



NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK 2025

# **Bridging Now to *Next***



## **RECONCILIATION WEEK 2025 Exhibition**

**Presented by  
The Birrung Gallery CCDP**



# Grace Naveikata

The theme “Bridging Now to Next” calls us to look ahead, building a future while carrying forward the lessons of the past. As an artist, this theme resonates deeply with me, particularly in the context of reconciliation. My work is a continuous exploration of this journey—honoring the strength of culture and community while also pushing forward, using the history lessons to create pathways for healing and understanding.

In my practice, I focus on the intersection of past and present, reflecting on the ongoing impact of colonization on Aboriginal communities while also celebrating the vibrancy and resilience of our culture. My artwork is both a reflection on history and a call to action, urging us to confront uncomfortable truths while also imagining a more inclusive future.

Through the use of symbolism, materials, and textures, I bridge the divide between past wounds and present possibilities. I seek to create a space for dialogue, one where the viewer is invited to consider their role in reconciliation—both in recognizing the pain of the past and in committing to the future of equity and respect for all.

Reconciliation, to me, is not a passive process and it requires active engagement, understanding, and action. My work serves as an invitation to reflect on how we can all contribute to bridging the gap from now to next, shaping a future where justice, respect, and recognition are at the heart of our shared Australian identity.

# GRACE NAVEIKATA

Relevance  
2025

Acrylic on Wooden Board  
40 x 30cm  
\$850

"Relevance" is a work inspired by the word "tradition". It explores the enduring significance of Aboriginal cultural heritage in contemporary Australia and reflects on how tradition remains a vital, living force in today's world. The green background of the piece – symbolizing growth and life – is layered with juxtaposing patterns—traditional and contemporary—that weave together to form a sense of continuous movement. This visual rhythm represents the ever-changing nature of cultural identity: dynamic, adaptive, and resilient, the external black motifs highlighting the importance of past, present and future.

By merging old and new elements, "Relevance" challenges the idea that tradition belongs only to the past. Instead, it shows how culture continues to evolve, shaped by both history and present-day realities. The patterns serve as a metaphor for this journey—interconnected, complex, and ongoing.

This work is both a visual reflection and a call to action. It asks viewers to consider their relationship with Aboriginal culture: to respect it, to learn from it, and to help ensure its survival into the future. For me, "Relevance" is a reminder that tradition is not static—it is active, vital, and deeply embedded in who we are.



# G R A C E N A V E I K A T A

Perseverance  
2025  
Acrylic on Wooden Board  
30 x 40  
\$750

"Perseverance" is inspired by the word "journey", representing the challenges and growth that shape one's path in life. The bright, vibrant colours in this piece symbolize the various influences that impact our journey, each hue reflecting different experiences, lessons, and turning points. These colours are interwoven with traditional patterns, merging the past with the present to emphasize the importance of staying connected to culture while navigating life's complexities.

At its core, this piece speaks to the strength required to continue one's journey. Life, much like culture, is not a straight path but one full of obstacles and shifts. The vibrant colours reflect the energy of these experiences, while the traditional patterns represent the resilience and enduring power of cultural heritage.

"Perseverance" encourages us to keep moving forward despite challenges, embracing both past influences and future possibilities as we continue our personal and cultural journeys.



# GRACE NAVEIKATA

Fortitude

2025

Acrylic on Wooden Board

40 x 50

\$750

"Fortitude" is inspired by the word "settled," a term that carries a heavy emotional weight when considering the history of genocide against Aboriginal people in Australia. While "settled" suggests resolution, it obscures the ongoing trauma, denial, and the failure to address the need for reparations. Though some progress has been made, the denial of true reconciliation is still felt today.

At the heart of "Fortitude" stands a central figure, leaning in, demanding presence. Positioned centrally, this figure commands the audience's attention, symbolizing the strength and resilience of Aboriginal communities. The posture suggests defiance, courage, and a refusal to be silenced. Surrounding this figure are others, whose positions leave their intentions open to interpretation.

Are they supportive, standing in solidarity? Are they indignant, angry at the continued denial? Or are they bystanders, indifferent to the struggle for justice? The work invites reflection on these questions, urging the viewer to consider their own role in confronting uncomfortable truths and advocating for reparations and reconciliation.





# GRACE NAVEIKATA

Song of the Black Swan

2025

acrylic on canvas

91 x 121cm

\$2,300

This portrait honours Maroochy Barambah — a revered Aboriginal Elder, songwoman, and law-woman of the Turrbal Tribe, with ancestral ties to the Gubbi Gubbi, Wakka Wakka, Kamilaroi, and Birri Gubba peoples. Born on the Cherbourg Aboriginal Reserve in South East Queensland, Maroochy's life and legacy span decades of performance, advocacy, and cultural leadership.

The black feathers that swirl around her form are more than just visual motifs — they represent the black swan, after which she is named, symbolising resilience, grace, and deep cultural significance. These feathers encircle her as both a tribute and a protective force, highlighting the power she carries as a performer, cultural custodian, and trailblazer.

The warm yellow background of the piece mirrors the openness, generosity, and warmth that Maroochy exudes. During the interview process for this work, I had the privilege of sitting with her and experiencing firsthand the genuine kindness and light she shares with those around her. The yellow signifies the light she brings into spaces, guiding and nurturing those she encounters, much as she has done throughout her life. Maroochy was the first Aboriginal artist to perform in an Australian opera and the first Australian to sing at the United Nations in honour of the International Year for the World's Indigenous Peoples. Her work — from opera and musical theatre to welcome ceremonies and political advocacy — has helped shape the cultural landscape of this country.

In *Song of the Black Swan*, I aim to capture more than just her image. This is a portrait of strength — of a woman who carries story, law, and legacy with unshakable presence, and who continues to inspire through voice, presence, and light.



Entrant for  
Archibald Prize

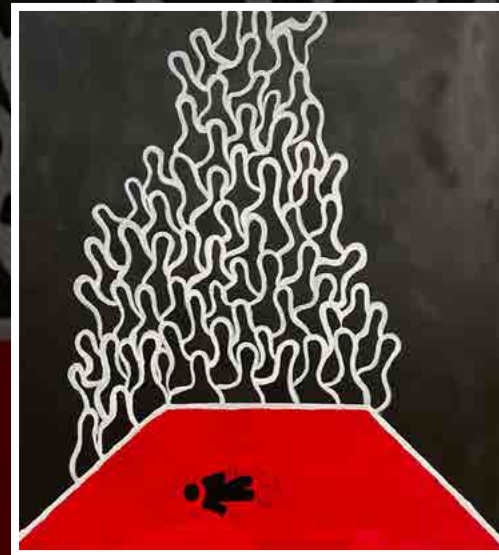
# G R A C E N A V E I K A T A

Bystanders  
2025  
Acrylic on Wooden Board  
101 x 101cm  
\$950

**Bystanders is a response to the discomforting reality of witnessing tragedy from a distance — a feeling that has become more familiar in today's hyper-connected world. Through social media and the internet, we are constantly exposed to pain, injustice, and violence, both globally and here in Australia.**

**While these platforms can be a force for good — enabling donations, awareness, and action — they also create a space where horror can be passively consumed or even exploited. It's easy to feel helpless, like a spectator in the face of real human suffering.**

**In this piece, the stark white outlines of the figures represent those who watch — present but detached. They stand over a single red figure: a symbol of tragedy, of real loss and pain. Bystanders confronts the tension between bearing witness and truly engaging. It's about that internal struggle — wanting to help, to do more, while wrestling with the limits of digital empathy.**



Entrant for  
Sulman Prize

# G R A C E N A V E I K A T A

Totem  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
40 x 121cm  
\$850

Totem is a tribute to Macleay Island — a landscape that became both sanctuary and symbol of transformation for the artist and their family. Anchored in shades of blue and green, the image captures the serene beauty of the island, interrupted only by a series of poles rising from the water. These forms, wrapped in traditional patterns, evoke totems — markers of identity, ancestry, and spiritual grounding.

The work speaks to the idea of new beginnings. When the artist's family relocated to Macleay Island, they sought quiet, comfort, and reconnection. In this piece, land and water merge into a space of calm reflection, while the totemic poles honour the personal and cultural significance the location holds. Totem becomes not just a landscape, but a visual anchor — a place where history, belonging, and renewal converge.



Entrant for  
Wynne Prize





# Elysia Love-Anderson

For the Reconciliation Week exhibition, I found it quite easy to figure out stories for my words - building bridges, chronicle and immemorial.

When figuring out these stories, I like to relate it to my experiences or something I feel needs attention. For 'building bridges', I had this idea of arms reaching out that form a bridge, however they aren't yet connected – much like in life where we are needing allies to help bridge the gap between First Nations peoples and non-First Nations peoples.

For my 'chronicle' work, I wanted to show my appreciation to Elders/ Ancestors who have shared knowledge on Culture in any way they could. I was born a few years after my great-poppy passed, and although i didn't get to meet him – I feel as though I know him and understand the connection he had to his culture.

The last piece I completed was for the word 'immemorial' – when hearing this word I think of our culture, a culture that is resilient and has continued to fight for what's right. The use of the shield is to show the strength and just how old the culture is. The shield sits in front of layers of "time" – this is to add to how long the culture has continued for.

# E L Y S I A LOVE-ANDERSON

Are we there yet?

2025

acrylic on canvas

60.9cm x 152.4cm

\$1,250

The words I received for this work was "building bridges". After dwelling on this for some time, I decided I wanted to focus the piece on the need for allies. We need to work together, for a better future for all – to form a "bridge over troubled water".

Shown in the piece is a rough, dark sea with two arms reaching out to form a bridge. Although the hands aren't yet touching, the energy around can be felt, an energy of connection and change. The edges of the canvas are darker as the connection has not yet spread around to "light the darkness". Are we there yet?



# E L Y S I A LOVE-ANDERSON

Our Culture  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
50.8cm x 60.9cm  
\$750

When thinking of the word "chronicle", my mind went straight to the thought of stories. This work came about from an old envelope I was given a few years ago that was my great-Poppy's.

The letter consisted of old pamphlets that contained information on culture, and I like to think he was saving these to share with the next generations of our family. I think this story works well with the Reconciliation Week theme as without the shared knowledge and fight from our Elders and Ancestors, we wouldn't be where we are today.

TO:  
THE  
NEXT GENERATIONS





# E L Y S I A LOVE-ANDERSON

Ancient  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
45.7cm x 91.4cm  
\$1250

When I was given the word "immemorial", it immediately resonated with me.

For this piece, I wanted to show the strength of our ancient culture. This has been depicted with the use of a shield; the lines representing the 65,000+ years of connection and continued culture our people have had to this land. This work is to show that this culture is resilient and will continue to be so through to the next generations.

The two lines that line the inside of the shield depict the land and the Ancestors – without these our culture would not be as strong and lively as it is today, ready to continue the fight.



# E L Y S I A LOVE-ANDERSON

CCDP OG  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
60.9 x 91.4cm  
\$750

For my Archibald piece, I decided to ask someone who I have immense respect for and am influenced by; Kane Brunjes. Kane is the inaugural inductee of Birrungga Gallery's 'Cultural Creative Development Program'. I am currently participating in this program and through the gallery I have been lucky enough to work with Kane and another CCDP participant on a mural. As this was both mine and the other persons first time working on a large scale, Kane was majorly supportive and guided us through it, while sharing his valuable knowledge on murals as well as his processes and techniques.

Kane is a proud Gunggari and Kabi Kabi man, whose works reflect his connection to his heritage, identity, nature, humanity, history and storytelling. When sitting down with Kane for a coffee and a yarn, he was so open and willing to answer all the questions I had for him. It came apparent to me that his life is heavily surrounded and dedicated to his culture; through the sharing of stories and knowledge through his art, to being a ranger on his country, where he cares and helps to look after the land. Not to forget, he is a mentor thorough Birrungga Gallery, where he shares his knowledge and helps guide participants through the CCDP.

I have painted Kane with his bucket hat on, which is how he was when I first met him. He is painted in front of a design which he uses in his own art, showing his connection to the bunya and hoop pine's which can be seen on Kabi Kabi country. I have used the black, yellow and red to represent his culture.



Entrant for  
Archibald Prize



# E L Y S I A LOVE-ANDERSON

Home

2025

Oil paint and acrylic paint pen on canvas

60.9 x 91.4cm

\$500

For my Wynne piece, this was my first attempt at a contemporary landscape and oil painting and because of this I decided to do a landscape that I am constantly looking at and have been for years. My old bedroom has been transformed into my "studio"; in here I have a large glass sliding door that connects to a veranda which peers over my uncle's backyard and his neighbours'. When sitting down looking out over the yards, I am able to see only what is visible over the wooden veranda rails – the tree line and the sky.

I have seen some of the best sunsets while sitting there to paint, that have really made me appreciate this suburban area as well as the position I am in and what I have. I think of the energy from the ancestors of this land; their energy filters up into the sky to put on a sight for their country.



Entrant for  
Sulman Prize

# E L Y S I A LOVE-ANDERSON

cuppa?  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
60.9 x 121.8cm  
\$2,500

For my Sulman work, I wanted to show my appreciation to a native reptile of eastern QLD and NSW, in my own contemporary way.

I often see this old, large eastern water dragon when I go to my lunch spot at work, down by the river. It comes out of the shrubbery and sits on the ledge of the bench, right near my arm. When in its presence, I have an overwhelming feeling of peace and through this I am able to find a connection. This connection feels familiar, kind of like sitting down with an elder for a cuppa.

I wanted to depict the connection through the blurring of the background, so the focus is purely on the water-dragon, as this is how it feels when I'm around it. The shrubbery, the light grey for the buildings, bridges, water and then the dark grey, white and blue depicts the concrete/rock bench it sits on; all this blurring/fading out when I am sitting there with it.



Entrant for  
Wynne Prize



# Jemma Stewart

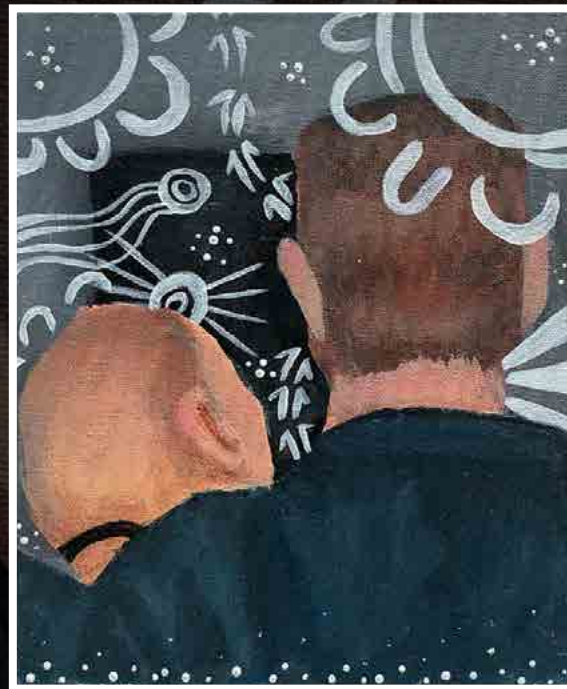
My artwork represents the beauty of culture and nature, and the ugliness of politics and war. I try to evoke emotion with my work, whether it is happiness, sadness, anger, or fear. I use these emotions to either motivate people to make a change, or to tell a story. I often create artwork surrounding topics of Aboriginal people and culture, as well as climate change and preserving nature through paintings. I use many materials to do this and create symbolism through colours, objects, and pictures which further helps me tell a story.

# J E M M A S T E W A R T

My Dad  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
10 x 25.4cm  
\$550

## David Hulett (Dad)

My father has always been a beacon of knowledge for me, and has not only taught me things, but has also grown culturally with me. My dad encouraged me to join the CCDP program at Birrung Gallery so I could have opportunities to not only help me with my art career but also to gain cultural knowledge. He continues to give me and the people around us knowledge and always will.



Entrant for  
Archibald Prize

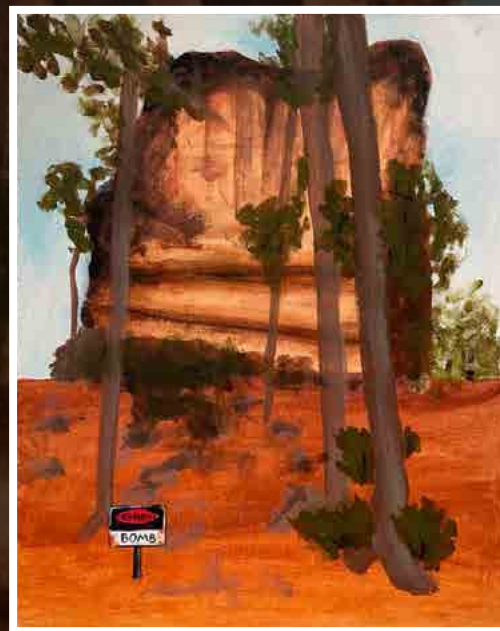


# J E M M A S T E W A R T

White Rock  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
30 x 40cm  
\$1,200

## White rock

The place I want to have as my Wynne entry 2025 is white rock. White rock is a culturally significant landmark to Aboriginal people, as the caves and outcroppings were known as spaces to connect country and personal identity and to pass on cultural knowledge. The site is also known culturally as a women's area. However, during World War 2 US troops used white rock as a military training ground, where gun pits and "unexploded ordnance" may still be present. There are fences and warning signs in particular areas around white rock where those potential dangers remain.



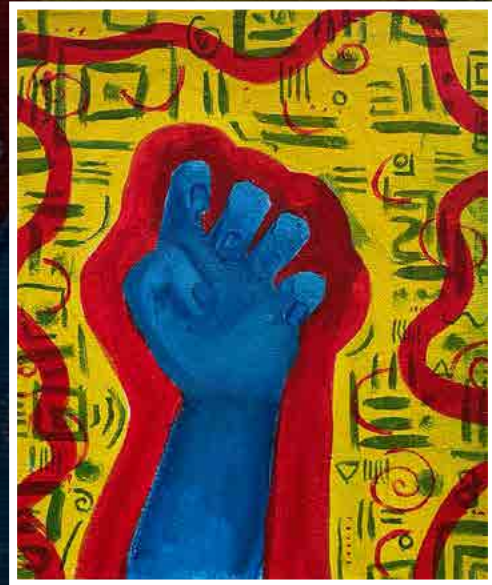
Entrant for  
Sulman Prize



# J E M M A S T E W A R T

Creativity  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
25.4 x 10cm  
\$590

The focus for my 2025 Sulman piece is not only focusing on knowledge, but also creativity. Perfecting technique and anatomy can elevate art, but in my experience, I have found that focusing too much on the technical side of art has muffled my creativity in the past. This painting is representative of feeling as if you are stuck in a box where you cannot think and create freely. The message behind this piece is to show the importance of keeping a balance between the technical and creative sides of art.



Entrant for  
Wynne Prize



# Kane Brunjes

Kane Brunjes is a Gunggari, Kabi Kabi man practicing in both public and gallery realms. Through his art practice Brunjes aims to solidify and represent a visual portrayal of how he views and reacts to the environment surrounding him with consideration to history and story.

Working exclusively with and represented by Birrunga Gallery he continues to develop these core foundations with a guided lens of expertise. Kane is the inaugural inductee (2019) and graduate (2022) of Birrunga Gallery's 3-year Cultural Creative Development Program (CCDP).

As an artist with CCDP, Kane's work reflects a deep connection to his cultural heritage, exploring themes of identity, storytelling, and the intricate relationship between nature and humanity.

Kane's pieces are a testament to his skill in combining traditional techniques with modern artistic sensibilities.

# K A N E B R U N J E S

Gunggari scar  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
152 x 76cm  
\$13,500

This work references a scarred tree from Gunggari Country. It was seen while on a trip with family where we were fortunate to have been told about the significance of this area.

The inspiration for this artwork has come from the word 'settled'. It highlights that Country was never 'settled' but rather invaded. This is seen in the darkness of the background.

The feeling of being 'settled' in the sense of safety for me though has come from learning the stories of my family, and learning of our culture, while also having the privilege to travel and view the country of my Old People. This is represented with the white paint of the Scar tree in the foreground.



K A N E  
B R U N J E S

Steven Button Snr  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
91 x 61cm  
\$7,000



Entrant for  
Archibald Prize



# K A N E B R U N J E S

Old Cypress Pine

2025

acrylic on canvas

91 x 61cm

\$9,000

The Cypress pine centre to the middle is an old pine I was shown while at work, probably the oldest tree to knowledge that I've seen. This area has been managed over the years, going back to our Old people so being in this area was quite significant. The area behind the Pine displays a theatre-like feeling, with a dark curtain being pulled from left to right. This signifies the learning of Country, being shown and told things from Countrymen/those with connection to various areas, and seeing a vision of how our Old people lived. This site also had shells throughout and the talk of shell middens came into conversation, represented in the white, chalk looking spaces seen around the piece. The red in the foreground captures a story of fire, highlighting its use in the management of Country.



Entrant for  
Sulman Prize



K A N E  
B R U N J E S

Kookaburra  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
91 x 61cm  
\$11,900



Entrant for  
Wynne Prize



# Birrunnga Wiradyuri

Birrunnga Wiradyuri, is the founder and principal artist of Birrunnga Gallery. He is dedicated to fulfilling his Cultural responsibilities, following, and practicing the central Wiradyuri Lore of Yindyamarra: to do something slowly, to respect, to be gentle, to be polite, to honour. A path he readily acknowledges which challenge him to grow daily.

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

Baladhu Nganhal Mulaa

2025

acrylic on canvas

120 x 100cm

\$40,000

**Sitter: Lionel Lauch (Healer; Artist; Cultural Knowledge Holder)**

**Story:** I met Lionel through my friendship with his Uncle, the late great Uncle Archie Roach.

Although our friendship came about after Archie went home, we quickly worked out that we share Cultural values and responsibilities.

Lionel is very much his own person and shines brightly on his own terms. Having said that, the influence of his Uncle's love is strongly present and is a beautiful realisation of the enduring legacy of an amazing human.



Entrant for  
Archibald Prize

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

Gaalmadhaany  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
100 cm x 80cm  
\$33,000

This piece represents the protection our Wiradyuri Matriarchy has provided, provides now and will continue to provide in to the future.

I'm only able to represent our Matriarchy in the form of cicada wings. In this piece I'm using the wings as a metaphor for Matriarchal protection, care, nurturing, Lore, Cultural knowledge and wisdom. The wings therefore are wrapped around we Wiradyuri as a whole.

The other aspect of demonstrative metaphor present in this work is the respect we Wiradyuri men have our Matriarchy. In the earthly world, it is the male cicadas that sing. So this piece shows the guidance and protection present in being wrapped in the wings of our Female Ancestors.



Entrant for  
Sulman Prize



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

murru wahluu  
2025  
acrylic on canvas  
100cm x 80cm  
\$33,000

**This piece represents the first instance of our Cultural practice 'murru' on Wahluu to mark the ceremonies of a senior Lore Man's passing since colonisation.**

**The inclusion of the fencing around the site is a metaphor around colonial preclusion of our Cultural presence on Wahluu in the historic and contemporary paradigms**



Entrant for  
Wynne Prize



