

Homage

Constructions by
Mark Dutney

*A Redland Art Gallery and
Woolloongabba Art Gallery
travelling exhibition*



*woolloongabba
art gallery*

*Redland Art Gallery is an initiative of Redland City Council,
dedicated to the late Eddie Santagiuliana*

Dedicated to the memory of the late
Arnold Watt, Billy Kooraubabba, Lindsay Roughsey and Melville Escott.

Images of the Mornington Island artists' artwork and of the Mornington Island artists have been reproduced with permission obtained from Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre.
Images of Mark Dutney and his artwork have been reproduced with the permission of Mark Dutney.



Mark Dutney

Homage

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Mark has created these works as homage to the Mornington Island artists' work and intends it to demonstrate a transformation rather than a plagiaristic reproduction of the work.

This catalogue highlights a selection of the works that form part of this Redland Art Gallery and Woolloongabba Art Gallery travelling exhibition.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are warned that this catalogue contains images of deceased persons.

Mark Dutney Artist Statement

I was privileged to see the first of the new art emanating from the Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre in 2005 and was in Brisbane at the Woolloongabba Art Gallery to see some of the canvases being delivered and unrolled. The work was astounding. It was bold and direct and I almost immediately reacted to its inherent three dimensional possibilities.

As homage to the potency of the images, I have unashamedly derived the essential elements of their visual impact (with no insight into their cultural significance) and created three dimensional reactions to the original Mornington Island artists' work. There is a residing Aboriginality in the constructions and my intent is both one of homage to the original Mornington Island artists' work and a desire for my visual reaction to demonstrate a transformation rather than a plagiaristic reproduction of the work.

Each construction is made of hundreds of parts which are individually painted, glued and screwed together and I derived a toymaker's joy in the building of each work. I sense an inherent meditative element in the original Mornington Island artists' work and the repetitive tasks involved in constructing my work were satisfyingly meditative as well. The inspirational source for this work, through the constructive process, has become the catalyst for, rather than the matrix of my new works.

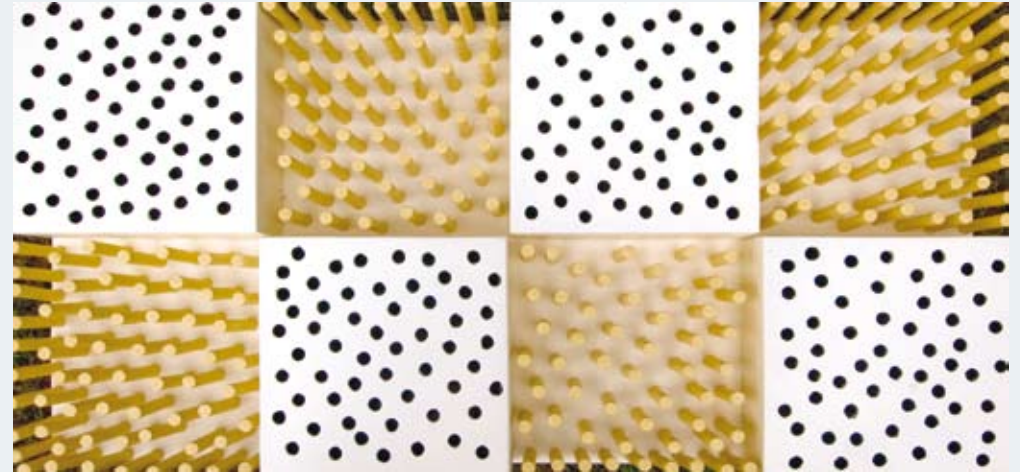
Actions Speak Louder than Words by Simon Turner

"I move, that today we honour the Indigenous peoples of this land, the oldest continuing cultures in human history" and with these words Kevin Rudd, the 26th Prime Minister of Australia, began to acknowledge the atrocities of our country's history. The subsequent apologies that followed were an admission of an unjust past. It was a speech for those whose lives were reshaped and ruined by government policy of the day; it was for their children and grandchildren. It was a speech for generations yet to be born and the restless spirits of our land.

Actions speak louder than words and arguably our first obligation will be to listen. Collectively as a country we have apologised though it will be the acts of individuals that may speak volumes. For decades state and federal governments have erected invisible fences in our society, effectively separating Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. We are a nation separated by paternal bureaucracy and regardless of intent or interest it continues to fail Indigenous Australians. There have been but a few who have managed to cut across these boundaries and truly shared a sense of country. They, the brave who have dared to communicate and maintain dialogue, belong to an array of industries from the sciences to the arts. The anthropologists have gathered and recorded, the doctors have attempted to treat and heal, but it is in the fields of sport and the arts that true equality and cross cultural appreciation has existed and flourished.

The anthropologist W.E.H Stanner predicted this kind of social change. In the foreword to one of his major works *White mans got no dreaming*, Stanner alludes to the need by mainstream Australia to develop a greater awareness of Indigenous Australia. He suggests that it will be 'artists' who will begin to inform us and hence begin to close our cultural divide.

To become aware of the 'other', we must first possess the ability to recognise difference as a unique and positive trait of human culture. It was Levina, a Jewish philosopher; who, trapped behind a barbed wire fence of a World War II German prison camp, came to develop this theory. During afternoon exercise periods Levina began to notice that a dog would visit the prison camp. The dog would appear



Top: Mark Dutney, *Billy Kooraubabba's Barramundi Markings Response* 2006, synthetic polymer paint, plywood, MDF and wooden dowel on board. Courtesy of the artist.

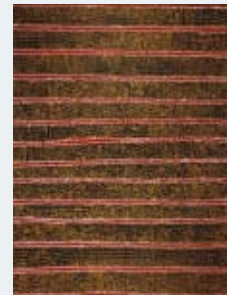
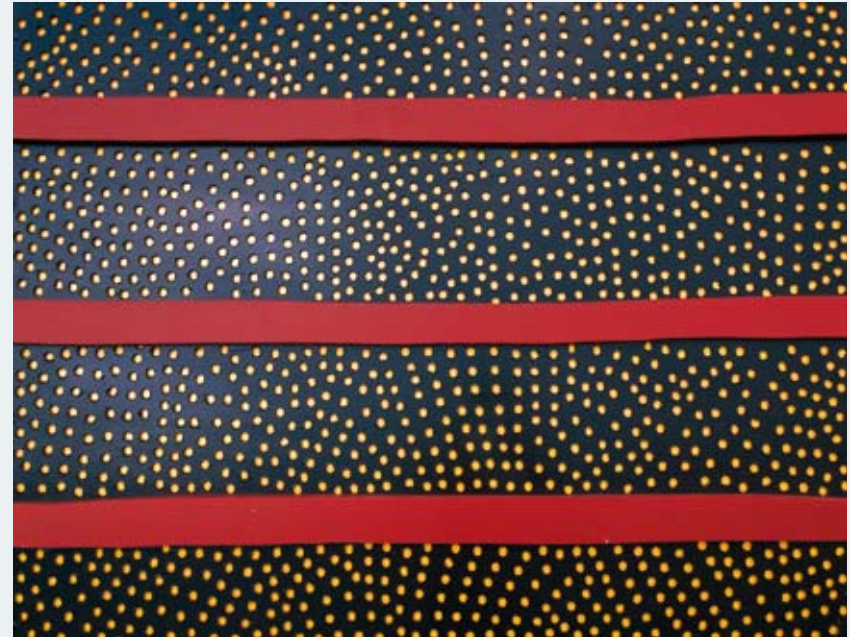
Bottom: Billy Kooraubabba, *Barramundi Markings (detail)* 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre.

pleased to see Levina, often wagging his tail. Levina was puzzled by these displays of joy and wondered why the dog was so happy to see him. These displays lay in stark contrast to the pain and suffering inflicted by a prison camp. After many encounters with the animal, Levina deduced that the dog was unable to either know or experience his emotions, whilst he could not begin to comprehend why the dog displayed such joy in seeing him. Thus he developed the theory of the 'other', that one's life experience is unique and therefore cannot be understood by those who have not lived or been subjected to another's experience of life.

Levina's theory of the 'other' seems more relevant than ever to our country's future. As our Prime Minister apologises and recognises the atrocities committed towards Indigenous Australians by successive colonial and Australian governments, we may begin to realise that these policies regardless of their humanitarian intentions were fundamentally destructive. As a nation of people never subjected to these laws, we cannot nor may we ever really begin to understand the pain and suffering they have caused. Yes, we can be sorry but no, we will never feel the pain. We have displaced the Aborigine, literally from his country, economy, culture and history.

Our eccentric perspectives have also corrupted Australian art history with imported aesthetics and provincial concepts. Early modernist movements like the Aranda School of Watercolour have been displaced in Australian art history by the Sunday afternoon painters of Heidelberg. Aranda watercolours are bright and translucent capturing the brilliant light of the desert. They are landscapes painted intuitively and accurately. As early 20th century paintings they adhere to all the fundamental principles of impressionism, yet we continue to attribute this canon of art practice to the stale, still, crusted, oil paintings of colonial Victoria. The Aranda tradition of watercolour painting still continues today and was only superseded as a medium by the introduction of acrylic paints in the early 1970's.

What has largely become recognised as the Australian Indigenous art movement that was initiated by men in the central desert community of Papunya, may prove in time to be our country's greatest contribution to international art. For over three generations Indigenous artists, primarily painters have quietly been developing sophisticated new visual dialogues that concern themselves with the representation of the concept of 'country'. The concept of country can be best understood as a triangular relationship between, the artist, the myth of the land and the physical



Top: Mark Dutney, *Reggie Robertson's Lightning Headband Response* 2006, synthetic polymer paint, masonite and MDF on board. Courtesy of the artist.

Bottom: Reggie Robertson, *Lightning Headband* (detail) 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre.

country itself. These relationships are completely co-dependent. Without the artist, the country and story would not be told. Without the country, the artist or myth would have nowhere to exist and without the myth there is no translation for the artist of the country.

35 years on, since old men in Papunya began to paint images based on ceremonial knowledge, the contemporary Australian Indigenous art movement spans our entire continent and the third generation of painters are beginning to emerge. In 2005, the community of Mornington Island realised a renaissance in their art practice. With the re-establishment of the Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre, Lardil and Gungalida men rejuvenated the act of painting and revived the promotion of their cultural symbology. Designs, senior men had worn on their bodies for decades as dancers, were transferred in acrylic paint onto canvas. The art centre also provided a space for the creation of a contemporary Kaiadilt art movement lead by their matriarch Sally Gabori. The Bentinck Project as it was called has become recognised as a progressive and significant chapter in Australian Indigenous art history. When Mark Dutney, a doctor of medicine, keen art goer and artist, visited the exhibition *Jidmaa Thawarthu* at Woolloongabba Art Gallery in 2005, he, like many of the audience, were drawn to the aesthetics of this work.

This exhibition created an opportunity for Dutney to engage with the visual languages of Mornington Island, effectively initiating a dialogue within the common space of a gallery. As an artist, Dutney looked, heard and remembered rather than turning a blind eye, failing to hear or choosing to forget. During the following years, Mark's interest in the Mornington Island artists continued to grow. He spent time with visiting artists, becoming a student again and in turn developed a deep and healthy respect. The influence of his new relationships with the 'old men' inevitably moved Dutney to a point where he was compelled to respond to his friends' works. His pieces are echos that pay homage to what he has seen, heard, learned and remembered.

Mark's art practice is to respond to his environment. Whether it be an American landscape or a family member's sand shoe, his recent responses to the work of the Mornington Island artists is neither an act of plagiarism nor envy. Rather they are tributes created with an air of respect and a direct need by this artist to honour the imagery, heritage and most importantly the people who created it. The revisionist Henry Reynolds once addressed a class of architecture students by posing the



Top: Mark Dutney, *Gordon Watt's Leg Markings Response* 2006, synthetic polymer paint, masonite, MDF and wooden dowel on board. Courtesy of the artist.

Bottom: Gordon Watt, *Leg Markings* (detail) 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre.

question “what would an Indigenous monument look like?” Artists Melville Escott, Billy Kooraubabba, Arnold Watt and Lindsay Roughsey passed away during 2007. Dutney’s responses to these artists’ paintings take on the additional function as a memorial and perhaps an answer to Reynolds’ question.

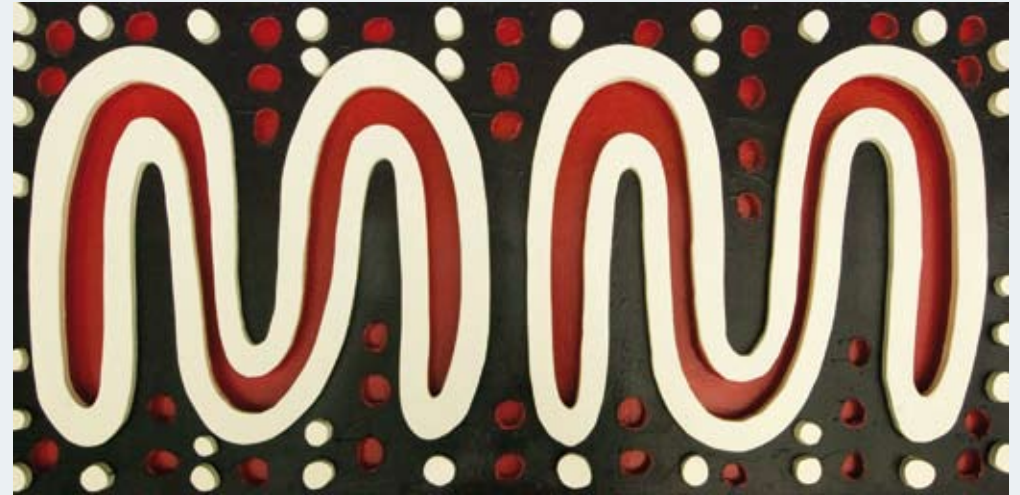
Dutney’s tributes are a physical act of recognising an Indigenous history and aesthetics whilst observing a set of protocols defined by Indigenous Australians. His choice of medium differs greatly from the original works that inspired him. By choosing to respond in a three dimensional manner, the artist emphasises the impact of these designs. By enlarging a small section of the paintings, Dutney again observes protocol in regard to the reproduction of Indigenous imagery. They invoke the essence of the Cherbourg ‘shadow box’, a sculptural relief made from an assemblage of artefacts produced in the 1960’s at the mission. The ‘shadow box’ was an attempt by artists like the late Robin O’Chin to create an economy and bring his culture into the lounge rooms of Australians. The boomerangs, spears and woomeras that made up these pieces were highly decorated and provided shelving for the placement of personal effects and valuables.

What Dutney attempts to create in these works are not merely reconstructions of some ‘other’, they are recognition of a vibrant visual culture. Dutney’s responses are constructions for our future; they are signal buoys afloat in the sea of change that are moving in the undercurrents and subcultures of Australia and slowly into our mainstream. Dutney’s works hang like tabernacles on the gallery walls. His efforts and labour in building these relief works lay testament to his dedication to show ‘others’ what inspires him. In doing this he celebrates rather than discriminates, remembers rather than forgets, and recognises what is uniquely Australian.

Dutney therefore attempts through the staging of this exhibition to road sign a direction towards reconciliation. He is an example of the humble position we collectively need to assume, regardless of our standing in society or profession. We as Australians need to find a new position, possibly cross-legged at the feet of Indigenous Australia, listening rather than assuming, sharing rather than taking and learning rather than preaching. At the end of our day, actions, our actions will always speak louder than words.

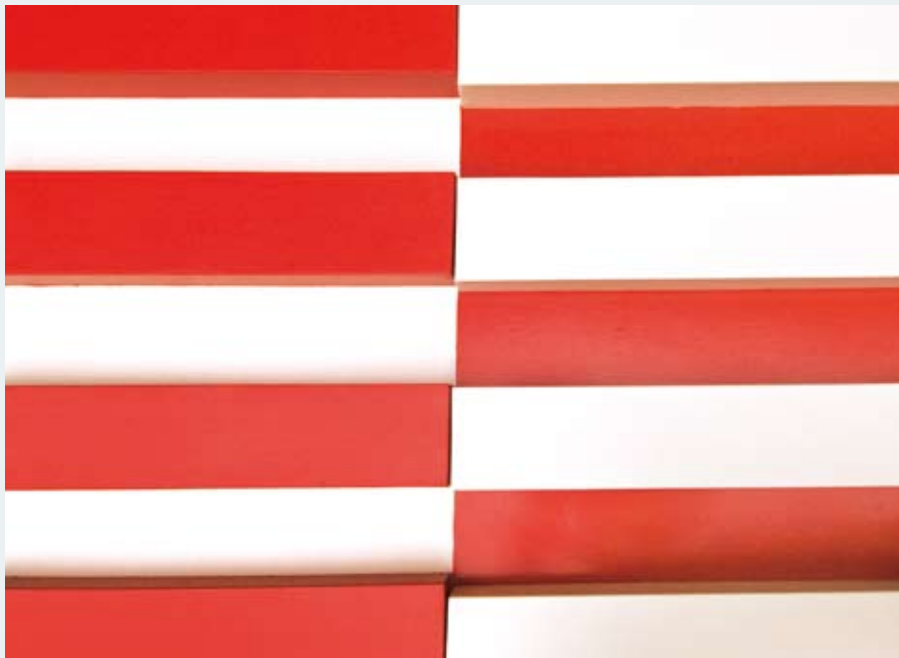
Simon Turner

Director, Woolloongabba Art Gallery



Top: Mark Dutney, *Jonathan Toby's Chest Painting Response* 2007, synthetic polymer paint, masonite and MDF on board. Courtesy of the artist.

Bottom: Jonathon Toby, *Chest Painting* (detail) 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre.



Top left: Mark Dutney, *Joseph Watt's Dibirdi Man Response* 2006, synthetic polymer paint and MDF on board. Courtesy of the artist.



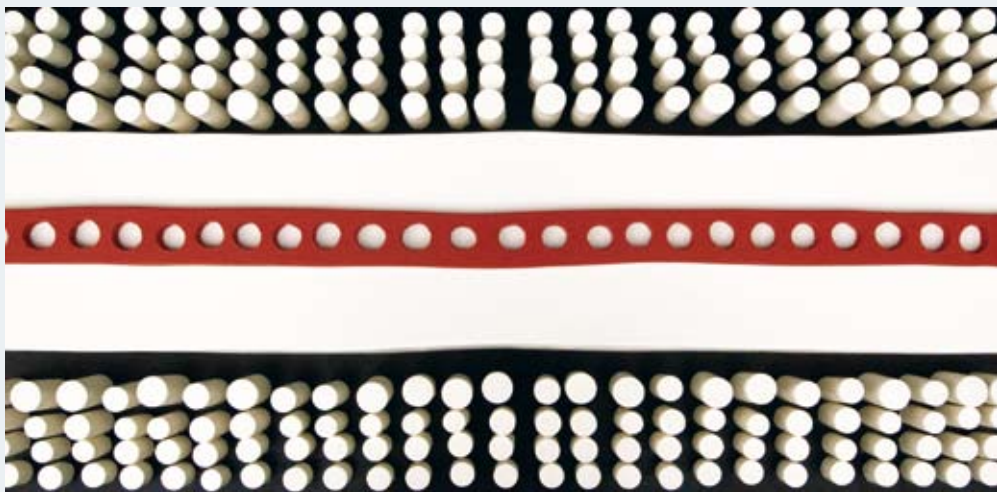
Bottom left: Joseph Watt, *Dibirdi Man* (detail) 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre.



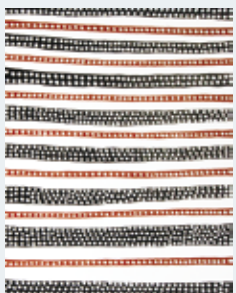
Top right: Mark Dutney, *Lex Toby's Bushfire Response (Dawn)* 2006, synthetic polymer paint and MDF on board. Courtesy of the artist.



Bottom right: Lex Toby, *Bushfire* (detail) 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre.



Top left: Mark Dutney, *Wayne William's Birri Headband Response* 2006, synthetic polymer paint, plywood and MDF on board. Courtesy of the artist.



Bottom left: Wayne Williams, *Birri Headband* (detail) 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre.



Middle: Mark Dutney, *Melville Escott's Leg and Arm Design Response* 2006, synthetic polymer paint, plywood and MDF on board. Courtesy of the artist.

Far right: Melville Escott, *Leg and Arm Design* (detail) 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre. Queensland Art Gallery Collection.

Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre 2005 – 2008

Since the first Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre (MIAAC) group exhibition at Woolloongabba Art Gallery in June 2005, our artists have continued to grow in confidence and produce work that has gained widespread attention from the fine art market across Australia and overseas.

Four months after this exhibition, we exhibited at Grantpirrie Gallery (Sydney) and the exhibition received strong interest and sales, further enhancing our reputation as a producer of fresh and exciting artwork.

A couple of days after this exhibition, Sally Gabori's first solo show at Woolloongabba Art Gallery opened, which was about to catapult her and MIAAC to the forefront of Queensland Indigenous art production and sales.

Sally had been quietly painting her stories and country, building up a substantial body of work which her solo show was selected from. To say this exhibition was a sell out is an understatement. It seemed that the whole of Queensland had fallen in love with her artwork and the story of how she had started painting and where it was taking her.

At the same time Emily Evans, one of our younger artists, was also receiving much industry acclaim and acknowledgement. In 2005 she became the first artist from MIAAC and in fact, from Mornington Island, to be preselected to the *Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Award*.

This led to both Sally and Emily being invited to take part in the *Xstrata Coal Emerging Indigenous Artists Award* at the Queensland Art Gallery in April 2006. For an Arts Centre of our size, this was an amazing achievement for an award that invited only 10 artists Australia wide to take part.

Also in April 2006 we exhibited the first Bentinck Island artists group show at Woolloongabba Art Gallery to introduce Sally's sisters and nieces who had followed her lead and taken up painting.



Top: Mark Dutney, *Renee Wilson's Thambe Leg Markings Response* 2007, synthetic polymer paint, plywood and MDF on board. Courtesy of the artist.

Bottom: Renee Wilson, *Thambe Leg Markings* (detail) 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre.

This exhibition, more than anything else, has been responsible for MIAAC's rapid rise to becoming a major player in Australia's Indigenous fine art market. Now there wasn't just one Kayardild artist, there were seven, and the work they were producing was just stunning.

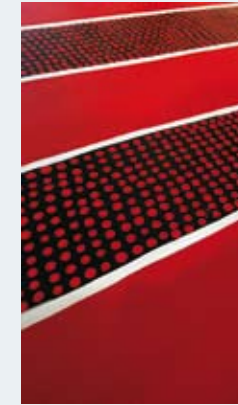
Sally Gabori had been responsible for starting a completely fresh and exciting painting movement where none had existed before. At the same time as this rapid growth and demand for the Kayardild ladies artwork, the men's group who had started everything with their body paintings, suffered the loss of four of the senior artists in the passing of Arnold Watt, Billy Kooraubabba, Lindsay Roughsey and Melville Escott.

This has been an enormous loss for MIAAC and the men's group exists only for a couple of artists. However a number of emerging artists are coming through the group; Thelma Burke, another 80 year old who has taken up painting stories from the mission days and her childhood in a lovely figurative style, has already had her first solo exhibition at Alcaston Gallery in Melbourne; Karen Chong who paints in a landscape style unlike anything MIAAC has produced before; Beverley Escott who has continued the body paintings and totem designs of the men; Annake Roughsey with fine detail work and Joyanne Williams, another showing great promise with her paintings of the scales of the Barramundi.

Of the men from the original men's group only Reggie Robertson still paints with us on a regular basis so it is pleasing to see the upcoming exhibition. This will showcase the profound effect our first artworks had on another artist; Mark Dutney, and his three dimensional responses to each of the artists first exhibition pieces. It will once again allow the public to learn about how we started our resurgence, and pay homage to the four senior artists we have lost, who have taken so much knowledge with them that will live on in their artwork.

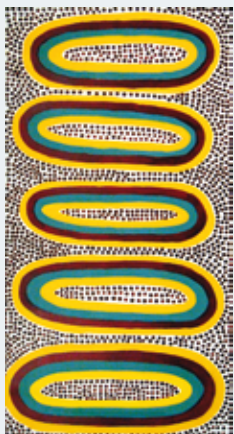
Brett Evans

Art Centre Coordinator, Mornington Island



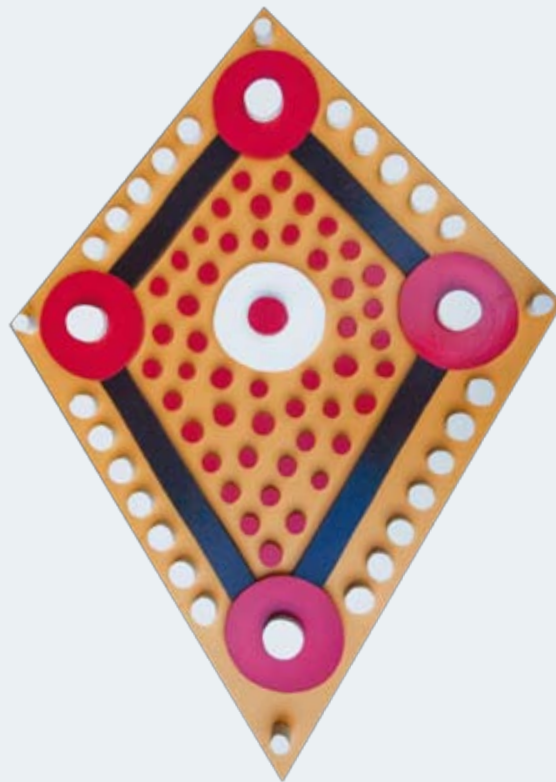
Left: Mark Dutney, *Bradley Wilson's Thambe Body Stripes Response* 2007, synthetic polymer paint, masonite, plywood and MDF on board. Courtesy of the artist.

Right: Bradley Wilson, *Thambe Body Stripes (detail)* 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre.



Top: Mark Dutney, *Jolene Roughsey's Leg Marking Response* 2007, synthetic polymer paint, masonite and MDF on board. Courtesy of the artist.

Bottom: Jolene Roughsey, *Leg Marking* (detail) 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre.



Middle: Mark Dutney, *Reggie Robertson's Headband Design Response* 2007, synthetic polymer paint, wooden dowel and MDF on board. Courtesy of the artist.

Right: Reggie Robertson, *Headband* (detail) 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre. The Rob Friend Collection.



Mornington Island Artists



From top left: The late Billy Kooraubabba, Bradley Wilson, Darryl Williams, Emily Evans, John Williams, Jolene Roughsey, Jonathon Toby, Joseph Watt, the late Melville Escott, Lance Gavenor, Lex Toby, the late Lindsay Roughsey, Reggie Robertson, Sally Gabori, Wayne Williams.

Mark Dutney Curriculum Vitae

Individual Exhibitions

- 1990 Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery *Kite Flying*
- 1991 Childers Regional Art Gallery *Residual Kites*
- 1993 Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery *Kite Perseveration*
- 1993 Spring Hill Baths *Kites and Arrows and Other Subconscious Icons*
- 1994 Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery *A Kites Eye View of Bourbong Street*
- 1996 Noosa Regional Gallery *The Doctor is In, The Doctor is Out*
- 1997 Bundaberg Arts Centre *An American Holiday*
- 1998 Bundaberg Arts Centre, The Vault Contemporary Art Space *Desk Blotters*
- 2000 Bundaberg Arts Centre *Self Portrait in Viagra Blue*
- 2003 Bundaberg Arts Centre *Archetypal Kites*
- 2004 Doggett Street Studio, Brisbane *Archetypal Kites – Metro Version*
- 2004 Bundaberg Arts Centre *Family and Friends – in Andy's Footsteps + Prince Edward Island – Spring to Fall 2001*
- 2004 Metro Arts, Brisbane *Family and Friends – in Andy's Footsteps*
- 2004 Doggett Street Studio, Brisbane *Prince Edward Island – Spring to Fall 2001*
- 2006 Doggett Street Studio, Brisbane *3 Obversions*

Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1991 Studio 82 Takalvan Street, Bundaberg *A Collaboration of Opposites*
- 1992 Bundaberg Regional Art Gallery *Isolation and Separation*
- 1993 Bellas Gallery, Brisbane *Isolation and Separation*
- 1993 Noosa Regional Gallery *Bretons Beach*
- 1994 Fireworks Gallery, Brisbane *Political Boats*
- 1995 Brisbane Flying Arts Finalist Exhibition *Sense of Self*
- 1996 Fireworks Gallery, Brisbane *Group Show*
- 1996 Bundaberg Arts Centre *Make an Appointment to See Me Again Please*
- 1997 Bundaberg Arts Centre *Expedition*
- 1998 Bundaberg Arts Centre *City and Surrounds*
- 1999 Bundaberg Arts Centre *Portraits of Ourselves*
- 1999 Childers Regional Gallery *Postcards Exhibition*
- 1999 Bundaberg Arts Centre *A Bouquet from the Art Society*
- 1999 Bundaberg Arts Centre *A Fifty Year History of the Bundaberg Art Society*
- 2000 Fireworks Gallery, Brisbane *Pro-Creation Stories*
- 2002 Metro Arts, Brisbane *A4 Refugee Project*
- 2003/04 Powerhouse, Brisbane *Access Arts Champagne Lid/Box Exhibition*
- 2006 Doggett Street Studio, Brisbane *30 x 30 Christmas Show*



Front cover: Mark Dutney, *Lindsay Roughsey Moon and Rainbow Response* 2007, synthetic polymer paint, dowel and MDF on board. Courtesy of the artist.

Back cover: Lindsay Roughsey, *Moon and Rainbow Series – Head Dress* 2005, synthetic polymer paint on canvas. Courtesy of Mornington Island Arts and Craft Centre. Woolloongabba Art Gallery Collection.

Homage

Constructions by Mark Dutney

Sunday 13 July – Sunday 17 August 2008

Redland Art Gallery, Cleveland
Gallery 1

The exhibition will tour regionally in
2009 and 2010.

Redland Art Gallery, Cleveland

Cnr Middle and Bloomfield Streets,
Cleveland Q 4163

Monday to Friday 9am – 4pm

Sunday 9am – 2pm

Admission free

Tel: (07) 3829 8899 or
gallery@redland.qld.gov.au
www.redland.qld.gov.au

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