

Julie Dowling
Eegarra Bearaba (To Arise from Sorrow)
12 July - 8 August 2008

Brigitte Braun Gallery
White Street Windsor VIC 3181 Melbourne Australia
T&F +613 9521 2324 M +61 417 184 260 W artplace.com.au E artplace@iinet.net.au

1. Amazing Grace, 2008

acrylic, polymer and ochre on canvas, 160x160cm

\$42000

This work is a culmination of an extensive journey back to my traditional Badimaya country and the act of forgiveness for past injustices inflicted by colonial force. This work reflects the quest for knowledge and understanding of my ancestral country. It is about the end of my journey to country with feeling of resolution and peace. Badimaya ancestral country is located in the central west of Western Australia and the specific sacred country for my family is located at a place called Coodingnow. Coodingnow means the place of two different bird species – one called the Coodin (a small bird) and the other the Gnow (Mallee fowl). Our women ancestors are buried at this place and the sacred creation serpent – the Beemara created the landscape. The Beemara (affectionately named “Old Boy”) still lives under the sacred spring located on Coodingnow. The title of this work was influenced and inspired by the British film ‘Amazing Grace’ which tells the story of William Wilberforce. Wilberforce led the successful campaign to end the global slave trade in the 1800s. Such debates were raging during the time when Badimaya people were being subjected to cruel treatment by white squatters. This painting is about forgiveness for such deeds inflicted upon Badimaya people and the search for deeper understanding of how Badimaya survive today.

The Elements

This series is a celebration of the official apology to the stolen generations. I wanted to depict the four elements as ingredients of hope and reconciliation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Australia. We all live within the Australian landscape experiencing these four elements as human beings together. The central figure being a woman connotes the feminine component of the bearer of all life and renewal. These four elements interrelate as sisters and are described using my language – Badimaya which is considered an extinct or endangered language.

2. The Elements: Ow’wa (Water), 2008

acrylic, polymer and ochre on canvas, 120x100cm

\$30000

Ow’wa (Water) shows the flow of water which is sacred to many Aboriginal people and is a source of connection to spiritual places. The majority of creation stories in Aboriginal lore are strongly linked to the way water has shaped the land. Water is a cleansing element used in ritual and in celebration of connection between people. Water also symbolises the cleansing effect of the official apology to the stolen generations. The healing effect of the apology is much like the water creating a new course for the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

3. The Elements: Wajjanoo (Fire), 2008

acrylic, polymer and ochre on canvas, 120x100cm

\$30000

Wajjanoo (Fire) shows the fields being set alight by Aboriginal people as a source of renewal and cleansing. The spirits of fire dance in celebration of the power they wield as it travels across the land during the dry season. Fire is much like the effect of saying sorry to our people over past injustices to our mothers, our children and our families. Wajjanoo (Fire) shows the fields being set alight by Aboriginal people as a source of renewal and cleansing. The spirits of fire dance in celebration of the power they wield as it travels across the land during the dry season. Fire is much like the effect of saying sorry to our people over past injustices to our mothers, our children and our families.

4. The Elements: O-thero (Earth), 2008

acrylic, polymer and ochre on canvas, 120x100cm

\$30000

O-thero (Earth) shows the sacredness of the land as our mother. According to Aboriginal lore, the earth is the giver of all life and the flow of the dreaming is manifest in Aboriginal people's connection to the land. Much like the strong connection between a mother and her child, so is the strength of Aboriginal people to their sacred country. With the stolen generations, the severing of the connection between a mother and her child is a tragic and lifechanging event. Such policies also manifest the atrocity of breaking the connection between Aboriginal people and their sacred earth.

5. The Elements: Windhoo (Air), 2008

acrylic, polymer and ochre on canvas, 120x100cm

\$30000

Windhoo (Air) shows the fundamental element for all life on earth to function. The clouds depicted in this painting are demonstration of how transient human existence is in relation to the environment. The national apology to the stolen generations is a symbolic gesture that may change the course of Australian history regarding the direction taken with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations. It is as though the dark clouds have changed and a clear way forward is visible for Aboriginal people.

6. Mollie, 2008

acrylic, polymer and ochre on canvas, 120x100cm

\$30000

This painting shows my grandmother, Mollie (Mary) at Saint Joseph's Orphanage, Subiaco in the late 1930s. She was taken there when she was 12 years old and was immediately put to work in the orphanage's laundry. She cleaned and mended clothes and bedding for the priests, nuns, lay workers and orphans who lived there. Along with a team of nine other girls, she washed, folded, and starched hundreds of items over and over again until she was 21 years old. Her education level was not improved past the sixth grade and when she left the orphanage she worked as a washer woman for guest houses and hotels. Her experience was not dissimilar to girls who were trained at institutions such as Moore River Native settlement. Like them, my grandmother was trained to be a servant to non-Aboriginal society. My grandmother is 90 years old this year and she is telling us about her life at the orphanage. She still expresses her sorrow that in the entire time she was in Saint Joseph's, she saw her Badimaya mother once. As her granddaughters, her stories make us appreciate the freedom to pursue our dreams and aspirations. For my grandmother, such thoughts were never allowed simply because she was Aboriginal. We learn many things from our grandmother finally yarning with us about her life separated from her family and her country

7. Wallah, 2008

acrylic and red ochre on canvas, 120x100cm

\$25000

This painting shows my maternal great, great, great-grandparents and the love they shared. My great, great, great grandmother, as our family oral history goes, was named after emu eggs or Wallah (in the Badimaya language). Wallah dreaming is one of the most powerful dreaming cycles for my people because it is seasonally represented in the night sky by an array of stars. When these stars are shown, it means that emu eggs are plentiful and my people could be ensured of a feed. What is significant about this painting for me is that it shows my ancestors at peace, having lived as young people never knowing the brutality of the early colonisers who came to their country in the 1870s. Wallah and her husband (whose name we do not know) are shown secure in their love for each other. I have shown Wallah to be proud, strong and protected by her husband. I often wonder what happened to them and what led to their daughter, my great great grandmother being taken by a white squatter from the bush near Wydgee station in the Mid-West of Western Australia. He named her Melbin after his favourite town and her descendents today still do not know what her Badimaya name was before that happened.

8. Woorda (Brother), 2008

acrylic, polymer and ochre on canvas, 91x71cm

\$18000

This painting celebrates our men – my brothers whose hearts are filled with hope following the official apology to the stolen generations. It was a gesture of atonement and commitment to address past injustices upon our people. The background shows waterholes connected as symbol of abundance and protection. The centre is a circle symbolising blood which is connected to symbols of the central figure's heart. The title is a Wattandi (Badimaya) word. This language is considered endangered as less than 300 people speak it fluently.

9. Narrumba (Sister), 2008

acrylic, polymer and ochre on canvas, 91x71cm

\$18000

This painting celebrates our women – my sisters whose presence is as abundant as the connection between the natural elements and plants. The official apology to the stolen generations was an acknowledgement that such an extreme of bigotry and discrimination can no longer happen in this country. For a new national identity to grow that includes Aboriginal people at its heart, this central figure expresses nurturing and forgiveness so that healing can begin. The background shows a creeping vine that spreads across the mother earth taking in all terrain requiring little resources but covering much country. The central figure is positioned as if beckoning the viewer to follow her into a positive future. The title is a Wattandi (Badimaya) word. This language is considered endangered as less than 300 people speak it fluently.

10. Indawong (Star), 2008

acrylic, polymer and ochre on canvas, 91x71cm

\$18000

This painting is about a woman symbolising a star which was significant for guiding people to find water, sacred places, and where food was abundant. The star symbolises how the official apology to the stolen generations represents the potential guiding principles for better race relations in Australia. It is a benchmark so that racism and discrimination can be eliminated between peoples in this nation. The title is a Wattandi (Badimaya) word. This language is considered endangered as less than 300 people speak it fluently.

11. Warnda (Ghost) , 2008

acrylic, polymer and ochre on canvas, 91x71cm

\$18000

This painting is about the spirits that remain of all those men and women of the stolen generations who have passed into the Dreaming before the national apology finally occurred. By the time the apology was spoken in federal parliament, it was ten years since the Bringing Them Home report was released by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. The notion of apologising to the stolen generations became a political football during that time adding more humiliation and despair to those survivors. Many of these survivors passed away during this period which is a sad indictment and a sign of the sheer lack of human decency by the previous parliament in failing to act.

The background shows the many cloud systems from various weather seasons. These represent the transience of life passing. Around the head of the central male figure are the tracks of large bungarra (goanna) representing how people also leave tracks in the earth long after they have passed into the Dreaming. These tracks can be followed if we know what to look for. The title is a Wattandi (Badimaya) word. This language is considered endangered as less than 300 people speak it fluently.

12. Wootha (Rainbow), 2008

acrylic, polymer and ochre on canvas, 91x71cm

\$18000

This painting is about the beginning of a new tomorrow for Aboriginal people in Australia. Many tears have been shed by for the loss of family members for many years and now these people are returning to family and country again. The rainbow represents the hope for a new beginning for these people. The background shows clouds without rain and a rainbow around the central figures torso. The rainbow is made up of yellabiddi (emu) tracks meaning that a track can be followed leading to sustenance. The title is a Wattandi (Badimaya) word. This language is considered endangered as less than 300 people speak it fluently.

13. Self-portrait - Yanga (Tree), 2008

acrylic and ochre on canvas, 91x71cm

\$15000

In this self-portrait, I am commenting about my relationship to Aboriginal men. Aboriginal men are disenfranchised from their original power base because of colonisation and dispossession. Today often our community must provide strength to our men against racism but in this representation, I have painted the arm of an Aboriginal man supporting and comforting me. This painting is about the positive relationships I have with Aboriginal men despite negative views of them in the non-Aboriginal community. Like a tree, our men adapt, re-shape themselves and continue to grow despite harsh conditions. Their influence will continue to determine the course of our communities future and carry the wisdom of their ancestors. Such a role is determined by their survival despite oppression which is supported and encouraged by strong Aboriginal women. The title is a Wattandi (Badimaya) word. This language is considered endangered as less than 300 people speak it fluently.

Icon to a Stolen Child Series

all works acrylic and polymer on canvas 25x20cm

\$ 2000 each

This series of 20 icons to a stolen child is part of an ongoing comment on the eugenic policies to 'breed out the black' upon Aboriginal people in Australia. These icons are about the reaction by the stolen generations to the national apology on 13th February 2008 by Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd. The titles are Wattandi (Badimaya) words from my people. This language is considered endangered as less than 300 people speak it fluently.

14. Icon to a stolen child: Heart (Woordoo), 2008

"Heart" is about when members of the stolen generations and their descendents find their families again and learning to know their positioning within them. The heart is believed by my family to be more important than the mind because from the heart then all knowledge can be grown.

15. Icon to a stolen child: Ashes (Oongarnoo), 2008

"Ashes" as an icon symbolises the process of finding ones family for the first time as if sifting through the ashes for answers to your past. For many of the stolen generations and their descendents are confronted with the remnants of their families torn apart by these brutal policies to destroy their culture and community.

16. Icon to a stolen child: To Wander (Kooreedart), 2008

"To Wander" is about the stolen generations members and their descendants who are still looking for their families.

17. Icon to a stolen child: Fragile (Wilyadoo), 2008

"Fragile" is about the delicate condition of many members of the stolen generations and their descendants who are trying to cope with trauma. Their stories all teach us how important family is to every human being on earth.

18. Icon to a stolen child: To Fix (Yanda), 2008

"To Fix" is about how saying sorry can mend people's hearts and their families.

19. Icon to a stolen child: Sunrise (Warrara), 2008

Sunrise is about new hope for our people in finding their families. These are the families they were stolen from as children.

20. Icon to a stolen child: Blood (Ngoba), 2008

"Blood" is about the strong bond within families that members of the stolen generations still feel even after many, many years of separation.

21. Icon to a stolen child: Bird (Jeedamin), 2008

"Bird" as an icon symbolises the freedom felt by members of the stolen generations after the national apology. They are able to transcend their suffering.

22. Icon to a stolen child: Orphan (Warreedhee), 2008

“Orphan” is what many members of the stolen generations were called even when their parents were still alive. Such a label brought much pain and often shut the door of hope for many people searching for or reunited with their families.

23. Icon to a stolen child: Baby (Aathee), 2008

“Baby” as an icon symbolises the tragedy of the many babies taken from their mothers and who are still seeking them today.

24. Icon to a stolen child: Song (Warra), 2008

“Song” is about the use of singing or songs by people when they are celebrating. Members of the stolen generations can now write songs of happiness that such things that were inflicted upon them will never happen again and that it was not their fault.

25. Icon to a stolen child: Dream (O’garain), 2008

“Dream” is about the dreams that many members of the stolen generations have about their lost families and the hopes of finding them once again.

26. Icon to a stolen child: Deep Water (Woojaaja), 2008

“Deep Water” is about the depth of yearning and sadness felt by those thinking about and searching for their missing families as members or descendents of the stolen generations.

27. Icon to a stolen child: Rejoice (Thalyarra), 2008

“Rejoice” is about the feelings of happiness and celebration for those stolen generations members and their descendants who have found their family and traditional country. It is also about the reaction to the official apology to them as a group of people who faced such blatant injustice.

28. Icon to a stolen child: Alive (Wa’ow’il’a), 2008

“Alive” as an icon symbolises the feelings of elation and fulfilment experienced by members of the stolen generations and their descendants after finding their families and culture.

29. Icon to a stolen child: Fire (Wajjanoo), 2008

“Fire” is about the passion that members of the stolen generations and their descendants have in their quest for their missing families.

30. Icon to a stolen child: No Half Caste ((Yow We-lurdee), 2008

“No Half-caste” is about how members of the stolen generations were labelled half-caste before they were taken from their families. Such terms enabled many families and communities to be forever changed and traumatised.

31. Icon to a stolen child: Listen (Wokawa), 2008

“Listen” is about the importance of listening to the stories of members of the stolen generations and their descendants. When we listen then we can open our hearts to another person and so become better human beings from the sharing.

32. Icon to a stolen child: Quiet (Etee), 2008

“Quiet” is about finding calm after trauma for those stolen generations members who have received the apology and individualising what such a gesture means to them.

33. Icon to a stolen child: Far Away (Weetcha), 2008

“Far Away” is about the feeling that members of the stolen generations and their descendants have at the beginning of their search for family. Their families seem too far away and out of reach with often no way of knowing how to find them again.

Brigitte Braun Gallery

White Street Windsor VIC 3181 Melbourne Australia

T&F +613 9521 2324 M +61 417 184 260 W artplace.com.au E artplace@inet.net.au

