaining of Mary U's life from the position of a granddaughter who tries to conjure the reality of that darkened life.

Julie Gough, *Crime Scene*, 2019, HD video, 18:00 mins, edited by Angus Ashton. Courtesy of the artist.

Julie Gough, *Reason*, 2024, HD video (mp4, 16:9, H264m 1080p, sound, colour), 24:43 mins. Courtesy of the artist.

Elizabeth Day, *Cold Case*, 2019, HD video, 11:23 mins. Courtesy of the artist.



Elizabeth Day, *The Silent Story of Mary U*, 2024, HD video, 9:00 mins. Courtesy of the artist.

The Longford Project

Anna Gibbs
Techniques of Crime Scene Investigation: The murder of Captain Thomas Hammant, aged 59, took place on 18 July 1832 in the course of 'a drunken brawl between neighbours and relations' at a pub. This brawl was typical of the heavily male-dominated, extremely violent society in which all these men lived. Life on the Norfolk Plains, as the area was then known, was hard, and many of the settlers were not successful farmers. Most of all though, this was a society shaped by the fact that all these men, willingly or not, whether settlers or convicts, were invaders in a land not their own. They were part of an occupying population that had fought a brutal 25 year war against the original inhabitants and rightful owners of the land, of whom they had lived in fear despite the fact that far more indigenous people than European occupiers were killed in these wars. The original inhabitants were dispossessed of their land without compensation, and this is a crime to which the present is heir.

Techniques of Crime Scene Investigation #2 examines how women could go missing from the historical record of the colonial world; a world where violence, illness, death and trauma were pervasive, even sometimes for families who had escaped their convict origins to become well-off occupiers of palawa land in what is now lutruwita/Tasmania. Piecing together an outline of events in one such life from research into her family history, this film speculates about the continual experience of loss piled upon loss and its impact on the emotional world of a woman who seems to have gone missing even from her own life.

Noelene Lucas
A Diabolical Crime: The wilful murder of Joseph Edward Wilson, 24, by John McKay and John Lamb. I thought about the mother of Joseph Wilson. She made no court appearance and did not formally identify her son's body. She would have been grieving this terrible loss. And she may well have seen or heard reports of how her son died. How do you get images like these out of your mind? How do you grieve and reconcile the brutality of what was done to your son in a senseless random attack? Walking can be a form of grief, the slow resignation of the frailty of life through the body heavy, step by step by step. Walking can become effortless repetition, like the heart beating, walking through torturous thoughts and painful memories towards peace.

A Perfect Chaos: Mary B was admitted to the New Norfolk Asylum for the Insane on 8 Sept 1871 at age 41. She was the wife of a carpenter from the farm 'Formosa', near Longford. She had been ill for 5 or 6 years but the attack that prompted her admission to the institution involved her throwing a tomahawk at her children, claiming they were not hers. Conditions were grim in the asylum. Mary B contracted tuberculosis and endured an inflamed and ulcerated leg for decades. She was described as 'Excitable and incoherent,' her mind a 'Perfect chaos,' yet also 'Quiet and industrious, a valuable worker.' The women's needlework was a measure of sanity and was very profitable for the institution. Mary B remained in the New Norfolk Asylum for the Insane for 30 years, with 'no mental change', until her death in 1901. The research for this project was supported by Salamanca Arts Centre, Hobart.

Anna Gibbs, *Techniques of a Crime Scene Investigation*, 2019, HD video, 9:58 mins. Courtesy of the artist.

Anna Gibbs, *Techniques of a Crime Scene Investigation #2*, 2023, HD video, 12:00 mins. Courtesy of the artist.

Noelene Lucas, *A Diabolical Crime*, 2019, HD video, 11:00 mins. Courtesy of the artist.

Noelene Lucas, *A Perfect Chaos*, 2024, HD video, 12:00 mins. Courtesy of the artist.

Steven ---, *Clock and Aboriginal Designs*, 2019,
mixed media, 100 x 75 cm. Collection CSNSW.

Works from the Department of Corrective Services Collection and the Boom Gate Gallery

The images from Boom Gate Gallery provide an insight into prisoners' own experience of life in prison. They are displayed here, at a slight distance from us, behind glass in a zone of their own and out of reach. Some of this work involves views of prison interiors. The world of 'inside' is unknown to most of us. These works exteriorise what we don't know, opening a consideration of the role of art in offering non-punishing and perhaps rehabilitative resolutions of crime. The small selection shown only begins to illustrate the diversity and surprising inventiveness that often characterises work from inside.

The Boom Gate Gallery has now been in existence for over thirty years. It currently provides art materials, canvases, brushes, paints, and sales opportunities to artists. Alongside this painting for sale tradition much art 'inside' is made from found 're-purposed' materials such as matches, bedsheets, paddle pop sticks, Hebel blocks, soap, toilet paper, papier maché, as well as an array of sundry found, sometimes 'procured' items. Creativity tends to exist in the cracks of assemblages of power, and that is most explicit in the use of these materials.

Incarcerated artists are involved in forms of innovation that fundamentally contest dominant frameworks of aesthetics, criminalisation, and imprisonment. They engage in art-making that upends how aesthetics and production of art within Western thought and culture belong to the domain of discerning mobile, sensory, white, and free Western man who ascribes value and judgement. Carceral aesthetics as relational practices reposition the viewing and discerning subject away from Western racial hierarchies to create affective possibilities of belonging, collectivity and subjecthood from a position of unfreedom.[1]

I am indebted in the thinking of art 'inside' to Nicole Fleetwood and her extraordinary exhibition Marking Time (MOMA 2020). Fleetwood, a Professor at New York University, has a curatorial position that engages with understandings gained by having several relatives caught in the prison system. She appraises the impacts of 'white' aesthetics, on the dominant codes of cultural production: 'Aesthetics as conceived in the Enlightenment era developed in tandem with the museum and the prison'.[2] This is in reference to the US system of incarceration and its historic relationship to slavery, since many prisons in the south were built on former plantations. I look to her thinking to find something of an analogy for the way the British imported and imposed on colonial Australia a penal system that continues to this day.

A large section of the Mann Tatlow Gallery exhibition is dedicated to Indigenous art. As in the United States, criminality in this country is still a construction of racism and colonisation. Australia

Marcus --- (Dungatti / Gumaynggirri), *Flooded Waters Flash Soup*, 2023, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Boom Gate Gallery.

Richard --- (Kunja/Barkindji), *Swamp Creatures*, 2024, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 60 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Boom Gate Gallery.

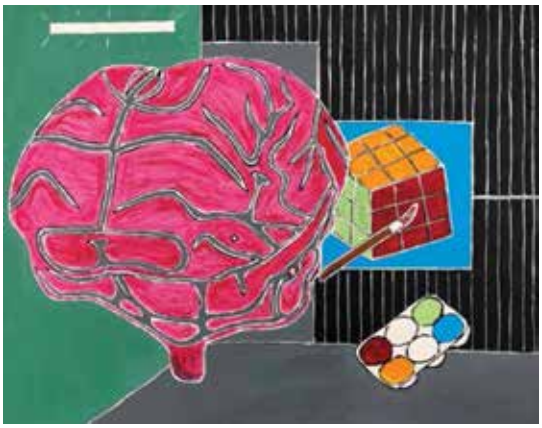
Grant ---, *Mental Health is Bigger than we Think*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 2 pieces, 70 x 90 cm each.
Courtesy of the artist and Boom Gate Gallery.

was settled to house an overflow of prisoners in Britain after the end of the American Civil War. The over-representation of Indigenous people and prison art in Australia remains a testimony to this situation, which is still unresolved after more than 200 years. We haven't 'closed the gap', and prisons remain a wound here.

On the corner of one of the earliest prison stone walls in Australia at Parramatta, is an Indigenous carving. It is possibly the earliest example of Indigenous prison art in Australia, dating from around 1797. Indigenous works in this exhibition are from a wide range of places, mainly in NSW. Artists such as Michael ---, Richard --- and Marcus --- present vivid accounts of their regions and are very familiar with local totems and iconography. Very frequently Indigenous people come to gaol from places or families where regional knowledges, traditions and family links have been disrupted, especially in relation to the traumas of Stolen Generations. This can make for a disconnect with local traditions, due to the various dislocations of invasion. Even without specific knowledge, groups of Indigenous painters can gain strength from working alongside others as they produce paintings, often in collaboration with each other. Language and knowledges are exchanged in this process despite there being few art classes in New South Wales prisons.

All work sold through the Gallery that claims to be Indigenous must be authenticated. This means that on entering the prison system a box must be ticked on a form claiming Indigeneity. Some who don't tick the box may not want to disclose their Indigeneity for fear of discrimination. Nevertheless, in small group settings, new artists are taught by those more experienced who share techniques, stencils, skills of dotting and layering dots, as well as some knowledge of stories and customs. These processes are quiet assertions of connections among prisoners themselves as well as to family groups on the outside.

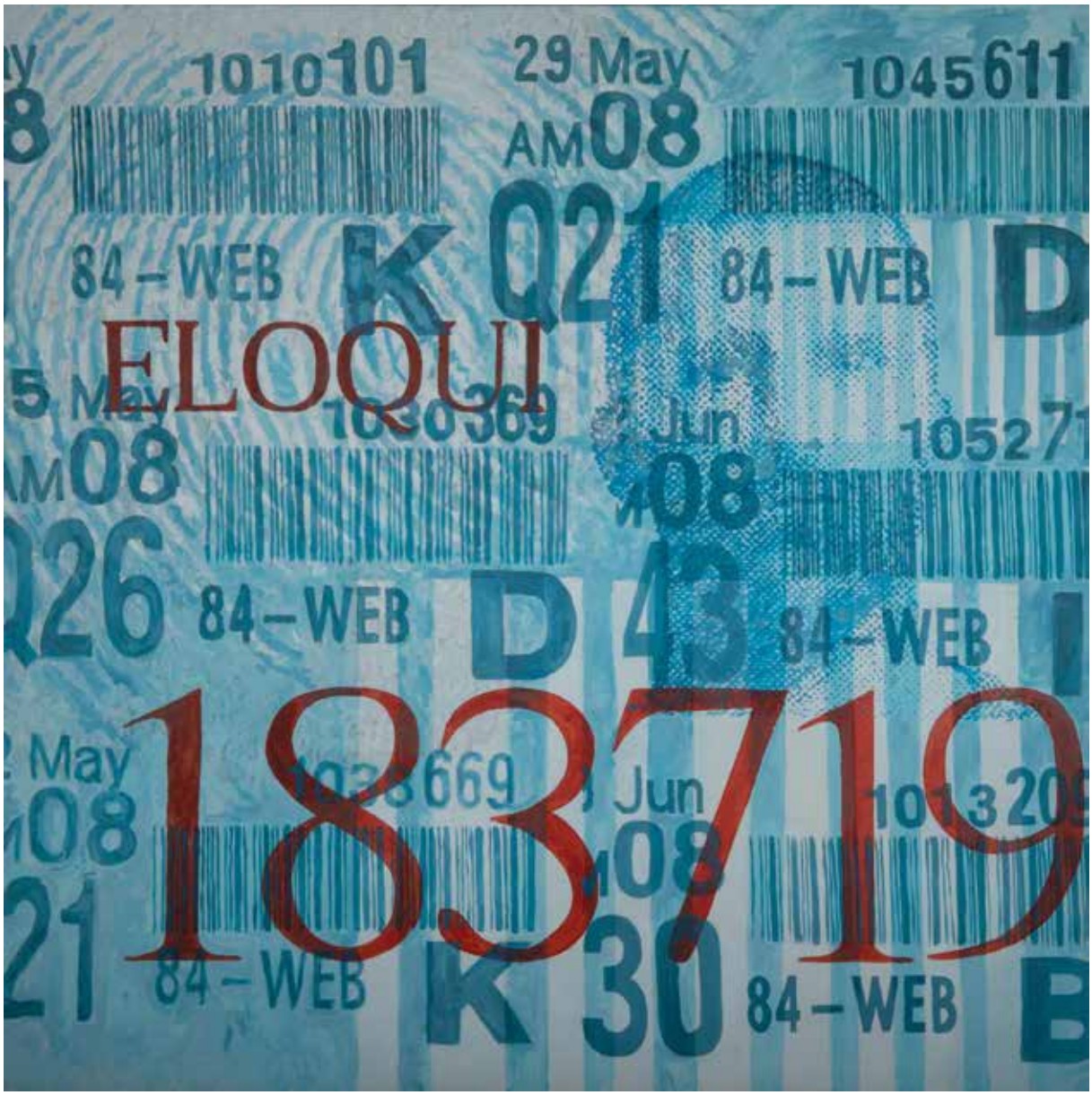
Some of the Indigenous artists shown here, including Anthony ---, Frederick ---, Herman ---, Stephen --- were part of a program called the Art Unit that operated within Long Bay between 1998 until 2012, established under the leadership of Sue Paull, whose program enabled an outstanding standard to be achieved as a handpicked group of ten inmate artists were able to pursue art-making on a daily basis in a very well equipped art room. Sue is also a contemporary documentary photographer, and some of her extensive archive of photographs taken inside prisons of New South Wales are included among the artists' work. A selection of artists who worked in the Art Unit atelier are shown here. The quality of Terry ---, Jayde ---, Geoff ---, and Zig ---'s work are testimonies to the value of having a well-resourced art facility in the prison. Jayde continues to be an active artist in the community working with young people at risk of crime as well as exhibiting his own work. All these people would attest to the value of a positive gaol sentence experience. Chris ---'s *Deaths in Custody: Then Came Art*, included in this exhibition has been widely reproduced and appreciated.



Troy ---, *Free Mind*, 2019, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 50 cm. Collection of Robert Lake.

Tom ---, *Entropy*, 2016, acrylic on canvas, 70 x 50 cm. Collection of Robert Lake.

Andrew ---, *Monitored*, 2024, acrylic on canvas, 23 x 23 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Boom Gate Gallery.



Geoff ---, *Innovations of Identifications*, 2003, acrylic on canvas, 120 x 120 cm. Collection of CSNSW.

Javier --- was able to produce his amazing depictions of Wing 10, his clock radio 'home' and many other extravagantly designed collaged bricolage items, found mainly within his immediate environment. Tony ---'s realistic descriptive paintings give us a snapshot of the world 'inside', as do Megan ---'s, Grant ---'s South Parkesque depictions of the absurd whacky world 'inside' and Brendon ---'s folded sheets tell stories of the people who used them. These 're-purposed' doona covers are a great example of the necessity to produce art that can arise from incarceration, as another form of quiet defiance revealing the power of storytelling to forge connection. Tony ---'s portraits of the architecture and the people inside are often interactive. In *The Zoo*, Tony paints himself as part of the crowd and says that other inmates like being painted. He is telling a story of the often horrors of living in an enclosed yard.

The lives of many prisoners have, in one way or another, been impacted by institutions including the mental health, social services, judicial system, medical systems etc. Prisons are the most extreme and perhaps the ultimate exemplar of the knowledge that we live in a mesh of systems and surveillances. Deputy Commissioner Luke Grant writes in his introduction to *Thirty Years* catalogue that 'we are looking against a backdrop in NSW of serious and chronic disadvantage and social exclusion. Making art develops personal effectiveness skills, willingness to learn, experiment and to make mistakes, self-criticism, and self-reflection'.[3]

The exhibition includes works that show these pressurised, damaged and often damaging spaces can sometimes be turned into fertile environments. Terry ---'s prison interiors reveal a space of creative freedom and even enlightenment, one that he managed to carve out for himself during his sentence. There are many for whom artmaking has been a completely alien practice until they arrive at the point of having

nothing but eighteen hours per day of boredom. Richard --- has produced a fine and extensive body of work that defies the confined life he has had to live, defining his deep association with his land and animals.

These works connect with activism around broader streams of social dysfunction referenced in other parts of the exhibition all speaking to the need to 'undo' or 'unravel' the idea of the prison.

The Boom Gate Gallery is exemplary of what can occur when political and administrative conditions allow. Art in prisons is by no means generally acceptable. In Queensland prisons art is not permitted to be sold. It is impossible to over-state how important it is for some people who are incarcerated to be able to find a way of allowing their thoughts, ideas, and creations to find public voice. In 2019 the Boom Gate Gallery in conjunction with the UNSW's Big Anxiety Festival produced an exhibition called *...in Trouble: inmate art and mental health at Long Bay*. Artists were asked to write about what it meant for them to be able to be creative, and unsurprisingly, their short texts often describe their works as life-saving exercises. Some of the significant works in the collection, such as Giacomo ---'s confident expressive paintings, are done by inmates who are mentally impaired.

The Gallery defines a space in Corrections which is in many ways exceptional. It has now existed for over thirty years promoting the value of creativity to prisoners in New South Wales. During that time, it has been through several iterations, but has survived thanks to inspired senior management and dedicated gallery managers.

Dennis Carriage (Wadi Wadi / Yuin), *Lightning Spirit*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 76 x 51 cm. This artwork and the artist's name are displayed with the permission of his family. Private collection.

1 Nicole Fleetwood, *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration*, 2020, Harvard University Press, p 31.
2 Ibid, p 28.
3 Luke Grant, 'Introduction' in *Boom Gate Gallery Thirty Years: creating and collecting 1992-2022*, exhibition catalogue for 30th Anniversary Exhibition, Boom Gate Gallery, Long Bay Correctional Complex.

Tony ---, *The Zoo*, 2022, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 120 cm. Collection of CSNSW.

Contributors

Vernon Ah Kee is a contemporary Australian artist, political activist and founding member of ProppaNOW. Ah Kee has ties to the Kuku Yalanji, Waanji, Yidinji and Gugu Yimithirr peoples in Queensland. He is represented by Milani Gallery.

Zanny Begg is a video installation artist who works across drawing, film, social and spatial practice to explore questions of feminism, migration, and ecological and intergenerational responsibility. Often creating intricate worlds through drawing costumes and backdrops, Zanny is interested in the loops and twists of time that reveal previously submerged or hidden histories.

Behrouz Boochani is an award-winning Kurdish-Iranian writer, journalist, scholar, cultural advocate and filmmaker, who was incarcerated for seven years by the Australian government on Christmas Island and Manus Island in Papua New Guinea. He now lives and works in New Zealand. Arash Kamali Sarvestani is an Iranian-Dutch filmmaker and producer.

Andrew Brooks is a Lecturer in the School of Arts & Media, UNSW, a co-director of the UNSW Media Futures Hub, a founding member of the Infrastructural Inequalities research network, a co-editor of the publishing collective Rosa Press. His work investigates policing and abolition, race and anti-racism, infrastructure and inequalities. He is one half of the critical art collective Snack Syndicate, the author of Inferno (Rosa), and the co-author of Homework (Discipline).

Carla Cescon lives and works on unceded Gadigal Country. As an artist she translates experiences and observation, and processes this through form, often referring to methods of painting, hand craft and sculpture. She attempts to translate materials as an expansion of drawing, which may become a construction, object or assemblage. Her practice is a way of creating visual descriptions or aphorisms. Collaborating with other artists and co-directing artist-run-initiatives are also important aspects of her practice.

Megan Cope is a Quandamooka artist from Minjerribah, North Stradbroke Island/Moreton Bay in South East Queensland. Her site-specific sculptural installations, public art practice and paintings investigate issues relating to colonial histories, the environment and mapping practices. She is represented by Milani Gallery.

Debra Dawes is an Australian contemporary painter who currently lives and works in Coledale, Murrurundi and Sydney, New South Wales. The works in this exhibition are the result of a collaboration with her nephew Dylan while he was incarcerated.

Dr Elizabeth Day was born in Liverpool, UK, and migrated in 1963 with her family to Tasmania, where she was confronted by the harsh colonial history still resonant in that state. She is a practicing contemporary artist who has a long history working in the mental health/carceral system. Her engagement with this silent walled-in world stems from an experience of incarceration within her own family. Her artwork has engaged the subject of the imposition of early colonial rule on the landscape and its Indigenous population and the transgenerational trauma it has produced. She has posited recognition of and care for those living in the shadows and performative unravelling of history as a creative response.

Destiny Deacon was a descendent of the KuKu (Far North Queensland) and Erub/Mer (Torres Strait) people. Her performative photograph explores Indigenous identity with often provocative and humorous imagery that mocks and satirises clichéd and racist stereotypes. The artist's estate is represented by Roslyn Oxley9.

Karla Dickens is an artist of Wiradjuri, Irish and German heritage, living and working in Goonellabah, Lismore, on Bundjalung Country in New South Wales. Her multidisciplinary practice often places overlooked or discarded objects into new contexts to interrogate Australian culture, contest histories and agitate for change. She is represented by STATION.

Mireille Eid (Astore) is an artist, writer, mother, scientist, librarian and migrant: multiple identities adopted by many refugees as they negotiate acceptance in host countries. She was born in Beirut, Lebanon and fled during the Lebanese Civil war in 1975 to migrate to Australia. She now lives in the Blue Mountains and works in Sydney.

Anne Ferran lives and works in Sydney. Her practice has explored histories of incarceration in prisons, asylums, hospitals and nurseries. Her artworks play with invisibility and anonymity, and are often haunted by things unseen. She is represented by Sutton Gallery, Melbourne.

Trevor Fry is a NZ/Australian artist who lives and works in Whanganui, Aotearoa/New Zealand. Abjection has been a central strategy in his work across diverse mediums, from drawing to installation, performance, video and ceramics, challenging acceptable taste and conventional attitudes.

Arielle Gamble is the CEO and co-founder of Groundswell Giving, a platform for climate action. She previously co-founded and curated *All We Can't See: Illustrating the Nauru Files*, a national exhibition and impact campaign that shed light on the human cost of offshore detention.

Anna Gibbs is a writer working across the fields of cultural and textual studies with a focus on affect theory, feminism, fictocriticism, experimental writing and contemporary art. An Adjunct Professor at Western Sydney University and PhD supervisor at the international Transart Institute, she has a history of collaboration with contemporary artists and her work, including catalogue essays, has been widely published both in Australia and overseas.

Sarah Goffman lives and works in Naarm (Melbourne). Working across performance, sculpture and installation, her practice often transforms packaging, navigating some of the complexities of the materiality of our culture: both conspicuous consumption and wanton neglect.

Julie Gough is an artist, curator, writer living in nipaluna, Lutruwita (Hobart, Tasmania). She is a member of the Trawlwoolway Briggs>Johnson>Gower>Vincent family based around Devonport. Her research and practice involves uncovering and re-presenting subsumed and often conflicting histories referring to her family's experiences as Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

Helen Grace (b Gunditjmara Country) is an artist, writer and teacher, based in Sydney (Wangal Country) and (formerly) Hong Kong. In 1980 she photographed the protests staged in Sydney by activist group Women Behind Bars that drew attention to Violet and Bruce Roberts's case and led to changes in the NSW Crimes Act.

Anne Graham lives and works on Gundungurra Country (Kanimbla Valley, Blue Mountains). Her research interests focus on an investigation of identity and place: portraits of people, their histories, their environments. She has held senior and leadership roles in arts education and has significant arts education experience in NSW Corrections. She is represented by Mais Wright.

Alana Hunt is a non-indigenous artist and writer whose work draws upon personal experience and forensic research to examine the violence that results from the fragility of nations and the aspirations and failures of colonial dreams. Her distributed art practice moves between publishing, exhibition making and public intervention.

Karrabing Film Collective is an Indigenous media group consisting of over 30 members, bringing together Aboriginal filmmakers from the Northern Territory. They approach filmmaking as a mode of self-organisation and a means of investigating contemporary social conditions of inequality. Most of the members of the collective live in rural Indigenous communities in the outback of Australia with low or no income. Through the collective's inventive artistic language, their work challenges historical and contemporary structures of settler power.

Warwick Keen is a Gomeroi multi-disciplinary artist, designer, teacher and consultant. He has been practicing independently as an artist for over 40 years, working in painting, wood carving, photography, graphic design, and for the past 6 years has focussed his creative energy on public art projects. Among his advisory and consultancy roles, he currently serves on Wollongong City Council's Public Art Panel.

Rosemary Laing was born in Brisbane, and lived and worked on Gadigal Country in Sydney. Her photo-based practice was most often created in relation to cultural and/or historically resonant locations throughout Australia. With interventions undertaken in situ or through the use of choreographed performance work, her work engages with the politics of place and contemporary culture. The artist's estate is represented by Tolarno Galleries.

Noelene Lucas is a Sydney-based video installation artist with a background in sculpture, living on Gadigal/Wangal country. As a fifth-generation Australian of convict/settler descent, she critically explores in her work the impacts of colonialism and corporate activities on the land.

Ricky Maynard, photographer, was born in Launceston, Tasmania in 1953 and is a descendant of the Big River and Ben Lomond people. He is best known for his photographic essays that document the stories of Aboriginal people in Australia. He lives and works on Cape Barren Island, Tasmania. He is represented by Bett Gallery.

Ian Milliss is a conceptual artist who was active in the 1970s anti-prison movement. He sees the Australian criminal justice system and prisons as an example of a failed but entrenched institution where the necessary systemic change is unlikely despite the existence of well-documented successful alternatives.

Marziya Mohammedali is an academic and multidisciplinary creative practitioner currently based in Boorloo (Perth), Western Australia. As a settler-migrant on stolen land, they photograph protest movements from the spaces in-between, sitting at the intersections of multiply minoritised identities and troubling the idea of what it means to be a contemporary witness.

Anna Mould is an artist living and working on Gadigal, Wangal and Dharug land in Sydney. She engages multiple disciplines including painting, photography, weaving and embroidery to explore complex social and political themes.

Aunty Barbara Nicholson is a Wadi Wadi elder who has been at the forefront of grass-roots campaigns to achieve justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. She gave many years of service to the Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Watch Committee, including alternately as its Chair and Secretary. She has spearheaded 12 volumes of *Dreaming Inside: Voices from Junee Correctional Centre*, visiting Junee prison numerous times to mentor and inspire creative writing by inmates in the *Ngana Barangarai (Black Wallaby)* program. She takes pride in providing opportunities for the writers to share their stories and lift up their voices to be heard.

David Nolan is a Wiradjuri artist and poet. His artworks and writing reflect on some of his experiences of growing up in Bethcar children's home, time in jail and mental health.

Sue Paull is a photographer, arts educator and curator. She coordinated the arts program for many years at Long Bay Correctional Complex and established the NSW Department of Corrective Services' art collection, the specialist Art Unit at Long Bay and the Boom Gate Gallery.

Stanislava Pinchuk is a Ukranian-Australian artist exploring the changing topographies of war and conflict zones, currently living and working in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina. Through a multidisciplinary practice, Pinchuk surveys the ways in which landscape holds memory and testament of political events and violations of human rights. She is represented by Ames Yavuz.

Sha Sarwari is a Brisbane-based artist who came to Australia as a Hazaragi refugee from Afghanistan in 1999. He spent seven months in detention as an asylum seeker and in 2014 worked as an interpreter for detainees on Manus Island. His work speaks of a place that exists between two worlds, longing and belonging, with a pointed reference to the political discourse around migration, identity, place, memory, nationhood and personal lived experience.

Julie Shiels is a visual artist based in Naarm (Melbourne), who makes sculptural and photomedia works that respond to pressing social and political issues such as climate, inequality, consumption and gentrification. Transforming everyday objects, text and found images, her creative projects draw attention to things that are hidden in plain sight, undervalued or slipping from view.

Cassie Sullivan is a lutruwita/Tasmanian Indigenous contemporary emerging artist living and working on Melukerdee Country. Cassie has a responsive, intimate and experimental arts practice that crosses disciplines of moving image, photography, writing, sound, installation and printmaking. The works in this exhibition are a result of participating in a Constance ARI project with Risdon Prison.

Abdullah M. I. Syed is a Pakistani-born Australian contemporary artist, designer, scholar and writer living and working between Sydney and Karachi. Trained in diverse disciplines, Syed identifies his interdisciplinary art practice as an archival form of *manzoom muzahamat*, or poetic activism. He is represented by Gallery Sally Dan Cuthbert, Sydney.

Uncle Gordon Syron is a Biripi/Worimi painter, respected Elder, educator and political activist. After serving 10 years of a life sentence Gordon Syron was released from prison and named the Artist in Residence, Black Deaths in Custody, then later President of the Black Deaths in Custody Watch Committee. According to Vivien Johnson, he channelled 'his anger at social injustice and the ongoing devastation of Aboriginal society and people by colonisation into his art.'

Claire Taylor is an independent curator and producer living and working on unceded Dharawal Country. Her approach to curatorial practice is collaborative, adaptable and cross-disciplinary. Co-curating *Dreams Nursed in Darkness* is her third major curatorial project that intersects with carceral sites or contexts, having previously curated a group exhibition of large-scale installations on Cockatoo Island and collaborated with Elizabeth Day on projects in Parramatta North and Parramatta's Justice Precinct.

The Longford Project is a group of artists (Elizabeth Day, Anna Gibbs, Julie Gough, and Noelene Lucas) who have intersecting family roots in Longford, Tasmania. The project represents a new way of linking history and story, of addressing historical amnesia and personal not-knowing.

Leanne Tobin is a multi-disciplinary artist of Irish, English and Aboriginal heritage descending from the Buruberong and Wumali clans of the Dharug, the traditional Aboriginal people of the Greater Sydney region. Leanne is driven by a strong sense of 'truth-telling'. Through her art she seeks to encourage open and honest dialogue about the past and to nurture respect and care for Country.

Kawita Vatanajyankur lives and works in Bangkok, Thailand, and previously studied and lived in Australia. In her performance videos, she uses her body to interrogate and challenge the intersections of womanhood, labour, and consumerism. She is represented by Nova Contemporary.

Acknowledgements

This project has primarily been developed on Dharawal, Dharug, Gadigal, Bidjigal (Biddigal) and Birrabirragal Country but we would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which all the artists involved in the project live and work, and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Elizabeth Day and Claire Taylor would like to thank all the artists, private collectors and institutions who have loaned works to this exhibition. In particular we would like to thank Dr Candice Bruce, Chris Degeling, Robert Lake, Sue Paull, Monash University Museum of Art, the Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Campbelltown Arts Centre and the NSW Department of Corrective Services. It would not be possible to show the works from the Boom Gate Gallery and the NSW Department of Corrective Services art collection without the support of Luke Grant and Michael Duffy. This is a public collection that has developed over 30 years but which is rarely seen beyond the Department. Lending some of the pieces from this important collection to *Dreams Nursed in Darkness* is a unique opportunity for the artworks to reach a broader audience.

We would also like to thank Aunty Barbara Nicholson, Aunty Lorraine Brown and Aunty Narelle Thomas, Warwick Keen and Leanne Tobin for their support and advice. We would also like to thank Gary Warner and Gotaro Uematsu for their assistance and Robert Lake for his curatorial advice.

Carla Cescon, Elizabeth Day, Anne Ferran, Trevor Fry, Anna Gibbs, Sarah Goffman, Julie Gough, Anne Graham, Noelene Lucas, Ian Milliss, Marziya Mohammedali, and Abdullah M. I. Syed have been commissioned to make new works for this exhibition, which has been made possible with the support of Create NSW and Creative Australia. Elizabeth Day's new work has been developed during residencies at Carriageworks and Waverley Artist Studios. The research for Noelene Lucas' new work was supported by Salamanca Arts Centre. Abdullah M. I. Syed's new work has been developed during a residency at Parramatta Artists Studios.

Dreams Nursed in Darkness, Wollongong Art Gallery, 7 September - 24 November 2024.

ISBN 978-0-6456205-3-5

This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body, and is supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW.

Wollongong Art Gallery is a service of Wollongong City Council, and is a member of Regional and Public Galleries of NSW.

Cover Up

In days of libraries and books
some searched for answers
facts, knowledge and histories
others for justification or fantasy
books held up as gospel
upright black-and-white truth-tellers
write as crime-concealing magicians
Covering-up

The words of writers giving birth to authority
perpetrators of misleading concealment
scandalous creatives masking one-sided evidence
white-washed reality with educated vocabulary
sealed with gold embossed tiles
honourable biased a mass-formulated instruction
prompting signals to deflect guilt
illusory narratives sold as best-selling must-haves
Covering-up

Pages fail to speak words of the many
wrong-doings only by the ‘others’
the bad, the native and the unknowing
strings of tightly-woven deceptions bound together
painting pretty pictures for the faint-hearted
keeping unethical acts of the real villains hidden
avoiding silent criticism
Breaching duty of trust of committing crime
Covering-up

Drawn to a book by its cover
foundation make-up screening ugly truths
hard words missing under hardcovers
passive non-telling and word twisting adventures
render beware as you grip a dusty jacket
be active in discovering lies between the lines
not all pictures are worth a thousand words
listen to the spoken words from those not found in books
Re-write the cover-up

Karla Dickens, 2022