

Artist Statements

Graham Badari – *Kardabaibai (Darter) catching Manmakkawarri (Catfish) at the Kulabbarl (Billabong), Kurraguyangguyang (Jacana) on Mandem (Lily pads) 2018. Ochre on Arches paper. 41 x 61 cm (57 x 77 cm framed)*

There is a Catfish Dreaming here in Kunbarllanjja (Gunbalanya). In the old days people used to go and hit the Catfish Dreaming rock with a leafy branch and ask the fish to go down to that big billabong, so people could get lots of catfish with their fish nets and fishing spears. The rock is still here, on the south side of town near the single mens' houses. Young and old used to go down to that billabong. But people don't do the increase ritual today. And today we don't swim or stand in the water because there's lots of crocodiles everywhere even out on the floodplains or even over on the other side in the creeks and swamps. We have other Dreamings here, the Leech Dreaming and Turtle Dreaming at the bottom of Nimbabbirr hill and a Long Tom Dreaming at the bottom of Injalak hill. There's also a Magpie Goose Dreaming on top of Arrkuluk hill. And the main one here is a Dog Dreaming, Adjumarllarl.

Nahni Manmakkawarri Djang kahdjangdi kondah kore Kunbarllanjja (Gunbalanya). Bu korroko nawu daborrabolk birridjareni nawu djenj manmakkawarri wanjh birrirey kore kahwardeyo makka wanjh manmakkawarri djenj djang, kore Walem Arrkkuluk kanjdji kore yawurrinj singlemen house kahrurrkdi kaluk Koyek kumekke. Birrirey nawu daborrabolk birriwodbuni kunworr dja birridjawani birriyimi ngarridjare djenj kakolung kore kubokimuk manlabbarl. Wanjh birrikolungi walabi dorreng dja djalakkiradj birridanjbuni birrimangi. Dja bolkkime larrk minj nangale kaburrbun kadjangwe nawu manmakkawarri djang. Dja bolkkime nawern nawu kinga wernmerrinj kore manlabbarlkimuk dja kore kabbal dja mankabohkabo minj nangale kadjuhme. Korroko birridjuhmi ngarridjumi wurdwurd dja morlehmorlenj dorreng birrimangi dja birridanjbuni djalakkiradj dja bolkkime larrk.

Exhibited courtesy of Injalak Arts and Everywhen Artspace.

Graham Badari – *Mibbarr (White Bellied Sea Eagle) 2020. Ochre and acrylic on Arches paper. 76 x 51 cm (96 x 76 cm framed)*

Mibbarr is a bird, it's brown and has a white breast. He lives in coastal areas where he catches fish from the sea. He also lives in rivers where there is rainforest. Djurddjurd is the same size like hawks, not like eagles, they are bigger and eat all the fish.

Nawu Djurddjurd nakka mayhmayh nawu nungan kani kare kore kurrula. Kore manbu mankabo Kalarabirridjowkkeng kare kaddum dja kakolung kanjdji karrinan nawern nawu djurddjurd kabarndi kore kundulk kore kungarre kukabo mangkuwil dihirrid. Nawu djurddjurd kangun djenj yiman marram namaddorl mibbarr. Djurddjurd muddjuyh brown dja berrekalkbele white bellied. Djurddjurd kuyahwurd yiman marram minj namaddorl dja mibbarr nakka benekukkimuk.dja djenj kabirridjarrkngun. Dja mayh nawu karrown nud kakukyo Djurddjurd nungan kadjalni kore kurrula dja kore mankabo mangkuwil manngarrekimuk.

Exhibited courtesy of Injalak Arts and Everywhen Artspace.

Alexis Beckett – *Forage* 2018. Banana leaf bowls, black ink drawings, acrylic paint, MDF board. 106 cm diameter, 12 cm high.

Phytoplankton are critical to the marine food web, being the primary producers of food for the oceanic food web, from zooplankton to fish and shellfish to whales.

*Scientists estimate that at least 50% of oxygen in our atmosphere has been produced by phytoplankton.**

These tiniest of living organisms provide essential nourishment for both birds and humans.

As climate change affects wind force and patterns, water currents and temperatures the consequences for plankton as they drift in the oceans is unknown.

This artwork references a view through a microscope of a vital food source for both birds and humans that inevitably change with the climate.

* Antarctic Climate & Ecosystems Cooperative Research Centre (2015)

The Bowerbird Collective, Mervyn Street, Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman, David Stewart *et al.* – *Songs of Disappearance* 2021. Animation. 3 minutes 32 seconds.

Senior Gooniyandi artist Mervyn Street from Mangkaja Arts in Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia, produced more than 100 individual paintings for this animation by Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman, which beautifully depicts some of our most iconic threatened species in their natural habitat (A note for all the birdwatchers out there: we know that the calls do not match the birds on screen, but with 53 species each appearing for only several seconds, this would have required a project budget to rival Pixar!)

The animation was made to accompany the release of 'Songs of Disappearance', an ARIA chart-topping recording of pure birdsong featuring 53 of our most threatened species. The title track of the album 'Songs of Disappearance' celebrates the incredible diversity of the Australian soundscape, and highlights what we stand to lose without taking action. Be immersed in a chorus of iconic cockatoos, the buzzing of bowerbirds, a bizarre symphony of seabirds, and the haunting call of one of the last remaining night parrots.

A collaboration between the acclaimed nature recordist David Stewart, Nature Sound, the Bowerbird Collective, BirdLife Australia, Charles Darwin University and Mervyn Street of Mangkaja Arts, this project, released alongside the 2020 Action Plan for Australian Birds, shows that Australians will not allow these precious avian voices to be silenced.

Animation Credits:

Artwork – Mervyn Street, Mangkaja Arts <http://www.mangkaja.com>

Direction, Animation, Editing – Bernadette Trench-Thiedeman <https://www.bernadettett.com>

Concept – The Bowerbird Collective

Production Assistant – Natalie Davey

Nature Recordings – David Stewart Nature Sound <https://www.naturesound.com.au>

'Songs of Disappearance' Arrangement – Simone Slattery

Album Production, Editing, PR – Anthony Albrecht

Album Design & Concept – The Bowerbird Collective <https://www.bowerbirdcollective.org>

Scientific Advisors – Prof. Stephen Garnett & Sean Dooley <https://birdlife.org.au>

Special Thanks – Liam Kennedy, Maggie Slattery, Paul Sullivan, Sean Dooley, Samantha Winnicki, Natalie Davey, Stephen Green, Mark Bolton, Eric Pilkington.

Supported by the Government of Western Australia

The 'Songs of Disappearance' CD can be purchased from The Bowerbird Collective's website <https://www.bowerbirdcollective.org>

Beth Croce – *Imperfect Repair* 2023. Porcelain and surgical suture. 20 x 15 x 12 cm

The most protective and nurturing of structures, the egg is a symbol of all that is deceptively fragile. It embodies the narrow margin between security and disaster in the natural world. We use human ingenuity to attempt to repair and restore degraded ecosystems but our attempts are clumsy, imperfect, and leave us wishing we'd worked harder to shield them from the start.

Kate Gorrington-Smith – *Eastern Curlew, Western Port Icon: I am my habitat* 2021. Linocut on eco-printed paper, unique state. 300 x 250 cm

How do you make a bird as tiny and well camouflaged as a migratory shorebird visible? These creatures, whose annual migrations span the globe, live modestly on the fringes of our shores, their lives governed by the grand planetary forces of tide and season. Their lives are invisible to us. We overlook their wetland habitat, imagining it empty and without value. We have no love of mudflats, and easily miss these small birds that scurry after the tide, dwarfed by the noisier and more familiar seagulls, pelicans and ibis.

I created this Eastern Curlew linocut to be on a human scale so that we can look it in the eye and consider it an equal being, with equal needs and an equal right to call Western Port its home. I first eco-printed the paper using locally sourced plants and seaweeds to ground the work within the local environment. Eastern Curlews are our largest and also most endangered migratory shorebird. A significant number of its global population spend the summer months on the shores of Western Port. It is a privilege that they do. Our shorebirds can't speak for themselves; we need to speak for them. #savewesternport

Heather Hesterman – *RISING* 2017. Engraved timber, acrylic paint, wire Dimensions variable, approx. 3.5m x 2.5m x 2m

"Warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and since the 1950's, many of the observed changes are unprecedented over decades to millennia. The atmosphere and oceans have warmed, the amounts of snow and ice have diminished, and sea level has risen." IPCC, 2014: Climate Change 2014: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fifth Report, Geneva, Switzerland, Summary for Policymakers, 1.1.p.2

Our landscape is restless and a storm is coming.

In 1940 Walter Benjamin prophetically wrote about the 'angel of history' who faces the past while wreckage upon wreckage is thrown at his feet. History is a pile of debris that we see as a series of events but the angel sees it as one single catastrophe. The angel would like to stop to fix or make whole what has been smashed. However a storm is blowing from paradise blowing him backwards into the future. This storm is called Progress.¹

The image of the angel watching our historic debris pile high unable to act as he is being propelled backwards has a strong poetic and visual resonance. The hindsight of history only serves if you do not repeat what has gone before, however the IPCC has analysed the past, like the angel, and has gazed into our future issuing predictions and projections. Our debris is reaching to the heavens and this storm is an extreme weather event with no signs of abating.

RISING utilises data from the National Tide Centre and the IPCC 5th report 2014, to construct mean sea levels documenting current and future sea levels. Projected rises of CO₂ levels in the atmosphere with concentrations from 700-1500 parts per million is predicted for 2100, currently 420.14 parts per million as of 29 Jan 2023. The timber markers are a tangible and visual cue showing increases of mean sea levels if green house gases continue to be released into the atmosphere unabated. Rising sea levels are impacting coastal and tidal zones that are essential for shorebird habitats.

Acknowledging science data and creating a visual form allows each marker to act as a visual prompt, this global phenomenon is visible at a human scale. The markers symbolise ocean acidification, warming, loss of species and habitat offering a simple visual warning.

1. Benjamin, Walter. 1969. *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York) Schocken Books cited in Haynes, Deborah J. 1997. *The Vocation Of The Artist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.224.

Eugenia Lim – *Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii (be relentless)* 2021. Digital Collage, edition of 10. 42 x 59.4 cm

Every northern spring–autumn, tens of thousands of Gambel’s White-crowned Sparrow (*Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii*) migrate 4,000 kilometres between Alaska and California. They fly by night and feed by day, going without sleep for up to seven days at a time. Unlike sparrows, sleeplessness spells disaster for humans. Both the Chernobyl nuclear meltdown and the US space shuttle Challenger implosion are linked to fatal human error and eroded sleep. Still, the US military has studied the white-crowned sparrow, seeking to one day engineer the sleepless soldier.

The sparrow (and the contemporary condition of being always-on and never-off — like ‘sleep mode’ on a digital device) is an emblem for this work. While Silicon Valley rules the world through the extraction and colonisation of human and planetary resources, this work honours the labour of precarious and anonymous workers on which our globalised world is built.

Zonotrichia leucophrys gambelii (be relentless) is a digital collage that stems from Lim’s 2021 body of work, *24/7*, a suite of sculptural works that negotiate the financialisation of time and the over-extraction of planetary resources. Sleep is where rest and repair happens — but what if it is interrupted, or potentially obliterated? From the migratory sleeplessness of Gambel’s White-crowned Sparrow to the world ecology of the Amazon, *24/7* explores sleep as the final frontier of late capitalism.

Lucille Martin – *Conference 2007/23*. Hand and digital embroidered photographic and drawn imagery on textile, thread work. 150 x 140 cm

Conference is a digitised and hand-embroidered thread and textile work illustrating 13 species of endangered, threatened and extinct Australian birds. The work, one in a series of eight textile pieces created for Martin's solo exhibition, *Naturally Selected*, in 2007, has been reworked for *BIRD*.

The endangered and threatened lists consist of land, sea and forest dwelling birds including the King Island Scrubtit, Golden Shouldered Parrot, Red Goshawk, Regent Honeyeater, Western Bristlebird, Plains Wanderer, Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle, Swift Parrot, Star Finch, Helmeted Honeyeater, Alligator Rivers Yellow Chat, Rainbow Bee-Eater and Mallee Emu-Wren.

Martin worked with a commercial embroidery company to digitise her drawings and photographic images, rendering them in shades of grey, devoid of their magnificent colour, and arranging them in two facing rows, as if in conversation about the looming threat of their potential extinction.

Each bird sewn into the monotone surface is laid bare of its sustaining habitat, halted in motion and voice. The depiction of each species is at once dramatic and lifeless, leaving the viewer to imagine and reflect on these extraordinary creatures that face their demise.

Martin finally hand threads each bird with strands of coloured thread, depicting both the bird's unique and brilliantly coloured feathers sustained, and then at once falling away. What will it take for humanity to stop the plundering of habitat and natural resources resulting in the demise of these extraordinary creature?

The lines of hanging threads collectively reference consumer bar codes, responding to climate challenges, global consumerism and overconsumption at the expense of nature. Martin's beautifully created piece resonates in its appeal and conceptual approach, highlighting and fusing traditional craft practices of sewing and monogramming with modern technology and contemporary language, taking the viewer on an intimate and poetic journey of engagement.

Jenny McCracken – *The Treachery of Collections: Regent Honey Eater – critically endangered 2023*. Acrylic polymer on prepared wooden surface. 34 x 23 cm

Regent Honeyeaters once roamed in flocks of thousands from Melbourne to Brisbane yet new research from the ANU published in January this year shows that, despite captive breeding and release programs, rangers being assigned to guard individual nests and tens of thousands of dollars being funnelled into other preservation programs, unless conservation efforts are stepped up the remaining wild population of approximately 300 Regent Honeyeaters (*Anthochaera phrygia*) will continue to decline. It has been noted that the population is now so sparse that young birds cannot learn the full range of calls necessary for successful mating. Efforts are being made in breeding programs to play recordings of calls to fledglings to ensure they are exposed to these vital songs.

These birds epitomise the contradiction of our concept of preservation in the face of almost unfettered environmental destruction.

'The Treachery of Collections' series is a nod to Rene Magritte's simple subversion of the traditional conceptual tropes of visual and linguistic representation almost a century ago. Also known as 'This is not a Pipe', Magritte

sought to undermine the semiotic relationship between image and words. In this case the semantics of the term 'preserved' and the semiotics of the painted images similarly challenge the conventional assumptions attached to the word 'preservation' as it relates to the living species represented.

One of the specimens painted here is a bird collected by Neville Cayley, renowned author and illustrator of Australia's first comprehensive illustrated birding guide. Collected in 1914, in Cronulla, Sydney, this individual is an example of the species wide ranging prevalence at that time.

Rachel Mounsey – *Rainbow Lorikeet remains. Tip Beach, Mallacoota. Black Summer, 2020 2023. Digital pigment print on cotton rag*

Image size: 150 x 100 cm. Paper size: 160 x 110 cm

In the midst of smoke, buried in ash, the lifeless bodies of hundreds of native birds were sprawled along the shoreline as far as the eye could see. Once ascending wings spread out underneath limp heads resembling crucifixion. Bright feathers sprinkled in sand glistened against their charcoal graves. Poetic beauty of a native avian graveyard, the small and significant casualties, days later washed out to sea.

Perdita Phillips – *208 x forgiveness? 2023. Mail art with mixed media on paper. 208 postcards 10 x 15 cm (assembled 130 x 240 cm)*

Sometime between the 6th and 8th of January 2010, 145 Carnaby's Black Cockatoos died at the golf course in south-west coastal town of Hopetoun, with a further 63 dying around the same time at a roost site in Munglinup, 75 km to the east. Post mortem results eliminated poisoning or disease, with the most likely cause of death being daytime temperatures reaching in the high forties to low fifties, accompanied by hot northerly winds of over 60km/h. Galahs, Regent Parrots, Australian Magpie Larks, Australian Ravens, Yellow-throated Miners and an Australian Kestrel were also found dead. Corpses were photographed piled on the ground.

Carnaby's Black Cockatoos are endangered and are only found in the southwest of Western Australia. Whilst the greatest continuing threat to the endangered population is clearing and fragmentation of habitat, small stochastic events such as extreme heat conditions, hailstorms and disease outbreaks can have high impact on birds that feed and roost together.

Does it matter that 208 birds are subtracted from the estimated world population of 10,000-60,000? Small acts can have big local impacts. Over time, increased frequency of climate-related events adds up to long-term shifts. Local populations are divided and genetically isolated. Specimens are dissected and fragmented. Land is cut and disassembled. What kind of apology can we offer? What will move us to action—to put the parts back together again?

Tuvalu Post – *Tuvalu Greenhouse Effect stamps 1993. Designer: Patricia Altman Printer: Southern Colour Print Process: Lithography Size: 4.26 x 2.85 cm*

'I am here at this important meeting as the highest representative of the people of Tuvalu. I carry a huge burden and responsibility. I carry their hopes that there will be a future for Tuvalu. This is an enormous burden to carry. It keeps me awake at night. No national leader in the history of humanity has ever faced this question. Will we

survive or will we disappear under the sea? I ask you all to think what it is like to be in my shoes. Stop and pause for a moment.

If you were faced with the threat of the disappearance of your nation, what would you do? I ask you to pause and ask yourself, what would you do?

Climate change is the single greatest challenge facing my country. It is threatening the livelihood, security and wellbeing of all Tuvaluans. There are others that also share this burden. The low lying coral atoll nations of Kiribati, the Marshall Islands and the Maldives, are also on the frontline of this battle against climate change.

This is a battle of immense proportions. The latest projections of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) 5th Assessment tell us that the global average temperatures are projected to rise to two point six to four point eight degrees above present temperature levels. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine what a world would look like even with the lowest projection provided by the IPCC? It would be hell on earth.

The great Italian poet Dante once wrote: 'The darkest places in hell are reserved for those who maintain their neutrality in times of moral crisis'.

These words are no less relevant today. We are all facing the biggest moral crisis of humanity. There is no place for neutrality or denial.'

From Prime Minister Enele Sosene Sopoaga's 2014 address at the 20th Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (December 2014, Lima, Peru)

The Wall of Wings 2019 – ongoing. Original prints by multiple artists.

In 2019, Coffs Coast artist Penelope Lawry initiated the *Wall of Wings* as a way for people of all ages and abilities to join the Overwintering Project, an environmental art project uniting artists around Australia to raise awareness for our most endangered group of birds, migratory shorebirds, and their habitat. Since then, the *Wall of Wings* has grown into an international open call inviting artists all over the world to contribute original prints of migratory shorebirds to this growing installation.

The *Wall of Wings* for BIRD is only a portion of the whole installation, which so far includes works from 222 individual artists and 5 schools, including contributions from Australia, Mexico, England, the USA, Greece, New Zealand, Hong Kong, the Netherlands, Spain and Scotland. Any form of original print is accepted, including etching, linocut, silkscreen, collagraph, monoprinting, stamping, lithography and woodblock prints.

'Godwits, sandpipers, stints, plovers, whimbrels, curlews, snipe...migratory shorebirds connect the world. Their pathways of their migrations bind skies, land and sea into a meaningful whole. Their journeys connect us through time and space, as they have been flying between the poles for more years than humans have walked the earth.

Thirty-six species of migratory shorebird spend October–May on the coast of Australia and New Zealand. Come autumn, they head north to their breeding grounds in northern China, Mongolia, Siberia and Alaska. After breeding, they will head back south, completing an annual circuit of roughly 25,000 km. Over their lifetimes many of these

birds, having completed this journey every year of their adult lives, will have flown more miles than from the earth to the moon!

Sadly migratory shorebirds are our most endangered group of birds. This is mainly due to their reliance on habitat throughout all 23 countries of their migratory route, the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, habitat that is constantly depleted through development, reclamation and rising seas due to Climate Change. We in Australia and New Zealand have a particular responsibility to preserve their critical overwintering habitat as we share their home for the majority of the year.'

Kate Gorringer-Smith, Coordinator, The Overwintering Project
www.theoverwinteringproject.com



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