



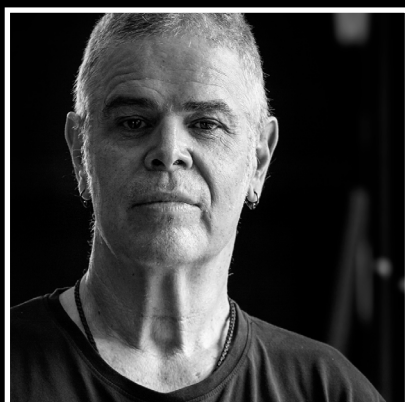
Birrunga Gallery & Dining

Reconciliation Week Exhibition 2023

B I R R U N G A
W I R A D Y U R I

K A N E
B R U N J E S

N A O M I
G R E E N



Artist Statement



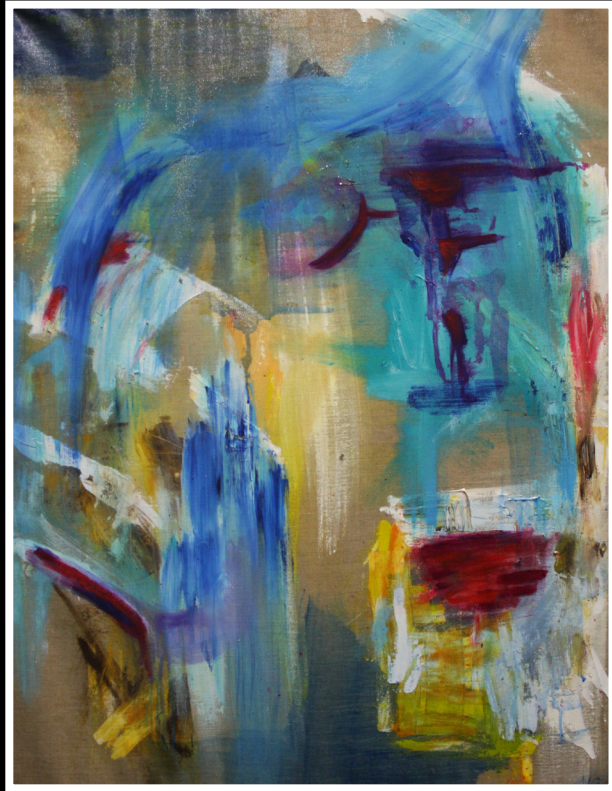
Through my artworks for this Reconciliation exhibition I hope to share my optimism about the future. I am currently pregnant with my second child and I am filled with hope for the future that they will grow up in and help build. For the last 19 years I have watched my first son grow and have been encouraged by the increasing love and acceptance that his generation show towards diversity, each other and country.

To celebrate Reconciliation, I have created a series of artworks which honour Indigenous musicians. To do this, I produced a series of “synesthate artworks” – abstract artworks which provide my visual interpretation of a particular song by an Indigenous musician.

Synesthesia is a perceptual phenomenon where the stimulation of one sensory pathway results in sensations associated with a second sensory pathway. For example, some Synesthates experience ‘coloured hearing’ where they see particular colours in their mind’s eye when they hear certain musical notes. Although not a synesthate myself, I became interested in this phenomenon while studying my PhD on colour vision, because it can reveal insights to how the mind and our sensations function.

Although true synesthates are rare, most people can relate to how music and art can make them feel. For example, soft, slow musical notes in minor chords and cool, dark, blueish colour combinations can both make us feel sad, while energetic major chords and warm, harmonious colour combinations may feel bright and happy.

By comparing music and art I hope that these artworks encourage viewers to embrace art as a sensory experience in the same way that you would music - without necessarily needing to understand it or analyze it - just feel it.



N A O M I
G R E E N

Lifeforce
2023
acrylic on canvas
77 x 101.5cm
\$2.5K

This painting was inspired by the song 'Follow the Sun' by Xavier Rudd. I am a long-time fan of Rudd, whose music first came out while I was in high school. I have always been enamored by the tranquil beauty of his music and, as a young Indigenous Australian, hearing traditional Indigenous instruments incorporated into mainstream, contemporary music for the first time was a pivotal moment that brought an immense sense of pride and a feeling of acceptance.

The song 'Follow the Sun' is a beautiful, serene, bared back, acoustic piece featuring recorded bird songs and a harmonica. Like the song, this artwork is a loving, spiritual ode to country. The bare, natural textures of the linen and the toned-down colours in the work reflect the natural textures and tones of the earth and a visual interpretation of the acoustic character of the song. The cascading blue tones echo waterfalls spilling down a cliff, gently nourishing all of life. While the contrasting warm yellow and red tones provide a feeling of warmth radiating from the sun or sand. The flow and movement in the painting from top to bottom and right to left, reminds us that country is overflowing with life.

N A O M I
G R E E N

Soundwave Dystopia
2023
acrylic on canvas
122 x 91.5cm
\$4.5K



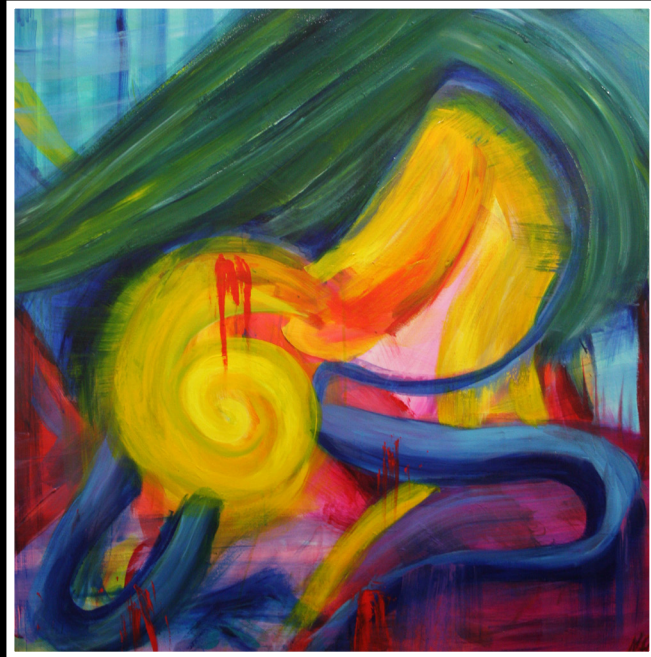
This painting was inspired by the song Dribble released in 2020 by young, Brisbane based musician Sycco. The song was Sycco's first hit, released in 2020 in the middle of the Covid pandemic, when she was only 19 years old. I loved the song from the beginning and was inspired by her talent and incredible achievements at such a young age. I respect that she is a young Indigenous woman, producing unique, contemporary, electronic music, reflecting the diversity of Indigenous people and their creativity.

In this work, the dark, electronic sound of the song is interpreted visually using dark tones, and highly saturated, synthetic, glossy colours.

Although an abstract work, to me, the painting resembles a futuristic, anime-inspired, city scene which reflects the young, modern sound of the song.

The pink wave along the horizon reflects the momentum of the song, progressed by the strong, percussive, steady beat. While the orange ball, about to roll off a cliff onto the flame-like shapes below provides my visual interpretation of the song's climatic bridge before the chorus.

N A O M I
G R E E N



SonicScape

2023

acrylic on canvas

91.5 x 91.5cm

\$2.3K

This painting is inspired by the song Lupa by King Stingray, a rock band from North-East Arnhem Land who released their first album in 2020. Their music is a joyful fusion of Western and Aboriginal elements. The band itself is comprised of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous members, lyrics are sung in both English and Yolŋu Matha and they use both contemporary rock and traditional instruments. Hearing them sing in both English and Yolŋu Matha, in top charting songs is incredibly powerful and heart-warming and their music is a testament to what we can do when we all celebrate our diversity rather than being afraid of it.

The warm yellow and magenta tones reflect the warmth and joy of this song, while the contrasting murky green and dripping red give the painting a grungy feel that resembles the rock sounds of the band. Combined, the colour scheme evokes contemporary graffiti which fits with the hard-hitting, contemporary rock style of their music.

Although an abstract piece, to me, the painting resembles an apocalyptic, futuristic landscape which fits with the modern feel of their music.



N A O M I
G R E E N



Colossal
2023
acrylic on canvas
102 x 102cm
\$4.5K

This painting is inspired by the song King Brown by Baarka, a Malyangapa and Barkindji woman. Baarka is inspirational for her strength and resilience, having overcome drug addiction, incarceration, and young motherhood before her success. Her lyrics are powerful and unapologetic and tackle complex issues like institutional racism. A force to be reckoned with, Baarka's music is testament to the strength and resilience of Indigenous women.

In this artwork I portrayed Baarka's strength and attitude. The geometric coloured shapes in the background echo the rhythm and percussive element of rap, while paint applied with my hands adds to the rawness of the work. The many different textures, colours and patterns visually represent the many different layers and influences in the song. The hot pink and magenta colours refer to Baarka's Blak femininity.

The pale pink rocket-like shape in the foreground appears to be blasting across the artwork, visually portraying the force of the song and of Baarka herself. While the magenta shapes in the midground resemble a giant figure, resembling the strength and power of the song and musician.



K A N E
B R U N J E S

Traveling star
2023
acrylic on canvas
101 x 76cm
\$7.5K



Left of the painting a fallen star is seen shooting through the sky. These streaks of light in the night sky represent wishes and dreams. It delves into a space of solitude, as often when I've seen shooting stars it's been in limited company and has allowed thought towards future aspirations.

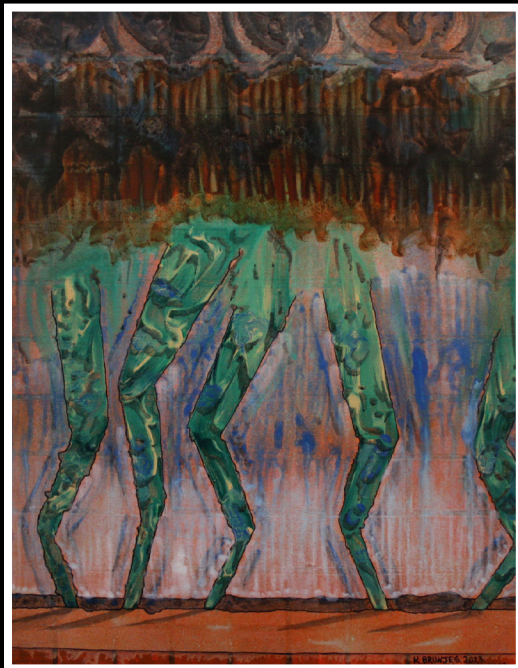
The falling direction of the star/meteoroid leads to the shadow of the Boomerang structure stretching off the canvas, creating a pathway from the sky and across Country. This travels upwards from the Boomerangs and then back out from the electric, light blue lines.

This is a path that connects the astral area with Country, and then an exit point back into the sky.



K A N E
B R U N J E S

Dancing Spirit
2023
acrylic on canvas
45 x 61cm
\$4.5K

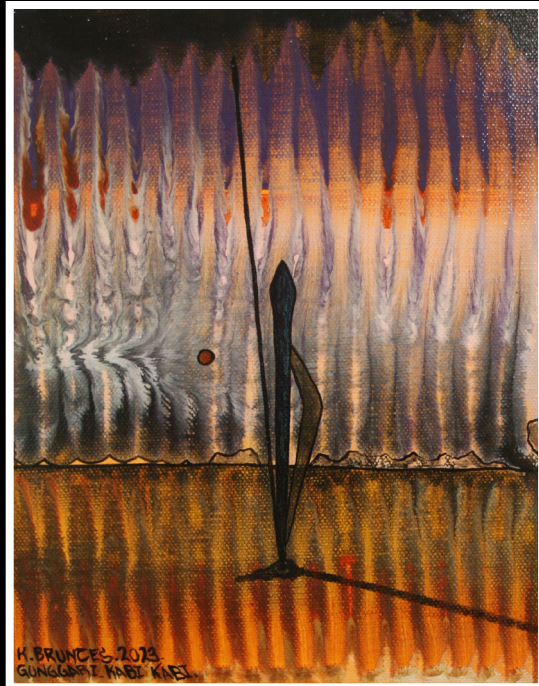


This work celebrates the sharing of song and dance. With respect to the ceremony and language shared by our Old People/Ancestors, gratitude is extended in remembrance of their stories which have allowed for the pathways I now travel.

BIRRUNGA
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GALLERY
✦

K A N E
B R U N J E S

The Statue
2023
acrylic on canvas
20 x 25cm
\$2K



This work was painted in thought of the Knowledge holders who speak for Country. The Spear, Nulla Nulla, and Boomerang center to the piece is symbolic of the protection given by those who have cared, and continue to care for Country, and the stories they hold.

The mountains in the distance to the left of the piece are glowing, inviting the viewer in, posing the question of whether to travel in or not. This represents the opportunity to receive and accept stories of truth or not.



K A N E
B R U N J E S

Power of Words
2023
acrylic on canvas
91 x 61cm
\$6K



Sheilds, Coolamons, Canoes, Boomerangs and a Nulla Nulla, create the image of the Butterfly. This represents the power of words and the strength that can emerge from words spoken individually and by others.

The shadow cast by the Butterfly in the bottom left corner shows the impact of words, whether they be spoken in goodwill, hate, or deception.

This piece delves into the analysis of language and conversations in search of a story which is true. Thought to this occurred while thinking about words spoken by the government and the inaction followed afterwards.



B I R R U N G A
W I R A D Y U R I

Artist Statement

Remove the 'Off' switch: Be Brave? Make Change? We Blaks are. Relentlessly. Under duress. And have been since the moment of invasion and beginning of colonial hostilities. It is for our allies, prospective and current to be brave, make change. That will make a difference. That will create a path to a relationship of quality.

The notion of reconciliation in the context of addressing the current state of affairs in this continent in regard to the historic, current and future impacts of the colonisation on the Sovereign Peoples / Nations of this continent is, to me, a profoundly flawed misapplication of a framework that relies on a preexisting relationship of quality in its primary charter.

And although there is no such relationship to reconcile, in the rush of good intention from colonials to make things better, the results are more of often than not skewed towards assuaging colonial guilt with the actual target demographic implored to do the heavy lifting.

As a 59yo Wiradyuri man, having defied the statistical odds of life expectancy by 12years, whilst I find the entire reconciliation circus relentlessly personally and Culturally offensive, it is important to take the default opportunity provided to generate a silk purse of relationship based respect, shared values, empathy, clear communication, rapport and alliance from the tattered sow's ear of the current tepid tabled option of reconciliation.

It was put to me during reconciliation week 2021 by a respected younger brother of mine that any mechanism that generates the opportunity for compassion is a worthwhile mechanism to consider.

I say that a compassionate, empathic, progressive juncture will manifest when colonial australians are unable to switch off to the plight of we blaks, where a 24/7 commitment to atonement with a view to treaties, compensation, formal acknowledgement of unceded Sovereignty, lands returned, policies tuned to genuine self determination, parity of opportunity to advancement, education, financial independence, freedom from racial criminalisation and the cessation of hostilities initiated by invasion. Until then, we must work toward a walking a combined, united path to decolonise the current state of affairs. At some point then, we may arrive at a pre-existing relationship of quality to begin to reconcile. Until then, reconciliation action plans retain a silent c.

I offer my esteem, respect and gratitude to Alex Hanlon and Erin Lang, Co-Chair and CEO of Reconciliation QLD in acknowledgement of their demonstrated willingness to participate in active listening to understand with a view to creating quality relationships.

Birrunga Wiradyuri.

'Between January 1980 and May 1989, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody was conducted with the final report and recommendations being given in April 1991. Of the 339 recommendations in the report, only one was implemented which was recommendation number 339:

"That all political leaders and their parties recognise that reconciliation between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities in Australia must be achieved if community division, discord and injustice to Aboriginal people are to be avoided. To this end the Commission recommends that political leaders use their best endeavours to ensure bi-partisan public support for the process of reconciliation and that the urgency and necessity of the process be acknowledged."

It was 2 years later in 1993 (the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples) that this recommendation was implemented, not by the government but by many of Australia's major faith communities when they started NRW National Reconciliation Week as a week of prayer for reconciliation. In 1996, the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation launched Australia's first National Reconciliation Week.'

Supplied by Wiradyuri Traditional Owners Central West Aboriginal Corporation

B I R R U N G A
W I R A D Y U R I

Silent W
2022
acrylic on canvas
121 x 91cm

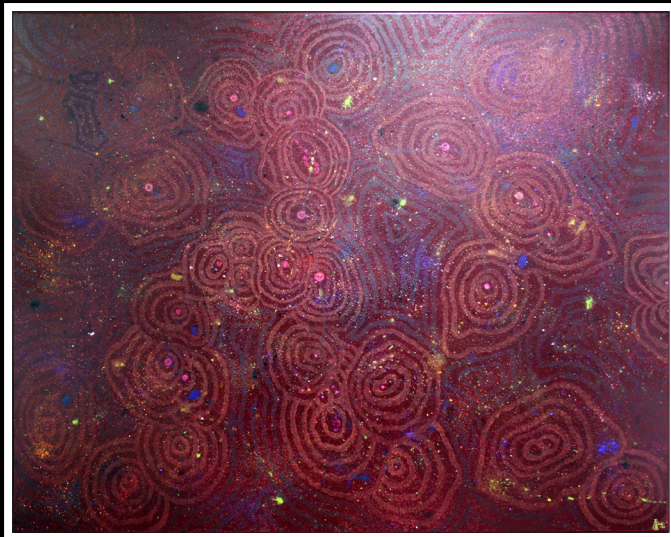


Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) inherently favour tokenism / box ticking over genuine engagement leading to relationship based initiatives driven by, informed and underpinned by a capital investment in supporting the target demographic to articulate the matters truly at hand. Blak deaths in custody. Trails of Blaks by all white juries. Blak Child removals. Stolen Land. Financial exclusion by black-cladding. Cultural criminalisation / apartheid. Racist political policy. Ongoing colonial genocidal hostilities et al. All of which is messy, not super RAP optics friendly, negative ROI and lets face it, burdensome. So box ticking it is, or put another way, wrapping up aspirant waffle to generate optics that encourage acceptance without question of any tangible, veracity, validity and/or valuable outcomes to the target demographic. In this case, closer scrutiny of the boxes beyond the glossy aesthetic reveals they are coffins with gold ticks on the lid of each casket.

The coffins are uniformly presented hiding the diversity of the causal factors contributing to the deaths of the target demographic within as well as the age, gender, standing, story of same. In each individual case the body is wrapped in a shroud of subterfuge, misrepresenting the reality of their lives and of course, of their deaths.

B I R R U N G A
W I R A D Y U R I

Silent E
2022
acrylic on canvas
121 x 152cm



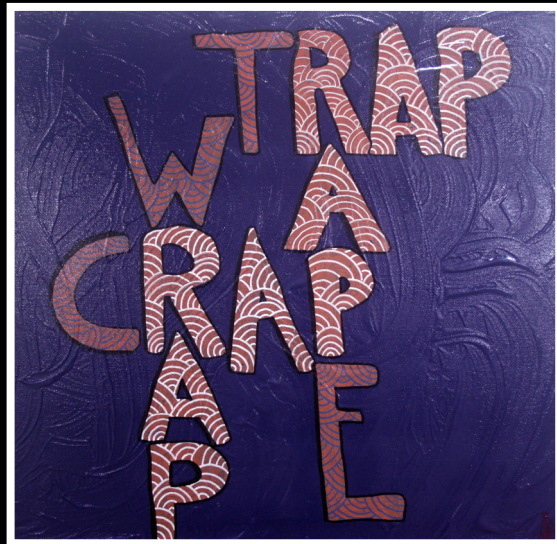
Of the many overlooked or whitewashed realities unattended too in considering what warrants acknowledgement, attention, accountability is the wholesale rape, criminalisation and abuse of our Blak Women is paramount.

The entire colonial population profits off of, inhabits privilege because of and exhibits wholesale arrogant entitlement in refusing to engage in any useful process of atonement that would be imbedded with genuine remorse, contrition, commitment to redress and justice. Our Mothers, Grandmothers, Aunts, Daughters, Nieces, current and this we are descended from deserve to be afforded justice and a cessation of hostilities in keeping with their sacred position of life givers, nurturers and holders of wisdom. For the better part, particularly on the eastern part of the continent, we are Matriarchal. Perhaps the criminalisation, profiling, targeting and rape of our women is not without consideration.

This piece is posed as a snapshot, looking down onto to Mother Country from above where the impact of each instance of rape is presented as weaponised assaults with the impacts radiating out from ground zero in each and every case.

B I R R U N G A
W I R A D Y U R I

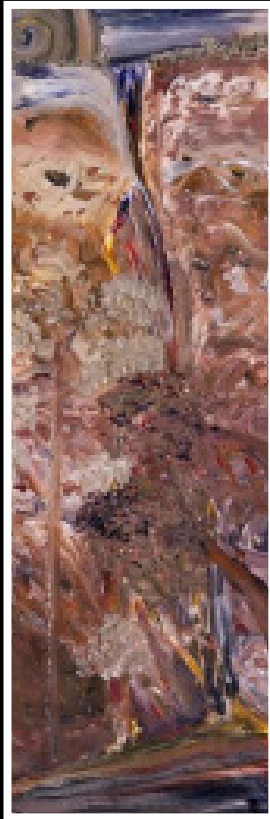
Silent C
2022
acrylic on canvas
121 x 91cm



Reconciliation Plans or 'RAPs' are for the better part, word heavy, content light aspirational documents generated by individuals or teams from entities that have no genuine connection to or relationship with the alleged target demographic.

Subsequently they are pretty-ed up waffle not worth the paper they're printed on. Meaningless, tokenistic crap. They also have a downside in the false representation of value adding to we Blaks and our communities in meaningful, traction oriented ways which offers yet another stereotype for us to challenge and educate about to the earnestly inept.





B I R R U N G A
W I R A D Y U R I

Silent T
2012
acrylic on canvas
100 x 30cm

The notion of reconciliation without scrutiny in regard to attending to the ongoing negative impacts of colonisation on we Blaks is a trap. The history is available. There are excuses a plenty but no genuine reasons for remaining ignorant to these realities in 2022. Truth Telling whilst imperative to genuine progress is rarely if ever presented by RAPs in a way that would trigger action. Obfuscation of the truth in favour of chirpily curated aspirational lists is unfortunately the rule rather than the exception.

This piece is of the massacre of Wiradyuri women, children and the elderly at Bells Falls Gorge NNE of Bathurst circa 1824, a part of the hostilities preceding, in and around the time of the declaration of martial law by the british on Sovereign Wiradyuri Country August 14, 1824. These are my ancestors, my People. The massacre is denied by the colonials. The wholesale slaughter remains unacknowledged, unresolved, without account or avenue to justice. Whilst these and many other truths remain shrouded in denial/obfuscation and subsequently unaddressed, the notion of reconciliation is a trap that offers hollow absolution to the faithful fuelled by the denied realities of the ongoing contemporary impacts the unaddressed open wounds of toxicity and compounding unresolved grief such atrocities present manifest in us all.