



# KARLA DICKENS EMBRACING SHADOWS

3 JANUARY – 12 MARCH 2023

We pay our respects to the Dharawal people who are the traditional custodians of the land, whose deepening connection to culture and customs have cared for this country for over 60,000 years. We acknowledge Elders past, present and emerging for their immense spiritual connection to place which was never ceded.

Dharawal land has always been recognised as a meeting place for people from other lands, and in this spirit we respectfully continue this tradition through the bringing together of our communities through arts and culture.

Always was and Always will be Aboriginal land.

KARLA DICKENS  
EMBRACING  
SHADOWS

3 JANUARY – 12 MARCH 2023

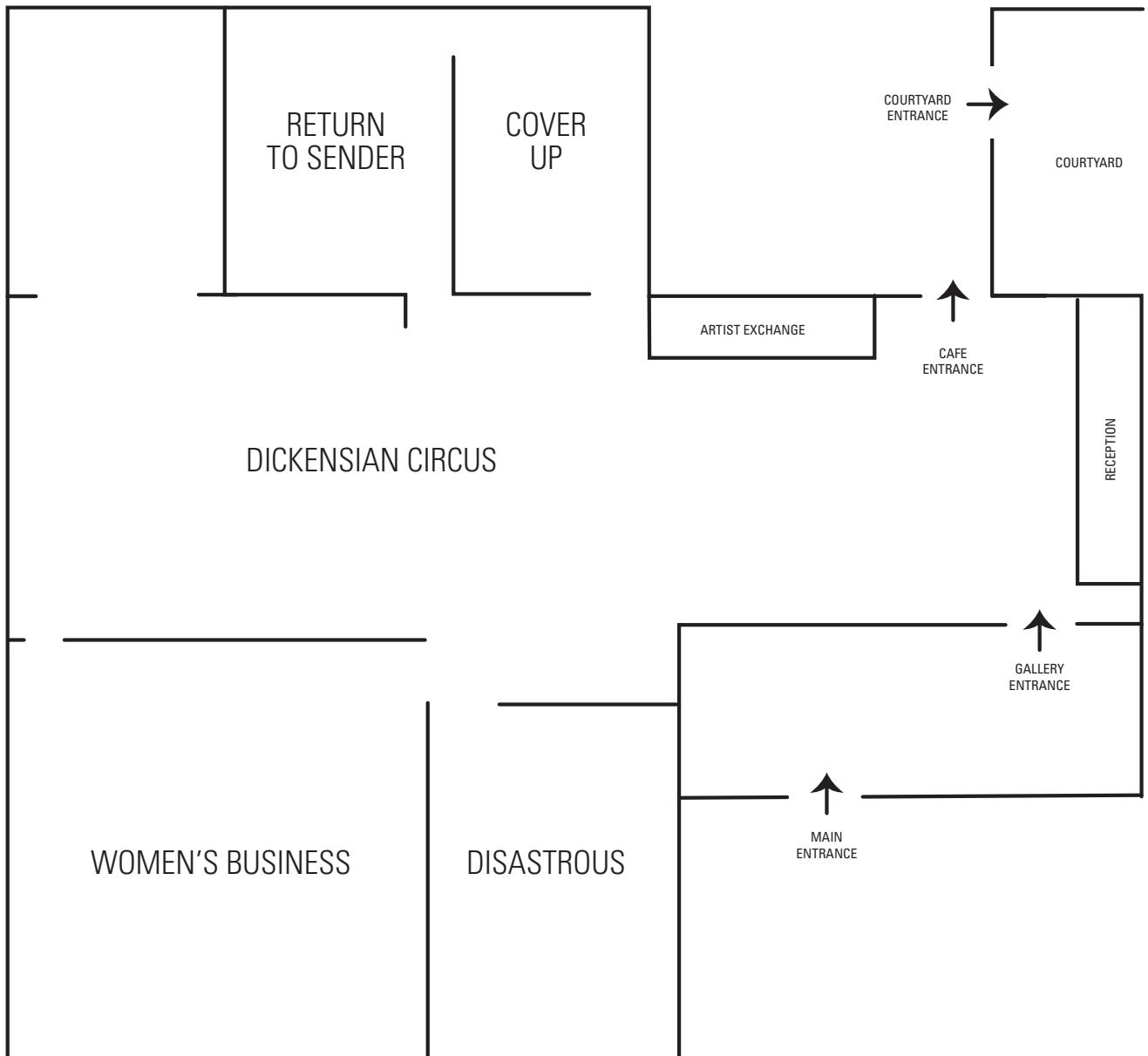
Campbelltown Arts Centre in association with Sydney WorldPride presents 'Embracing Shadows', a survey exhibition by Lismore-based Wiradjuri artist Karla Dickens.

Spanning 30 years of practice, 'Embracing Shadows' focusses on themes of female identity and racial injustice that are enduringly explored in Dickens' reflections on Australian culture. The exhibition brings together key bodies of work for the first time, including 'Hot Thing' (1995), 'Sheila's Downunder' (2002), 'Black Madonna' (2009), 'Workhorse' (2015) and 'Bound' (2016), as well as select works from the 'Dickensian Circus' and 'Country Show' series (2020-2021).

'Embracing Shadows' also premieres 'Disastrous', a series created following the record-breaking floods that devastated Dickens' home region of the Northern Rivers, NSW in early 2022.

Born in 1967 in Sydney, Karla Dickens is of Wiradjuri, Irish and German descent. Through collage, painting, installation, photography, film and poetry, Dickens' practice is a highly personal and political interrogation of Australian culture and history. Dickens' work has featured in major group exhibitions in Australia and internationally, including 'A Dickensian Country Show', Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, Art Gallery of South Australia and 'A Dickensian Country Circus', NIRIN: 22nd Biennale of Sydney, Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2020, and she is one of nine artists selected to create a new commission for the Art Gallery of New South Wales' major expansion project, Sydney Modern, which launched late in 2022. Dickens' work is held in many public and private collections across Australia and internationally.

# GALLERY MAP



# DICKENSIAN CIRCUS



The 'Dickensian Circus' series explores histories of Indigenous people involved in Australian circus shows, side shows and tent-boxing troupes from the 1920s to the 1950s, and their role as 'entertainer' for primarily white audiences. The works, comprising everyday items and memorabilia which Dickens has collected over many years, capture an essence of the lives and stories of Aboriginal circus performers and workers. One such performer and the starting point for these works is Con Colleano, a world-famous tightrope walker with Aboriginal, African/West Indian and Irish heritage. By altering his

surname, Colleano presented himself as Spanish in order to be more acceptable to Australian audiences.

This is a growing collection of works and has been exhibited in 'A Dickensian Country Show', Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art, 2020; 'A Dickensian Circus', Biennale of Sydney 2020; and a 'Dickensian Sideshow' at Lismore Regional Gallery and Orange Regional Gallery, 2020-2021.

C1	'Eight in One Night', 2020 Mixed media 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist	C11	'Goats and Top Hats', 2019 Mixed media 179 x 62 x 62cm Collection of the artist
C2	'Hook a Bye Baby', 2020 Mixed media 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist	C12	'Shrunken Respect', 2019 Mixed media 77 x 55 x 32cm Collection of the artist
C3	'Guessing Game', 2020 Mixed media 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist	C13	'Cruel Buffoonery', 2019 Mixed media 115 x 60 x 60cm Collection of the artist
C4	'Dollars in the Dust', 2020 Mixed media Diptych, 25 x 20cm and 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist	C14	'Under The Act', 2019 Mixed media 46 x 49 x 24cm Collection of the artist
C5	'Neverland', 2021 Mixed media 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist	C15	'Golly Fucking Gosh II', 2021 Mixed media 120 x 120cm Collection of the artist
C6	'Town Bike on the Road', 2020 Mixed media 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist	C16	'Motherless Mermaid', 2020 Mixed media 58 x 100 x 40cm Collection of the artist
C7	'Trick Rider', 2019 Mixed media 58 x 54 x 26cm Collection of the artist	C17	'Lions, Tigers and Endangered Bears', 2019 Mixed media 120 x 240 x 8cm Collection of the artist
C8	'Wild Lubra Reel in Display', 2019 Mixed media 54 x 33 x 54cm Collection of the artist	C18	'Colonial Roundabout', 2019 Mixed media 150 x 110 x 110cm Collection of the artist
C9	'In the Can', 2019 Mixed media 89 x 30 x 30cm Collection of the artist	C19	'Not This Little Black Duck', 2019 Mixed media 150 x 53 x 77cm Collection of the artist
C10	'Show Prize II', 2019 Mixed media 48 x 26 x 30cm Collection of the artist	C20	'Slippery Seals', 2019 Mixed media 176 x 100 x 46cm Collection of the artist

C21	'Keep your Distance I & II', 2021 Mixed media (diptych) 25 x 20cm each Collection of the artist	C31	'21st Century Protection IV', 2019 Mixed media 33 x 30 x 11cm Collection of the artist
C22	'Don't Freak Me', 2020 Mixed media 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist	C32	'21st Century Protection II', 2019 Mixed media 33 x 30 x 11cm Collection of the artist
C23	'Flying Kitty', 2020 Mixed media 66 x 66cm Collection of the artist	C33	'Truths on the Ghost Train', 2019 Mixed media 62 x 56cm Collection of the artist
C24	'Keep your Distance I', 2021 Mixed media 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist	C34	'Wudhagarbidyabu Gulbulaabu (Listen and Hear)', 2019 Mixed media 65 x 65 x 46cm Gift through the Adelaide Biennial Ambassadors Program 2020, Art Gallery of South Australia
C25	'Bucked', 2020 Mixed media 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist	C35	'Skippy isn't the Villain Here', 2019 Mixed media 150 x 63 x 84cm (including plinth) Collection of the artist
C26	'Four horsemen of the Western Plains', 2021 Mixed media 175 x 140 x 100cm Collection of the artist	C36	'Scaffold Panel #12', 2019 Inkjet print on PVC with stainless steel eyelets, edition 3 135 x 200cm Collection of the artist
C27	'Cowboy Country', 2021 Mixed media 120 x 180cm Collection of the artist	C37	'Knockout Racism', 2020 Mixed media Diptych, 25 x 20cm and 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist
C28	'Hoofs and Horns', 2021 Mixed media 120 x 180cm Collection of the artist	C38	'Scaffold Panel #11', 2019 Inkjet print on PVC with stainless steel eyelets, edition 3 135 x 200cm Collection of the artist
C29	'21st Century Protection III', 2019 Mixed media 33 x 30 x 11cm Collection of the artist	C39	'Show Prize I', 2019 Mixed media 55 x 26 x 27cm Collection of the artist
C30	'21st Century Protection I', 2019 Mixed media 33 x 30 x 11cm Collection of the artist		

C40	'Scaffold Panel #5', 2019 Inkjet print on PVC with stainless steel eyelets, edition 3 135 x 200cm Collection of the artist	C49	'Pound-for-Pound #2', 2019 Mixed media 196 x 41 x 41cm Collection of the artist
C41	'Scaffold Panel #6', 2019 Inkjet print on PVC with stainless steel eyelets, edition 3 135 x 200cm Collection of the artist	C50	'Pound-for-Pound #4', 2019 Mixed media 198 x 41 x 41cm Collection of the artist
C42	'Scaffold Panel #9', 2019 Inkjet print on PVC with stainless steel eyelets, edition 3 135 x 200cm Collection of the artist	C51	'Come in Spinner', 2019 Mixed media 120 x 120 x 10cm Gift through the Adelaide Biennial Ambassadors Program 2020, Art Gallery of South Australia
C43	'The Grass isn't Greener', 2020 Mixed media 25 x 20cm Collection of the artist	C52	'The Site of Deep Knowing', 2019 Mixed media 120 x 120 x 12cm Gift through the Adelaide Biennial Ambassadors Program 2020, Art Gallery of South Australia
C44	'S.O.S.', 2020 Mixed media 25 x 20cm Collection of the artist	C53	'Hole in my Pocket', 2019 Mixed media 120 x 120 x 9cm Collection of the artist
C45	'****Red Blood', 2021 Mixed media 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist	C54	'Blue Buffoon', 2020 Mixed media 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist
C46	'Scaffold Panel #14', 2019 Inkjet print on PVC with stainless steel eyelets, edition 3 135 x 200cm Collection of the artist	C55	'Sitting Duck', 2020 Mixed media 64 x 64cm Collection of the artist
C47	'Touring Troupe', 2019 Mixed media 33 x 51 x 23cm Collection of the artist	C56	'Winner Winner Chicken Dinner', 2020 Mixed media 88.5 x 64cm Collection of the artist
C48	'Pound-for-Pound #7', 2019 Mixed media 160 x 41 x 41cm Collection of the artist	C57	'Ready, Aim, Fire', 2019 Mixed media 120 x 120 x 7cm Gift through the Adelaide Biennial Ambassadors Program 2020, Art Gallery of South Australia

C58 'Clown Nation', 2019  
Mixed media  
120 x 120 x 5cm  
Gift through the Adelaide Biennial  
Ambassadors Program 2020, Art  
Gallery of South Australia

C59 'Gambler's Ruin', 2020  
Mixed media  
25 x 20cm  
Collection of the artist

C60 'Feeding the Beast', 2020  
Mixed media  
Diptych, 25 x 20cm and 64 x 64cm  
Collection of the artist

C61 'The Carnival is Over', 2020  
Mixed media  
64 x 64cm  
Collection of the artist

C62 'The Nation Has Gone Nuts', 2020  
Mixed media  
64 x 64cm  
Collection of the artist

C63 'Lawless Piggy', 2019  
Mixed media  
133 x 75 x 72cm  
Collection of the artist

C64 'Smiles and Cannibals', 2019  
Mixed media  
120 x 120cm  
Gift through the Adelaide Biennial  
Ambassadors Program 2020, Art  
Gallery of South Australia

# A DICKENSIAN CIRCUS

No erected Big Top today  
no sawdusted arenas or rolls of painted canvas  
a dark sideshow has found its way  
into a womb of Colonial privilege

Star-spangled banners exert unease  
Ms Ready emphatically reclaims this sacred space  
her legs mirroring the strength of its marble columns  
an exotic Koori knockout, she harnesses the spirits  
stolen from those caged in the rusty menagerie over which she towers

These Aboriginal faces reflect historical human zoos  
sadly mirrored today in jails countrywide  
unnatural spectacles without safety nets  
spell-binding juggling acts are needed to sidestep those circuses  
as the magicians who manipulate such entertainments continue to shine  
ticket prices skyrocket as risks and casualties increase

Mr Ready firmly stands his ground  
not just a boxing-tent performer  
his fists help him to protect and survive—day in, day out  
tattoos share daredevil stories and legacies  
scars of resilience  
just like tightrope walkers, who demand respect

Knife dodging acts, gun shooting cowboys and bareback riders  
fires rage with spectacular damage  
evidence of a nation with holes in buckets  
which leak more than water  
“There’s a gaping hole in this bucket, dear Liza,  
how on earth can you fix it dear Henry, dear Henry?”  
The clowns enter and the show goes on...

– Karla Dickens, 2020

# A DICKENSIAN COUNTRY SHOW

A dark side of the circus  
behind the lights and make-up of the show  
is the hard reality of artists and show-people  
who are glued together with blood, sweat and tears  
searching for hope  
for a home-away-from-home

A tribe of misfits, outsiders, freaks and no-fits  
the throw-aways, the shunned, the rejected and the shamed  
gathering and nurturing each other with a sense of belonging  
entertaining and warming the hearts of those who abandoned them  
healing the cruel  
while enforcing their own existence

There are those who love to watch horror movies and car accidents unfold  
excited by the energy and horrifying misfortunes  
the thrill of potential death  
waiting for the acrobat to loose her footing  
the fat man to explode  
they feel beautiful as they cringe at the bearded lady  
the snake-man and any other human with unusual differences

As a source of inspiration they please the crowds  
delivering soul-food to the outwardly whole  
arriving in the shadows to embrace theirs  
the boxing tent is raised  
mobs punch the air  
as they watch black fellas bruise and knock each other across the canvas

They watch their dreams unfold  
as carnies scratch to feed themselves  
shovelling popcorn and dressed in their Sunday best  
making memories and dancing with deep desires  
sad clowns tie the truths together as they mock themselves  
teasing them with playful tomfoolery  
magicians and trained athletes in hand-made costumes  
which sparkle thousands of lights into their hearts and eyes...

– Karla Dickens, 2020

DISASTROUS



The environment is a recurring theme in Karla Dickens' practice. Having been involved in environmental activism for much of her life, Dickens acknowledges hearing repeated discussions and calls to action while witnessing little action and increased devastation. Since 2019 alone, Dickens has experienced devastating fires and floods in her home region. Making work is a way to process her first- and second-hand experiences, bear witness and raise attention.

The series 'Disastrous' (2022), commissioned by Campbelltown Arts Centre, confronts the breadth of environmental disasters occurring across Australia at the hands of those in denial holding positions of power. This series was created following the record-breaking floods that hit Dickens' home region of the Northern Rivers in early 2022.

'Mother's Little Helpers' (2019) is a collaboration with Bunurong, Tasmanian and Yuin man Bruce

Pascoe and filmmaker Brendan Blacklock. The film was made on Gamilaaraay Country, outside of Bingara in northern New South Wales, and includes a number of students from Bingara Central School.

'As Indigenous Australians we connect with County and refer to the planet as Mother Earth. Recently a small group of First Nation Adults and children from different parts of Australia gathered in Bingara NSW to create a visual story. Our short film speaks of our concerns and the importance of healing 'The Mother' with the help of our youth, who are our future and our only hope. Known and respected for his great words Uncle Bruce Pascoe will not speak in this film - it is the viewers responsibility to look hard, learn quick and listen deeply. What will you see? What act will you take?'

– Karla Dickens, 2019

A1	'Mother's Little Helpers', 2019 Single channel video, 7:32 mins Collection of the artist	A11	'Ronald's Laugh Now', 2018 Mixed media 66 x 50 x 43cm Collection of the artist
A2	'Before You Go', 2020 Mixed media 120cm x 120cm Collection of the artist	A12	'Attack of the Dirty Clown', 2018 Mixed media 57 x 42 x 38cm Collection of the artist
A3	'No Sense', 2020 Mixed media Diptych, 50 x 34 x 56cm and 220 x 60 x 3cm Collection of the artist	A13	'Keeping Australia Beautiful', 2018 Mixed media 63 x 56 x 41cm Collection of the artist
A4	'Fever', 2022 Mixed media 124 x 124cm Collection of the artist	A14	'Clean Up Australia', 2018 Mixed media 105 x 62 x 55cm Collection of the artist
A5	'For Sale', 2022 Mixed media 124 x 124cm Collection of the artist	A15	'Strapped by the Love of Money I', 2020 Mixed Media Pentaptych (one from series), 150 x 66 x 5cm Collection of the artist
A6	'Killer Cattle', 2022 Mixed media 124 x 124cm Collection of the artist	A16	'More or Less', 2019 Mixed media 87 x 222cm Collection of the artist
A7	'Cuddling Bones', 2022 Mixed media 124 x 124cm Collection of the artist	A17	'Game Over', 2020 Mixed media Pentaptych, dimensions variable Collection of the artist
A8	'Heartbreaking Records', 2022 Mixed media 124 x 124cm Collection of the artist		
A9	'Whitewashing Change', 2022 Mixed media 124 x 124cm Collection of the artist		
A10	'A Bell, A Crow and Empty Buckets', 2021 Mixed media Dimensions variable Collection of the artist		

# SOS

20:20 vision  
blurred vision  
clear raw sight  
unknown truths awake  
a long slow burn

No '60s trip  
hold on to your hat  
dial a friend  
the show has began  
things just got real

Some saw their hearts  
some weep for dollars  
the air took a deep breath  
seeds were planted  
families connected

Loved ones die  
old wounds rise  
the earth heals  
24/7 reports  
wash your hands Jeffery

Pull up your socks  
be grateful  
love thy neighbour  
black lives matter  
educate yourself

The future is now  
grow hope in your garden  
eat love  
feed love  
be brave

SOS

– Karla Dickens, 2019

# MOTHER'S LITTLE HELPERS

The deathbed rattles  
reality has arrived  
with an offbeat heart  
her veins die

Thirsty and hungry  
no shelter to hide  
screaming and crying  
as water levels rise

No coloured pills  
for mother today  
overdosing on crooked Bandaids  
shakes from withdrawal stay

Battered and bruised  
sweating in pain  
the time has come  
to nurse her back

Too late for flowers  
hold her hand  
hug her tight  
love her through long, dark nights

Sleepless chaos  
no more fight I see you, I hear you  
I stand to fight

As mother recovers  
looking unsure  
and drained  
she feels connection

Not blissfully  
but respectfully  
a world where humans  
are brave enough to listen

An environment  
that builds  
trust in survival  
where money is not the hero

Another realm  
without excuses  
hate or cunning  
or self searching gain

Stay crazy for a minute longer  
imagine a sustainable future  
your heart full of hope  
and an openness to learn

Where governments and those in power  
make change  
with a sense of intelligence  
and childish wonder

Let's keep tripping  
Act now

– Karla Dickens, 2019

# WOMEN'S BUSINESS

Women's Business presents a collection of work by Dickens spanning 30 years of practice. The works explore the experience of being a woman, including themes of sexuality, birth, death, abuse, rape and racism.



B1	'The King & the Pirates', 2012 Oil and mixed media on canvas 133 x 163cm Collection of the artist	B11	'Black Madonna', 2010 Mixed medium on board 76 x 76cm Collection of the artist
B2	'Looking at you VI', 2017 Inkjet print, edition of 3 plus 2 artist's proofs 105 x 105cm Collection of the artist	B12	'Shine', 2009 Painting on mother of pearl 25 x 25cm each Collection of the artist
B3	'Our Mother, Our Land', 2007 Mixed media 96 x 126cm Collection of the artist	B13	'The Black Virgin', 2009 Mixed media on canvas 110 x 110cm Collection of the artist
B4	'In her Arms', 2007 Mixed media 96 x 126cm Collection of the artist	B14	'Black Mother I', 2009 Mixed media on canvas 40 x 40cm Collection of the artist
B5	'Blood & Bone', 2008 Mixed media 45 x 44.5cm Collection of the artist	B15	'Black Madonna VI', 2009 Mixed media on canvas 122 x 92cm Collection of the artist
B6	'Loving Memory II', 2007 Mixed media 80 x 42cm Collection of the artist	B16	'Mother of All', 2010 Ceramic and mixed media Dimensions variable Collection of the artist
B7	'Loving Memory', 2007 Mixed media 38 x 28cm Collection of the artist	B17	'Yours Forever', 2003 Mixed media 117 x 63cm Collection of the artist
B8	'Songs of Sorrow II', 2015 Mixed media 190 x 60 x 5cm Collection of the artist	B18	'Till Death Do Us Part', 2003 Mixed media 43 x 63cm Collection of the artist
B9	'Songs of Sorrow I', 2015 Mixed media 190 x 60 x 5cm Collection of the artist	B19	'Mother Mole', 2003 Mixed media 58 x 63cm Collection of the artist
B10	'Brand the Help', 2015 Mixed media 165 x 40 x 26cm Collection of the artist	B20	'Bag', 2003 Mixed media 31 x 21 x 8cm Collection of the artist

B21	'Slag', 2003 Mixed media 31 x 21 x 8cm Collection of the artist	B31	'White Aprons, Black Hands, Brown Babies, Red Blood', 2015 Mixed media 103 x 90 x 11cm Collection of the artist
B22	'Tramp', 2003 Mixed media 31 x 21 x 8cm Collection of the artist	B32	'Slavery', year Mixed media 43.7 x 122cm Collection of the artist
B23	'Precious Floosie', 2003 Mixed media 58 x 63cm Collection of the artist	B33	'Bound', 2015 Canvas straightjackets with mixed media, polyptych - 6 pieces Dimensions variable Powerhouse collection, purchased with funds from the MAAS Foundation 2017
B24	'Muff', 2002 Mixed media 25 x 20cm Collection of the artist	B34	'Clipped Wings II', 2015 Mixed media 200 x 60 x 50cm Collection of the artist
B25	'Snatch', 2002 Mixed media 25 x 20cm Collection of the artist	B35	'Warrior Woman XIV', 2017 Mixed media 30 x 18 x 10cm Collection of the artist
B26	'Spadger', 2002 Mixed media 25 x 20cm Collection of the artist	B36	'Warrior Woman XIII', 2017 Mixed media 30 x 18 x 10cm Collection of the artist
B27	'Exposed II', 2016 Inkjet print, edition of six 60 x 90cm Collection of the artist	B37	'Warrior Woman VI', 2017 Mixed media 30 x 18 x 10cm Collection of the artist
B28	'Exposed I', 2016 Inkjet print, edition of six 60 x 90cm Collection of the artist	B38	'Workhorse IV (no map of Tassie)', 2018 Mixed media 90 x 61 x 20cm Collection of the artist
B29	'Exposed III', 2016 Inkjet print, edition of six 60 x 90cm Collection of the artist	B39	'Workhorse III', 2018 Mixed media 130 x 58 x 28cm Collection of the artist
B30	'Wounded Warriors I', 2015 Mixed media Dimensions variable Collection of the artist		

B40	'Workhorse V', 2018 Mixed media 106 x 56 x 32cm Collection of the artist	B51	'Sleeping Beauty I' from series 'Black and Blue', 2016 Mixed media 120 x 120cm Collection of the artist
B41	'Bottom Feeder I', 2018 Acrylic and collage on board 60cm x 48cm QUT Art Collection Purchased 2018	B52	'Lawless Freedom', 2016 Mixed media 280 x 120 x 20cm Collection of the artist
B42	'Bottom Feeder II', 2018 Acrylic and collage on board 60cm x 48cm QUT Art Collection Purchased 2018	B53	'Urban Aboriginals (Home)', 2004 Acrylic and mixed media on canvas 41 x 31cm Collection of the artist
B43	'Bottom Feeder IV', 2018 Acrylic and collage on board 60cm x 48cm QUT Art Collection Purchased 2018	B54	'Resting with the Wild Things', 2013 Mixed media 110 x 110cm Collection of the artist
B44	'Bottom Feeder III', 2018 acrylic and collage on board 60cm x 48cm QUT Art Collection Purchased 2018	B55	'Dancing Hounds', 2013 Found fabric, pencil, synthetic polymer paint and adhesive on board 49 x 67cm Artbank Collection, purchased 2015 , as part of the NSW Arts and Disability Partnership, generously supported by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services and Arts NSW
B45	'Guardian I - V', 2013 Mixed media Dimensions variable Collection of the artist	B56	'Walking the Dog', 2013 Found fabric, pencil, synthetic polymer paint and adhesive on board 49 x 67cm Artbank Collection, purchased 2015 , as part of the NSW Arts and Disability Partnership, generously supported by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services and Arts NSW
B47	'Bush Cocky I, II & III', 2015 Mixed media 40 x 32 x 30cm Collection of the artist	B57	'Howling Comrade', 2013 Found fabric, pencil, synthetic polymer paint and adhesive on board 49 x 67cm Artbank Collection, purchased 2015 , as part of the NSW Arts and Disability Partnership, generously supported by the NSW Department of Family and Community Services and Arts NSW
B49	'Sleeping Beauty III' from series 'Black and Blue', 2016 Mixed media 120 x 120cm Collection of the artist		
B50	'Sleeping Beauty II' from series 'Black and Blue', 2016 Mixed media 120 x 120cm Collection of the artist		

B58	'Sediment', 2014 Mixed media 25 x 25cm each Collection of the artist	B67	'Bless you Bless Me', 2010 Mixed media 60 x 60cm Collection of the artist
B59	'Healing', 2008 Papier-mache 100 x 45cm Collection of the artist	B68	'Embraced', 1998 Acrylic and paper on cardboard 89 x 111cm Collection of the artist
B60	'Crying Song', 1997 Mixed media on canvas 60 x 50cm Collection of the artist	B69	'Sheila', 2002 Acrylic and mixed media on canvas 43 x 33cm each Collection of the artist
B61	'Home is Where the Rabbits Live', 2011 Mixed media on canvas 120 x 120cm Collection of the artist	B70	'Tiny Bundles Blue Birds and Tears', 2006 Mixed media 44 x 34cm Collection of the artist
B62	'Rabbit Country I & II', 2010 Mixed media on canvas 50 x 60cm Collection of the artist	B71	'The Hottest Thing', 1995 Acrylic and mixed media on canvas 30 x 50cm Collection of the artist
B63	'Life', 1997 Mixed media 106 x 90cm Collection of the artist	B72	'Out', 1994 Mixed media 42 x 76cm Collection of the artist
B64	'Stop', 1998 Mixed media 78 x 71cm Collection of the artist	B73	'Untitled', 1994 Mixed media 60 x 90cm Collection of the artist
B65	'Living', 1994 Mixed media 120 x 184cm Collection of the artist	B74	'Blood and Bones', 2008 116 x 65cm Collection of the artist
B66	'Big Heart', 2008 Mixed media Dimensions variable Collection of the artist	B75	'Now', 2000 Mixed media on canvas 97 x 53cm Collection of the artist

B76 'Fight Club', 2016,  
Steel and acrylic paint  
Polyptych (8 parts), dimensions  
variable  
Collection of the artist

B77 'Pure and Simple', 2015  
Mixed media  
36 x 27 x 27cm  
Collection of the artist

B78 'The Weight of Grief', 2014  
Mixed media  
45 x 58 x 40cm  
Collection of the artist

B79 'Protection?', 2014  
Mixed media  
104 x 80 x 51cm  
Collection of the artist

B80 'Never Ending', 2015  
Mixed media, polyptych (8 parts)  
Dimensions variable  
Collection of the artist

B81 'Black Trinity', 2010  
Ceramics and mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
Collection of the artist

B82 'Wounded Warriors II', 2015  
Mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
Collection of the artist

# BOUND

You asked for it / in front of God / for better or worse / in sickness and in health / 'till death do you part / hand-cuffs lock vows / obey

Not in front of the kids / reassure the unborn baby / pegging tiny singlets on the line / hands tied behind her back / dying desperate housewives / crippled by fear / pregnant

Home sweet home / black and blue poorhouses / with a high security guard / a decorated cell / common place anchors / dreams of great escapes / hung high by a worn heart-string

You're lucky you've got me / ugly whining bitch / wrapped in tight cruelty / a social dress malfunction / out of date and damaged / drowning in shame / be grateful

You need me / mummy's little helper visits daily / waiting on a chemical disaster / too lost to care / too numb to fight back / knots of effective confusion / disgraceful embarrassment

Impossible departure / in ropes with closed wallets / depending on a pittance / worthless money-makers / cutting off circulation / restraining the sunshine / imposing quiet punishment

Bondage isn't sexy / if an everyday tool / cover up the swelling / buckled up for pain / blood-stained devotion / promises of change / sorrys no more

Run

– Karla Dickens, 2015

# SLEEPING BEAUTY

A still night  
summer smells  
wet grass  
playful freedom  
disturbed

Hunters lurk  
behind cruel smiles  
deluded entitlement  
hateful desire  
wanting now

Sweet dress  
fresh pink nails  
clean squeezey hair  
a hint of rose oil  
dancing heart

Cruel takers take  
against protest  
hard screams  
wilful violence  
no permission

The breeze stirs  
moonlight sparkles  
birds stop  
petals close  
gentle rains land

Death grip  
penetrating her soul  
trails of blood  
imposing nightmares  
overpowered

Looking back  
enough  
movement no more  
deep silence falls  
sleep long

I leave you flowers  
love letters  
gardens of tears  
butterfly kisses  
tender hugs  
and yesterday's dreams

Beautiful then  
beautiful still

– Karla Dickens, 2016

# WARRIOR WOMEN

Turning the washing basket  
upside down, inside out  
looking for Reg Grundies  
resilient and well made

No frills  
no pastel flowers  
nor see-through lace  
no crutchless G-strings

Hardened undergarments  
big-girls' undies  
protective covers  
personal security guards

The world needs facing  
wearing raw pain, old pain  
shared and naked pain  
standing up, showing up

Being heard and being counted  
holding courage tight  
ready to love and be loved  
to be real, to be hurt, to be brave

Big-girl underwear  
big-girl knickers  
tough and ready  
until the time allows  
then the cheeks will shake

Run, dance, fart and sing  
as the nakedness is unleashed  
on the darkest of nights  
glowing under moons of glory

Warrior women play again  
butts blowing in the breeze  
gracefully relaxed  
in empowered freedom

– Karla Dickens, 2017

RETURN  
TO SENDER



Return to Sender presents Karla Dickens' collection of vintage postcards from the turn of the century depicting First Nations women, men and families. The images – individual portraits, ethnographic photographs and overtly racist caricatures – have been collaged to become an act of defiance and a call for resistance. By reworking these images, Dickens is ensuring this part of our shared history is acknowledged and widely seen.

The artist would like to personally acknowledge all First Nations people represented in the postcards, along with their ancestors and present families. The artist holds each individual with the utmost respect and hopes to hand back any power stolen when these historical images were first taken and distributed. May we all continue to reveal, engage and expose Australia's darkness.

D1 'Return to Sender 6', 2021  
inkjet print  
174 x 146cm  
Edition of 8 plus 2 artist proofs  
Collection of the artist

D2 'Return to Sender', 2021  
Mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
Collection of the artist

D3 'Return to Sender 1', 2021  
Digital print on banner  
260 x 191cm  
Collection of the artist

D4 'Return to Sender 5', 2021  
Digital print on banner  
260 x 205cm  
Collection of the artist

D5 'Return to Sender 2', 2021  
Digital print on banner  
260 x 191cm  
Collection of the artist

D6 'Return to Sender 3', 2021  
Inkjet print  
126 x 86.5cm  
Edition of 8 plus 2 artist proofs  
Collection of the artist

D7 'Return to Sender 4', 2021  
Inkjet print  
127.5 x 96cm  
Edition of 8 plus 2 artist proofs  
Collection of the artist

# RETURN TO SENDER

Return to sender — the weather is here, wish you were nice

Colonial Post Service delivers  
some have a numbered mailbox out front  
checking for letters, bills, or a postcard  
others live under a tarp, tin, or a tree  
the Queen's stamp postmarked

Wish you were here  
some wish they weren't  
just a quick note to say hi  
genocide greetings with catchy captions  
the mailer is now the jailer

Postman with history haunting mailbags  
carrying Australian snapshot souvenirs  
senseless messages from the Smiths to the Joneses  
when picture postcards don't need for a word  
conjuring loving hate mail

There'll be no cheques in the mail  
waiting on snail mail to deliver unseen sorries  
are they as deaf as the post — I listen  
I hear — metal chainmail from new poison pens  
now sent via email

Return to sender

— Karla Dickens, 2021

# COVER UP



Cover up presents works by Dickens which consider the continuing legacies of colonialism in Australia, from the ongoing displacement of First Nations People to the denial of Indigenous history in published books. As Australia approaches a referendum to establish an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, this body of work is an important reflection on Australia's past and consideration of the country's future.

'Colonial Bottom Feeders' (2018) comprises found objects and a boat hull featuring a Union Jack

made from rusty oil cans. The work considers the British Empire's ability to overturn countries and people, leaving them 'lost at sea'. Atop the boat sits a space-like cabin, as well as stars and planets painted on the hull by collaborator, Indigenous artist and astronomer, Leigh Arnold. These offer a method of navigation for people who may find themselves in uncertain waters.

E1	'Colonial Bottom Feeders', 2018 Fibreglass, rust, rope, bones and paint 159 x 350 x 118cm Commissioned for Contour 556: Canberra's Public Art Biennial, Australian Capital Territory, 2018. Campbelltown City Council Collection. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program by Karla Dickens, 2021	E9	'Soldiering On', 2022 Mixed media 125 x 125cm Collection of the artist
E2	'No Return', 2016 Mixed media 105 x 105cm Collection of the artist	E10	'As Is', 2019 Mixed media 120 x 120cm Collection of the artist
E3	'Bound with no Binding I', 2022 Mixed media 65 x 65cm Collection of the artist	E11	'Jack and Jill (A.K.A. Hung, Strung and Quartered)', 2016 Mixed media 240 x 15 x 10cm (oars), 87 x 175cm (flag) Collection of the artist
E4	'Keep Smiling IV', 2022 mixed media 65 x 65cm Collection of the artist		
E5	'Bound with no Binding II', 2022 Mixed media 65 x 65cm Collection of the artist		
E6	'Keep Smiling V', 2021 Mixed media 65 x 65cm Collection of the artist		
E7	'The Blues I', 2022 Mixed media 65 x 71cm Collection of the artist		
E8	'Keep off the Grass', 2022 Mixed media 65 x 65cm Collection of the artist		

# COVER UP

In days of libraries and books  
some searched for answers  
facts, knowledge and histories  
others for justification or fantasy  
books held up as gospel  
upright black-and-white truth-tellers  
write as crime-concealing magicians  
Covering-up

The words of writers giving birth to authority  
perpetrators of misleading concealment  
scandalous creatives masking one-sided evidence  
white-washed reality with educated vocabulary  
sealed with gold embossed tiles  
honourable biased a mass-formulated instruction  
prompting signals to deflect guilt  
illusory narratives sold as best-selling must-haves  
Covering-up

Pages fail to speak words of the many  
wrong-doings only by the 'others'  
the bad, the native and the unknowing  
strings of tightly-woven deceptions bound together  
painting pretty pictures for the faint-hearted  
keeping unethical acts of the real villains hidden  
avoiding silent criticism  
Breaching duty of trust of committing crime  
Covering-up

Drawn to a book by its cover  
foundation make-up screening ugly truths  
hard words missing under hardcovers  
passive non-telling and word twisting adventures  
render beware as you grip a dusty jacket  
be active in discovering lies between the lines  
not all pictures are worth a thousand words  
listen to the spoken words from those not found in books  
Re-write the cover-up

– Karla Dickens, 2022

# PROJECT TEAM

**Project Director**

Michael Dagostino

**Curator**

Karla Dickens and Emily Rolfe

**Assistant Curator**

Hannah James

**Loans and Registration**

Isabelle Morgan

**Design and Marketing**

Ashley Murray

**Media and Communications**

Gabrielle Wilson (The Press Society) and Ella Beer

**Production Lead**

Emily Rolfe

**Production Support**

Adam Porter

**Conservation**

Tegan Anthes

**Education and Creative Learning**

Julia Quinn, Samantha Relihan and Mariah Calman

**Gallery Technicians**

Stephanie Allington, Nicci Bedson, Corrigan Fairbairn, Emma Louise Hayman, David Hawkes, David Langosch, James Lesjak-Atton, Alex Latham, Willa Pratt, Sam Spragg, Athena Thebus

# C-A-C TEAM

**Director**

**Business and Engagement Manager**

**Head of Curatorial**

**Visitor Experience Coordinator**

**Curator, Contemporary Visual Art**

**Creative Producer**

**Creative Producer**

**Collections Officer**

**Assistant Curator, Contemporary Visual Art**

**Media and Communications Officer**

**Design and Communications Officer**

**Acting Creative Learning & Engagement Officer**

**Creative Producer – Public Art**

**Arts & Cultural Liaison Officer –**

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**

**Assistant Creative Producer**

**Assistant Education and Creative Learning Producer**

**Little Orange Studio Coordinator**

**Little Orange Studio Assistant**

**Arts Administrator**

**Senior Visitor Experience and Retail Officer**

**Venue Technician**

**Visitor Experience Officer**

**Visitor Experience Officer**

**Visitor Experience Officer**

Michael Dagostino

Mouna Zaylah

Adam Porter

Rebecca Anderson

Emily Rolfe

Anthea Doropoulos

Brittany Green

Isabelle Morgan

Hannah James

Ella Beer

Ashley Murray

Julia Quinn

Timothy George

Sarah Morris

Anne Cutajar

Samantha Relihan

Tina Wheately

David Capra

Julie Finch

Sharon McAndrew

Louise Snowdon

Phu Nguyen

Mellissa Grierson

Julie Finch

Laura Brunick



Located on Dharawal land, Campbelltown Arts Centre is proudly owned by the people of Campbelltown and is a cultural facility of Campbelltown City Council. Campbelltown Arts Centre is assisted by the NSW Government through Create NSW and also receives support from the Crown Resorts Foundation, the Packer Family Foundation and the Neilson Foundation. Image Credit: 'For Sale', 2022. Mixed media, 124 x 124 cm.