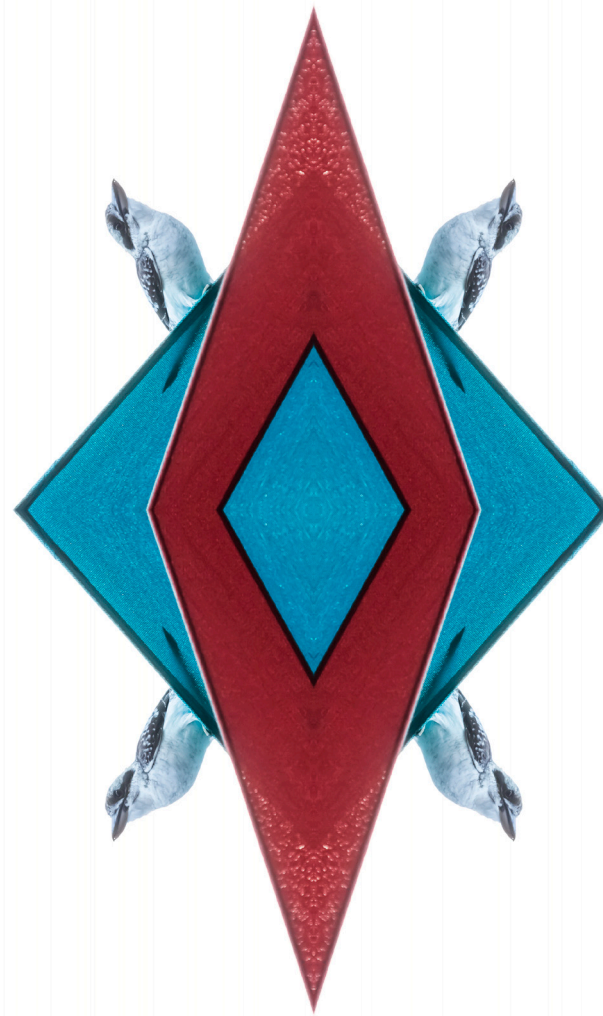


Boonwurung (St Kilda) - Rainbow Lorikeet 2017, Archival print on rag paper, 120 x 80 cm, edition 8 + 2AP



Above (left): Wulgurukaba (Magnetic Island) - Kookaburra 2017, Archival print on rag paper, 120 x 80 cm, edition 8 + 2AP



Above (right): Boonwurung (St Kilda) - Crow 2017, Archival print on rag paper, 120 x 80 cm, edition 8 + 2AP
 Cover: Boonwurung (St Kilda) - Red Wattlebird 2017, Archival print on rag paper, 120 x 80 cm, edition 8 + 2AP



KENT MORRIS - UNVANISHED

18 OCTOBER - 11 NOVEMBER 2017
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**KENT MORRIS
 UNVANISHED**



SEEING BEYOND THE BRICKS, WE ARE STILL HERE

Let no one say the past is dead. The past is all about us and within.

Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker)

Recently, I was reading *The Past*, a poem by the late Oodgeroo Noonuccal. It is in an old book of black poetry edited by Kevin Gilbert¹ which I have absorbed over and over. The pages are now thin and stained from my cups of tea and the book smells old but familiar, like my father's study. I have sat quietly with Oodgeroo's thoughts, feeling the rhythm of her pen. She wrote so vividly about being caught in the two worlds of suburbia and her Ancestral connections and memories. She was passionate about her people and longed for a time before ships and houses, when Minjerriabah was just theirs and the campfires never went out.

Oodgeroo wrote about father sky and mother earth and the space in between. I reflect on this when thinking about where our Ancestral memories sit. When suburbia begins to take over, it is this space in between father sky and mother earth that carries both our physical presence and our culture. It is in the land, it is carried on our waters, it is sung by the birds and now it is in the structures and concrete layers of the cities we live in.

Oodgeroo wrote that "the past is all about us and within". This is true of Kent Morris and his Barkindji connections and it is true of his imagery, layered with symbolism evoking the spirits and cultural practices of his Ancestors while critiquing the imposition of buildings on Aboriginal land. His works create a First Peoples' visibility within the harsh landscape of the built environment and are carefully considered studies of his Barkindji country and the country of others where he lives, works and travels.

When I look at Kent's work I see shields that our Ancestors made, I see designs that we painted on our bodies and the ground and I see the familiarity of buildings that I sit within every day. Importantly, I see a statement of culture that rejects the monuments of colonisation, symbolic of the displacement of First Peoples. He reshapes these spaces to reclaim them. The works have strength because of their exceptional attention to detail and technique but are always underpinned by country.

In his series *Unvanished* (2017), Kent reminds people that there is a continuum of culture that does not stop when the land changes. It is present and ongoing, and through his view

we are privileged to see the world through Barkindji eyes. The geometric markers of identity from south-eastern Australia form a hypnotic movement in the mirrored photographs of his works. These designs refer to our customary practices and are a clear statement of Sovereign presence.

The title, *Unvanished*, was partly inspired by Bobbie Hardy's book *Lament for the Barkindji - The vanished tribes of the Darling River Region*². This is a book of fiction. The very presence of Kent defies this myth of the 'vanished' Barkindji people and through his art he responds with force. His works are shields of defence, statements of culture and of existence. Kent told me, "My family's oral history recounts how, in the mid 1800s, a small number of Kurnu-Barkindji people, my ancestors, walked on to Toorale Station for sanctuary and survival. Today there are countless descendants of that mob and I am proud to be one of them. We have not vanished."³

The strength we feel when in the presence of his works is informed by genetic memories passed down from thousands of years of connection to country and thousands of years of knowing what the crow or the cockatoo is telling us. Kent's use of birds is significant. They are symbols of culture and they form an integral part of who we are as First Peoples. They have many meanings and come to us as messengers, as creators and as our protectors.

Kent's works speak strongly to me like words from Oodgeroo. They affirm that culture is within and around us, that we are resilient, and that we reclaim this space whether we sit within houses of brick and mortar or by the rivers where our old people camped. Kent sees beyond the built environment, using it and reshaping it to highlight our culture and our history which are often visually absent in the landscape. Strong in life and culture, *Unvanished* boldly states we are still here.

Kimberley Moulton, Yorta Yorta

¹ Noonuccal, Oodgeroo. 'The Past', in *Inside Black Australia, an anthology of Aboriginal poetry*, edited by Kevin Gilbert, Penguin, Melbourne, 1988

² Hardy, Bobbie, *Lament for the Barkindji: the vanished tribes of the Darling River Region*, Rigby, Adelaide, 1976

³ Morris, Kent, in conversation with Kimberley Moulton, August 2017



Boonwurung (St Kilda) - Sulphur-crested Cockatoo 2017, Archival print on rag paper, 120 x 80 cm, edition 8 + 2AP

KENT MORRIS

Born 1964
Barkindji

EDUCATION

2013 Indigenous Arts Leadership Program, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra ACT
1985-1986 Post Graduate Diploma Fine Art – Distinction, Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne VIC
1982-1983 Bachelor of Fine Arts, Monash University, Melbourne VIC

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2017 *Unvanished*, Vivien Anderson Gallery, Melbourne VIC
1995 *My Life as Daryl Hannah*, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne VIC
1993 *Portraits of Pleasure*, Luba Bilu Gallery, Melbourne VIC
1991 *Primary Narcissism*, Luba Bilu Gallery, Melbourne VIC
1990 *Double Infant*, Kent Fine Art, Melbourne, VIC
1988 *Capital*, Irving Sculpture Gallery, Sydney NSW
Capital, Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne VIC
1986 *Not Architecture, Not Portraiture*, 70 Arden Street, Melbourne VIC
1985 *Towards the Origin*, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne VIC

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2017 *Tarnanthi*, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide SA
Bowness Photography Prize, Monash Gallery of Art, Melbourne VIC
34th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award, MAGNT, Darwin NT
Tell, Ballarat International Foto Biennale, Ballarat VIC
Sunshine Coast Art Prize, Caloundra Regional Gallery, Caloundra QLD
Dhumbadha Munga – Talking Knowledge, Eildon Gallery, Melbourne VIC
2016-17 *Sovereignty*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA), Melbourne VIC
2016 *33rd Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*, MAGNT, Darwin NT
Reframed, Incinerator Gallery, Melbourne VIC
Wyndham Art Prize, Wyndham Art Gallery, Melbourne VIC
Dhumbadha Munga – Talking Knowledge, Eildon Gallery, Melbourne VIC
2015 *Darebin Art Prize*, Bundoora Art Centre, Melbourne VIC
The Incinerator Art Award, Incinerator Gallery, Melbourne VIC

Victorian Indigenous Art Awards, Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat VIC
1995 *Photo Posters*, Centre for Contemporary Photography, Melbourne VIC
1993 *The Margaret Stewart Collection*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne VIC
1989-90 *Proposals*, Artspace, Sydney NSW; Contemporary Art Centre of South Australia, Adelaide SA, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne VIC
1988 *Site of Execution*, ACCA, Melbourne VIC
Artisans, George Paton Gallery, Melbourne VIC
1987 *Third Australian Sculpture Triennial*, Heide Park and Art Gallery, Melbourne VIC

COLLECTIONS

National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne VIC
Parliament House Art Collection, Canberra ACT
University of Technology Sydney (UTS), Sydney NSW
Hamilton Gallery, Hamilton VIC
Koorie Heritage Trust, Melbourne VIC
City of St. Kilda, Melbourne VIC

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

ACCA, 2016, *Sovereignty*, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne VIC
Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2015, *Victorian Indigenous Art Awards 2015* (exh. cat), Art Gallery of Ballarat, Ballarat VIC
Art Gallery of South Australia, 2017, *Tarnanthi* (exh. cat), Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide SA
Claburn, A. 1991, "Primary Narcissism: Kent Morris", *Agenda*, Issue 18
Cox, W. 2016, "Sovereignty: Always Was, Always Will Be", *Broadsheet*
Feredy, S. 1993, "Portraits of Pleasure", *Agenda*, Issue 33
Flynn, E. 2017, "Review: Sovereignty", *Art and Australia*
Harford, S. 2016, "ACCA's Sovereignty surveys the new face of Indigenous culture", *The Age*, December 9
McDowall, B. 2017 "Sovereignty at the ACCA – A Vital Australian Exhibition" *The Culture Concept Circle*
MAGNT, 2017, *34th Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* (exh. cat), MAGNT, Darwin NT
MAGNT, 2016, *33rd Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* (exh. cat), MAGNT, Darwin NT
National Gallery of Victoria, 1987, *The Third Australian Sculpture Triennial* (exh. cat), NGV, Melbourne VIC
O'Halloran, D. 1989, "White Goods, White Sorcery", *Agenda*, Issue 1, Vol. 1
von Zinnenburg Carroll, K. 2016, "'Sovereignty': Indigenising and decolonising curatorial practice", *Art Monthly*, Issue 295