



Waalarrinji (long-time-now)

Dr Virginia Keft

24 June - 5 July, 2023

WayOut Artspace

1.

The Colony On Show

2022, silk eco-dyed with eucalyptus leaves found on Dharawal Country, reclaimed timber, raffia, wire, permaplastik paint, eucalyptus wood found on Country, 63 x 140 x 33 cm
\$8800

This work is a celebration of Country. The woven flying foxes reference my connection to family, community and Culture. The Eucalyptus leaf prints are created by utilising natural tannins and pigments in the leaves, seeds, and barks from Australia's native plants. Leaves and plants such as Eucalyptus have been a rich source of colour for Aboriginal peoples for centuries. The interplay of light and shadow upon the eucalyptus leaf prints on silk are integral to the installation of the sculptural work.

2.

matjam yapinj yapin tja (Flying Fox in the Spring)

2023, raffia, found Eucalyptus wood, wire, 80 x 100 x 30 cm.
\$7100

The woven sculptural matjam (Flying Foxes) reference my connection to Muruwari Culture through shared knowledge. Threads of Culture are tied together through learning, listening and engaging. The bats thrive by maintaining communal bonds with each other that span generations. When connection to community, Culture and Country is strong, we thrive.

3.

Hanging around on Dharawal Country

2021, synthetic polymer on canvas, 92 x 137 cm
\$6400

The work represents the Australian landscape as viewed from my window. My neighbourhood is home to tens of thousands of Grey-headed Flying Foxes. They have settled in our streets because they have been displaced from their natural habitats due to human activities. The central motif of Wirambi (the Flying Fox), celebrates connection to place and community. The contemporary figurative elements of the bats are interwoven with Aboriginal symbols and patterns. The interwoven branches on which the bats hang represent the complex and fragile connections between family, Culture, Country and Language.

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4.

Imprints of Country

2023, raffia, silk eco-printed with Eucalyptus leaves found on Dharawal Country, 25 x 24 cm
\$1700

On Dharawal Country, we live with the bats everyday. We learn their daily habits, and social interactions. They are a community. They were here long before humans arrived. These vulnerable creatures are important to our ecosystems because they pollinate and disperse the seeds of many important trees. As a Muruwari woman who is a guest on Dharawal Country, I respect this place, the animals in it, and its natural rhythms.

5.

Birthday Yellow

2022, charcoal, ink, pencil, paint pen, raffia on canvas, 92 x 123 cm
NFS

Birthday yellow wattle splashed across Country tells me I'm a year older. A celebration of bright cotton candy yellow bursts up to signal renewal, birth, ageing, and a life well lived.

6.

Dharawal Country is where the mountains meet the ocean

raffia, synthetic polymer, colour pencil, found eucalyptus wood, wire on canvas, 123 x 92 cm
\$8100

Dharawal Country is where the mountains meet the ocean. The escarpment hugs the coastline, containing the moisture that rolls off the ocean and depositing it back onto Country as rain. This movement of moisture between the ocean and the mountains is what keeps this thin strip of land green and sustains the life that lives upon it - plant, animal and human.

Grey-headed flying foxes are an important part of the delicate ecosystem that has existed for thousands of years on Dharawal Country. Their journeys within and across Country dropping seeds and pollinating important trees. They remain because the mountains keep this Country green, yet this Country remains green also because they stay.

7.

thantay, yungki thika (Frog, you sing to me)

2021, soapstone carving, 16 x 25 x 11 cm
\$5100

Thantay, the frog, sings in the night. He calls out to say he is there but when we look for him he is hard to find. Hidden - but still heard. The Language of my people is also scarce and fragile. The Old people pass and leave the stories, the knowledge and the wisdom. Thantay the frog morphs from the Soapstone, caught in a moment of crawling upward across the rough surface of the uncarved stone. The surface of Thantay is hard and smooth revealing the natural beauty of the soapstone colour. Uncle Jimmie Barker left the Muruwari with a gift, he recorded words and language - "These words, are remembered by a handful of old

people. Some Muruwari people, young and old, may learn again, the language, something of what has been lost with the years. Some, maybe, might start to learn the language again".
Pinampiy Kayila Muruwari - "I remember Muruwari".

8.

Woolyungah

2021, synthetic polymer on canvas, 183 x 92 cm

\$6400

Woolyungah is the Dharawal name for the area referred to as Wollongong. It is home to tens of thousands of Grey-headed Flying Foxes. Human activities and suburban sprawl have displaced them from their natural habitats. The bats are seen as pests by some residents because of the noise and smell of their camps that sit side by side with human dwellings. However, these vulnerable creatures are important to our ecosystems. They are a part of the delicate balance of Dharawal Country that we must protect and preserve.

9.

Canopy

2023, silk eco-printed with Eucalyptus and Grevillea leaves, installation
variable dimensions

\$15,100

Canopy is an immersive work that envelops the audience in the imprint of Country. The collection of printed silks ripple and move with the breeze and the passage of the viewer, evoking the high canopy of the Eucalyptus bushland.

The artist prints lengths of silk by utilising the natural tannins and pigments in the leaves, seeds, and barks from Australia's native plants; plant materials which have been a rich source of colour for Aboriginal peoples for centuries. The hues and patterns that emerge on the fabric and paper vary from clear, perfect imprints with sharp definition showing every line and leaf-vein, to abstract shadows and suggestions that merge in and out of the landscape on silk. The colours of Country that are permanently imprinted on the silk range from earthy browns, to sunset reds, rich rust, and surprisingly fresh greens. Each print is a unique celebration of the beauty of Country.

10.

Rain is coming

2023, silk eco-printed with Eucalyptus leaves found on Dharawal Country, synthetic polymer on canvas , 91 x 45 cm

\$2800

Flying foxes huddle among the branches, rain droplets dripping from their leathery wings. Against the leaden sky their dark silhouettes merge with the dappled Eucalyptus leaf canopy.

11.

Kuthara Kalkara (family)

2023, raffia, emu feathers, quandong seeds, wire 76 x 76 x10 cm
\$4700

Kuthara Kalkara is the Muruwari way of saying family. The literal translation is 'many children'. The weaving represents the artist's love and connection for her children, the three circles representing the family unit. The emu feathers represent comfort and safety.

12-18.

Waalarrinji (long-time-now) [series]

Family of three | Ngurrunj (Emu) | Barwon river | After the fire | Ngaanda dhalu marrin (happy birthday wattle) | Grey days | Muruwari granddaughter

2024, Eucalyptus bark, silk eco-printed with Eucalyptus and Grevillea leaves, raffia, synthetic polymer, raffia, series, various dimensions
Enquire for individual pricing

Waalarrinji (long-time-now) is a deeply personal mixed media work that incorporates elements of weaving, carving, drawing, and textiles. Each of the 7 pieces in the collection are symbolic of key moments or facets in the artist's personal, spiritual, and cultural identity. The raw Eucalyptus bark pieces were respectfully foraged on Dharug Country over a series of 5 weeks during time spent with Elders. The multilayered sculptural works reference ancient Aboriginal traditions of painting on bark. The artist looks backward with respect to ancient ways of doing and being whilst simultaneously acknowledging the complexities of contemporary life as an artist, Arts worker, a single mum, and a muruwari woman.

19.

Country Runs Deep

2023, synthetic polymer, raffia, textiles, 45 x 91 cm
\$3900

Aboriginal people have never surrendered their rights. *Country runs deep*, speaks to the depth of Indigenous peoples connection to water. Theirs is an unbroken custodianship to the land and sea for more than 60,000 years. Beyond what the eye can see - Country is water; it rolls, crashes, holds memory, gives life, is still, hard, fresh, salty. Water is the lifeblood of Country, and it runs deep.

20.

Colours of Country

2023, silk eco-printed with Eucalyptus leaves found on Dharawal Country. 115 x 115 cm
\$2800

Colours of Country is inspired by the colour and scent of Spring. During this time of year the wattle is blooming and the Eucalyptus trees are brimming with bird life. The work is created through a process of permanently imprinting native Australian leaves, seeds, and barks to silk through a heat process. The moment of unraveling the hot silk and peeling the leaves from the fibres produce a comforting scent of Eucalyptus to reveal the colours of Country.

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21.

Saltwater Country

2023, synthetic polymer, raffia, textiles, silk eco-printed with Eucalyptus leaves, 100 x 91 cm
\$7100

At sunset the Flying Foxes fly out to Five Islands - off the coast of Port Kembla - returning at dawn to their camps among suburban houses. In daylight we see them hanging around in the trees, resting as we go about our lives. Their journeys within and across Country drop seeds and pollinate important trees. They remain because the mountains keep this Country green, yet this Country remains green also because they stay.

22.

Country is what we can and can not see

2022, charcoal, ink, pencil, oil paint, raffia, silk on canvas 92 x 123 cm
\$5900

As a child I learned sewing and textile skills by watching my mother. She learned by watching her mother. An improvisational and intuitive seamstress, my mother is as skilled at hand sewing and crocheting as she is on the sewing machine. I sat on the floor in the messy sewing room chatting to her while she deftly moved the fabric beneath the whirring needle, stitching and knotting her work into existence. As an adult I sat by the Barwon River with Elders and learned ancient weaving practices. Sitting on the same earth my ancestors watched over for thousands of years, I listened to Country and shared stories with the women while we worked the grasses and raffia into existence.

23.

The Colony

2022 - ongoing, raffia, wire, various dimensions
Enquire for individual pricing

The central motif of the Flying Fox, celebrates connection to place and community. Woven bats are created using ancient techniques passed from Elders to the artist; emphasising that Culture persists. The interplay of light and shadow are integral to the installation of the sculptural work, referencing the silhouetted bats against the Dharawal Country sky.

24.

The Morning After

2023, raffia, Eucalyptus wood found on Dharawal Country, ecoprinted paper, wire, 60 x 79 x 20 cm
\$6900

The morning after.
Australia spoke;
A resounding NO
echoes across Aboriginal Land.
No to Voice.

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No to recognition.
They used theirs, the familiar one
Status quo stands - Colony in this Land
Shock, blame, and 'yes' to shame.
Friends, allies, now we rally.
Truth, strength, power. Survival.
Always was, Always will be.

The Morning After was made on the day Australians voted No to the referendum on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to parliament. Utilising natural tannins and pigments from Eucalyptus leaves, seeds, and barks, the artist takes the material (paper) used by Australians to decide the fate of the Indigenous Voice to Parliament and turns it into Country. Bending and weaving the line of raffia, the sculptural forms of the flying foxes create a tactile and immersive experience that envelopes the audience in Country and invites connection. The repetition of the words No with an occasional 'yes' brings into sharp focus the harsh reality of the Morning After - shame, regret, sadness.

25.

Follow the yellow brick NO

2024, ceramic tiles, sand, bark, permanent marker, dimensions variable
\$6900

Follow the yellow brick NO unpacks the complexities of navigating this landscape of 'NO' in post referendum Australia. The work references L Frank Baum's classic novel, The Wizard of Oz, in which the hopeful characters take the difficult journey towards the promise of fulfilment only to discover these promises to be a fraud. The bright yellow tiles - a symbol of the uniformity of Colonial urbanisation - are emblazoned in endless repetition with the outcome that they fail to see from the start. The overwhelming support of the Australian public to reject the Indigenous Voice to Parliament was, for many Aboriginal peoples, a reminder of the lasting landscape of racism and erasure. The hard circular tiles, along with the black gravel and red Eucalyptus bark are reminiscent of both the Aboriginal flag and a respectful nod to Western Desert landscape and dot paintings. The work is a defiant gesture of truth telling and questions the legitimacy of so-called 'reconciliation' whilst attesting to the endurance of Aboriginal cultures, our stories, our truths and our voices in the face of adversity.

26.

pinampi Country thigga (Remember my Country) II

2023, raffia, found Eucalyptus wood, wire, 60 x 79 x 20 cm
\$5800

Threads of Culture tied together through learning, listening and engaging. As an adult I sat by the Barwon River with Elders and learned ancient weaving practices. Sitting on the same earth my ancestors watched over for thousands of years, I listened to Country and shared stories with the women while we worked the grasses and raffia into existence. We shared time, stories, and physical space in the circle as we weaved. The central motif of the Flying Fox, celebrates connection to place and community. The woven sculptural forms reference both my connection to Culture through shared knowledge and the way the bats thrive by maintaining communal bonds with each other that span generations. When connection to community, Culture and Country is strong, we thrive. Weaving practice is a deeply personal expression of my connection to Culture and belonging - a thread that connects places and people (past, present and future).

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27.

We were here long before the Hills Hoist

2022, synthetic polymer on canvas, 123 x 92 cm

We were here long before the Hills Hoist, offers a nod to Lin Onus' seminal 1991 work, *Fruit Bats*. Dr Keft overwrites the Hills Hoist as a potent symbol of white Australian suburbia - a structure that is so readily recognised as the Australian post-war Colonial icon of white ownership of Land. The work is a statement about the resilience of Aboriginal culture and critiques the mindset of the Colonial project which aimed to colonise, conquer and disperse.

28.

The Emerald City

2024, textiles, found vintage mirror

\$4100

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples the Indigenous Voice to Parliament referendum was both difficult and traumatic. It was a journey that promised much but delivered little. *The Emerald City* confronts the viewer with a simple but devastating truth contained in a single word; 'No'. Pulling back the curtain on the thinly veiled racism that drove much of the discussion around the referendum, the artist places the viewer firmly within this truth - the mirror reflecting both the onlooker and the repeated 'no' behind them, disallowing distance.

29.

Always was, always will be

2023, raffia, silk eco-printed with Eucalyptus leaves found on Dharawal Country, 25 x 24 cm
\$2800

This work is about strength, resilience, and persistence of Aboriginal Peoples. The work celebrates the continuity of the oldest living culture on the planet and the unbroken connection and custodianship to the land. Always was, always will be Aboriginal land.