



**PARLIAMENT OF  
NEW SOUTH WALES  
ABORIGINAL  
ART PRIZE  
2013**



## KARLA DICKENS JANUARY 26, DAY OF MOURNING

Karla Dickens  
January 26, Day of Mourning  
2013  
280 x 124 cm  
vintatage Australian flag, thread and  
embroidered applique

Karla Dickens was born in Sydney in 1967, moved to the Hunter Valley when she was 27 and since 2003 has lived in Bangalow. She has had more than 20 solo exhibitions, including *Loving Memory*, Lismore Regional Gallery, 2008 and *The Black Madonna*, Grafton Regional Gallery, 2010. She has also participated in more than 30 group shows, including *Ngadhu, ngulili, ngeanyiyagu: a Personal History of Aboriginal Art in the Premier State*, Campbelltown Arts Centre, 2008; *Bungaree — the First Australian*, Glasshouse Regional Gallery, Port Macquarie, 2013, and *The Native Institute Exhibition*, Blacktown Arts Centre, 2013. Her work has also been shown at Hogarth Galleries, Paddington; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; and at exhibitions in Italy and the United States. Dickens is represented by Ray and Evan Hughes at the Hughes Gallery, Surry Hills. She has been artist in residence at Brewarrina (1995), University of Technology, Sydney (1997), Jowlbinna, Cape York (1997), Guardella, Italy (1998), and Redfern, Sydney (1998). She has also worked as a teacher with outsider groups such as the elderly, the mentally ill, the homeless, addicts, youth at risk and inmates at Goulburn Correctional Centre, and has produced a number of murals as a result of this community involvement. In 2012 a 18-metre mural was installed at Goonellabah, northern New South Wales, based on her fabric collage work *The Dreaming of a Koala Heaven*, the original of which was sold in an art auction to raise funds for koala conservation. Dickens is an awarding-winning artist, with wide-ranging skills, a commitment to giving back and a serious passion for the healing process found and given in her art.

**1** What emotions is the artist expressing in this work? In your response, refer to the artwork statement and the artist's strong emotional response to Australia Day. (subjective frame)

**2** Explore why an artist may choose to use found or ready-made objects to create an artwork. In your answer, refer to the power or meaning attached to the Australian flag used by Karla Dickens. (structural: postmodern)

**3** Suggest two very different ways audience members might respond to this artwork. In your response, consider the world issues suggested in the work and how different audience members might interpret these issues. (conceptual framework: audience-world)

**4** Which frame do you think is the most useful in understanding this artwork? Explain your answer.

**Key words: grief, patriotism, found object, Australia Day, Survival Day, Day of Mourning, ready-made**

*The majority of Australia celebrates 26 January by wrapping themselves in the red, white and blue flag, having barbecues and feeling proud to be young and free. I cringe, stay close to dear friends, do all I can not to leave the house and respectfully hold my grief — the grief for the old, grief for the continuous denial, grief for the disrespect, grief for the lack of acknowledgment and the poor choice of the day to celebrate. After finding the flag at the tip, I went about handsewing my grief, with one cross after another. Unfortunately, it's only a small gesture to reflect the true loss.*

## **BARRY COOPER – UNCOVERED! CHEECKO ROLL-LAY AND HARRY PHUMPA: CHARACTERS THAT WERE THOUGHT TOO FUNNY FOR THE DAVE CHAPELLE SHOW!**

Barry Cooper is a Koori from the South Coast of New South Wales. He has been drawing since he was a child. In 2013 Cooper won the annual Black Cockatoo Art Award at Shoalhaven. He also loves to write and has been published in various short story anthologies. His work is influenced by his enjoyment of comics, cartoons, the routines of stand-up comedians and humour of all kinds.

*My favourite comedian is Dave Chappelle. I used to watch his show late at night on SBS years ago (along with some very interesting late-night movies). I loved the characters he and his co-writers created and I always wanted to put together my own show. Alas, I didn't have access to cameras, actors and recording and lighting equipment, so I decided to put my own characters on paper using inexpensive materials — pens, pencils and water-soluble crayons. I've also been influenced by artists like Gary Larson, Robert Crumb and Michael Leunig. I like the way they put so much emotion and feeling into small frames of reference. And I've been wondering for some time now why Indigenous artists (or even artists in general) don't create or incorporate more humour into their artwork. It's true that many Kooris lead desperate lives — but it's equally true that many of us laugh and poke fun at one another all the time. So why don't we show that aspect of our lives? Let the humour shine through, I say. Let it shine.*

**Key words: humour, cartoon, pop culture**

Barry Cooper

Uncovered! Cheeko Roll-Lay and Harry Phumpa: Two Characters that were thought too funny for the Dave Chapelle Show!

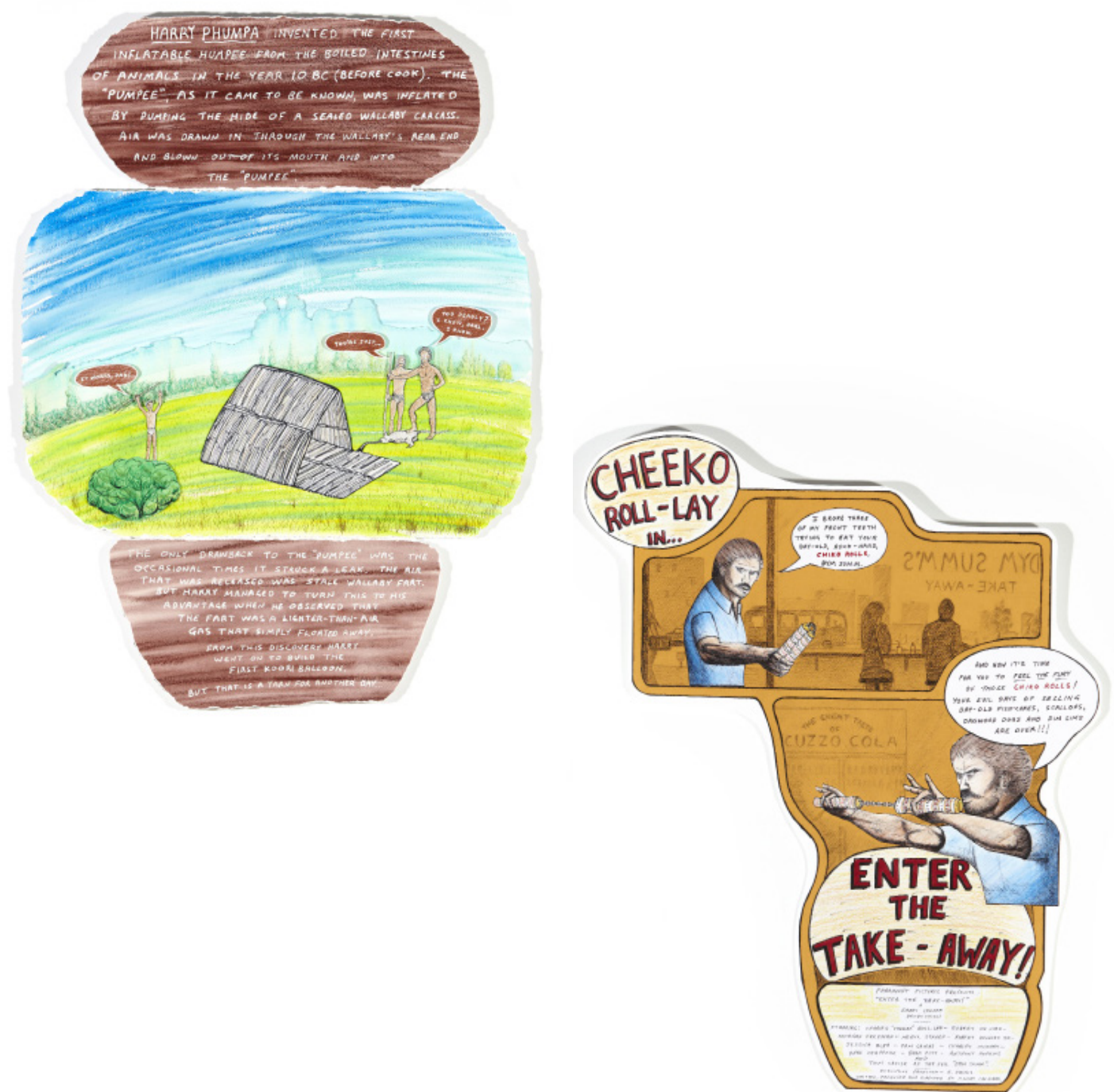
2013

cardboard, paper, pen, pencil, water-soluble crayon, white-out, permanent marker, and self adhesive foam board

**1** Refer to the artist statement to suggest why contemporary artists may use comedy in their works. (postmodern)

**2** Describe one aspect of contemporary Indigenous culture which is represented or challenged in this artwork. (cultural)

**3** Explain why this work can be termed post-modern. In your response, you may like to refer to Barry's use of everyday materials, cartoon styles, and pop culture appropriation. (postmodern: structural)



## **BRAD WEBB – BLACK ESTATE**

*This painting reflects my own experience, as an urban Aboriginal person who did not grow up on a mission or reserve, when I visited regional New South Wales in the late eighties. I was shocked and appalled by the conditions in which our people were still living. The segregation and racism was suffocating, and it could have been any township in rural Australia. This shanty township was located about 10 to 20 kilometres outside of the main town. Under the Aboriginal Protection Board, most Aboriginal communities had been located outside of towns, the intention being 'out of sight, out of mind'. Heading towards the tip, I came across this makeshift community of corrugated iron shacks perched above the land fill. The smell was intense; the conditions were third world, with no electricity or running water. There were no words to describe my feelings other than deep sorrow, and how lucky I felt that I wasn't born into that. But I never escaped poverty and racism. This painting shows two different perspectives on the world: in the background a functioning community is thriving, while in the foreground another community struggles to survive. The most damning thing about this is that these living conditions still prevail today, here in this so-called lucky country.*

Brad Webb is a Bundjulong Dunghutti man from northern New South Wales who currently lives on the Central Coast. Webb is a prolific artist working in many media, including pastel, inks, gouache, acrylic, oils, glazes and digital imagery layered over painting. Webb works intuitively in the creation of his images, guided by his feelings and emotions. He brings his observations, life experience and cultural perceptions to his work. His passion for music has resulted in the production of a number of recent paintings inspired by listening to Aboriginal music, both traditional and contemporary.

**Key words: inequality, segregation, close-the-gap, limited palette, complimentary colours, Bundjulong Dunghutti**

**1** With reference to the artist statement, suggest some emotions the artist is trying to convey in this painting. (subjective)

**2** Describe how the techniques and colours in the work are used to reflect some of these emotions. (structural)

**3** Research the Aboriginal Protection Board and list 2 reasons for and 2 reasons against its value in creating and sustaining communities and townships. (cultural)



Brad Webb  
Black Estate  
89.5 x 80 cm  
acrylic on 4gsm paper

## WARWICK KEEN – COLOUR BARCODE (SCAN ME I MAY BE ABORIGINAL)

Warwick Keen was born in 1958 in Newcastle, New South Wales, and belongs to the Gomeroi (Gamilaraay) language group. He has practised and taught art for 40 years and intends to continue doing so for the rest of his life. Since 1995 he has been teaching Aboriginal art, an experience in which he too has learned a great deal. Keen is the founding member of Gamilarat, Tamworth's first Aboriginal artist organisation and was its chairman from 2000 to 2007. Keen has been a finalist in the Parliament of New South Wales Indigenous Art Prize every year since its inception.

*The notion of the colour-bar has existed in Australia since the invasion/colonisation of Terra Nullius by the British. Indigenous Australians were immediately ostracised by the white oppressor. 'Colour-bar' is a term that emerged during the mid-twentieth century to describe the practice of preventing Aboriginal Australians from enjoying the same basic rights and privileges as white Australian citizens. These rights and privileges involved simple things like swimming in the local swimming pool; entry into the local RSL Club; being able to sit wherever you like at the cinema; not to mention being counted as citizens in your own country. As we move further into the twenty-first century, pockets of racism still exist in Australian society that perpetuate the prejudices of the colour-bar paradigm.*

*Wider acceptance and understanding of Australian Aboriginal people and their culture in today's world have allowed many families and individuals to step forward and identify themselves as being Indigenous. In the past, for more reasons than one could possibly contemplate, many people of Aboriginal heritage either failed to recognise or were totally unaware of their ancestry.*

*My subject is a very real and very controversial political argument. How is 'Aboriginality' defined? Whose job is it to verify one way or another whether one person is deemed to be Aboriginal while another is not? The controversy that surrounds this issue is not just a 'white thing', it is also a 'black thing'. The black, white and varying shades of grey in my painting symbolise the different skin colours that exist in Aboriginal communities throughout Australia. Side by side, we blend in with one another to create a bigger picture.*

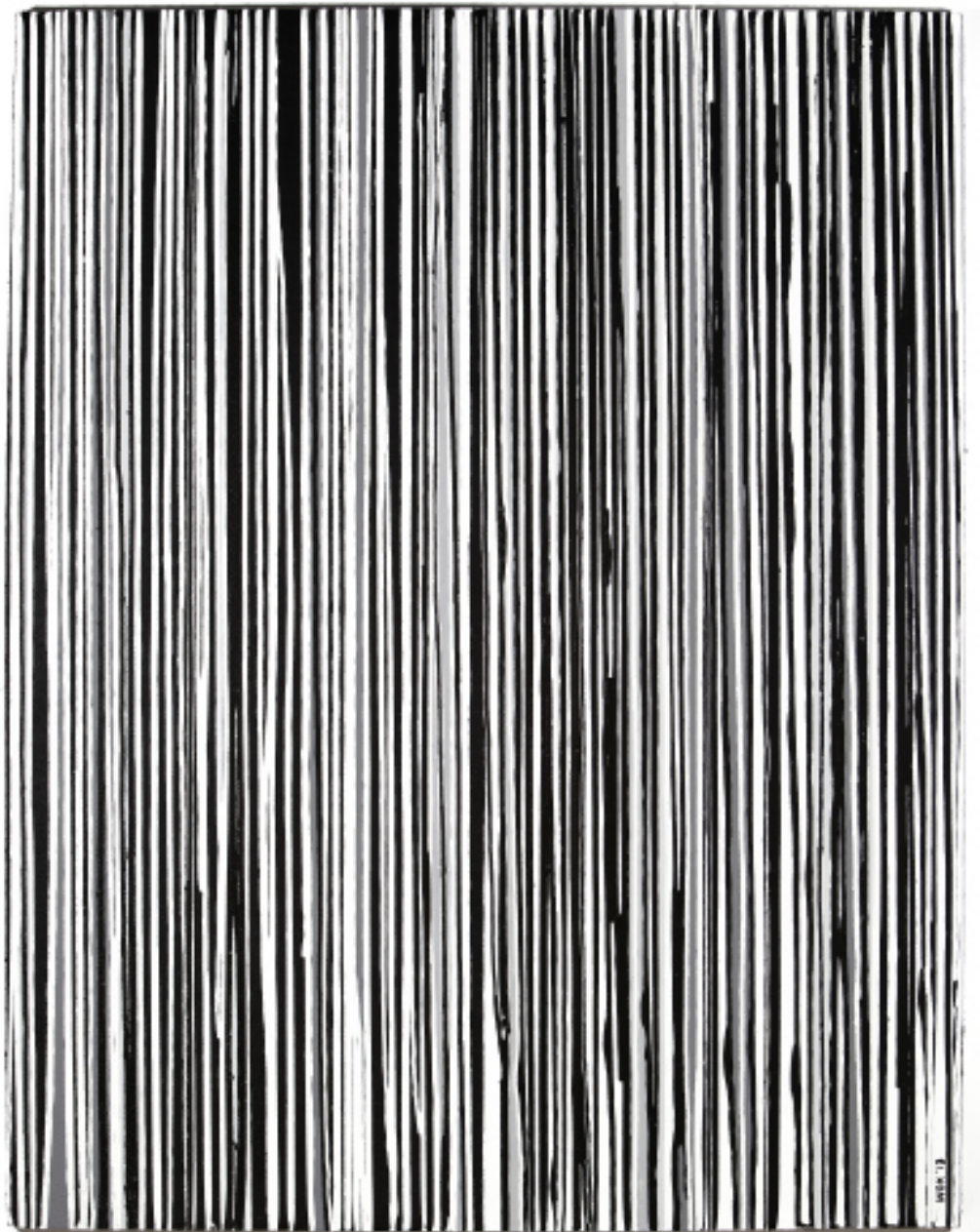
Warwicj Keen  
Colour Barcode (Scan me I amy be Aboriginal)  
2013  
190 x 140 cm  
acrylic on canvas

**1** Investigate the term 'Colour Bar'. Considering the title of the work, explain how the artist has re-contextualised this term. (postmodern)

**2** With reference to the colour choices in the work, suggest how the artist challenges the way identity may be (mis)defined based on skin colour.

**3** The title of the work uses wit to express a serious political and social argument about how 'Aboriginality' is defined. Explain why artists may use wit or humour to explore controversial or difficult subject matter. Refer to the work in your explanation.

**Key words:** wit, identity, colour choice, racism, political art, Gomeroi (Gamilaraay)



## LYNETTE RILEY – WISDOM IN OUR COUNTRY

Lynette Riley is a Wiradjuri/Gamilaroi woman from Dubbo and Moree. As part of Riley's practice she makes kangaroo skin cloaks as artworks. These cloaks are traditional garments with symbols and images burnt onto them. Riley makes them for family members to record their totem and family connections. Riley has shown her work in selected galleries only. She had a major exhibition with Diane McNaboe in Dubbo in 2012 and through the University of Sydney provided a cloak for the Governor of New South Wales, Marie Bashir, in 2012.

The three kangaroo cloaks highlight kinship connection in our country.

The cloak in the centre, the wisdom tree, depicts sources of gathered wisdom and knowledge and the need for strong morals and ethics in relationships. The trunk pattern is that of the mugga, or ironbark tree, with deep furrows interlinked with fissures. The large burl is the face of wisdom. The root system ensures we are grounded in our country.

The cloak on the left features the wilay, or brushtail possum. It is a clan totem for the Dubbo Ga people, hence the need to pay homage. The wilay is sitting in a eucalyptus tree and its tracks are running up on the left.

The cloak on the right shows the muraany, or white cockatoo, with eggs in a nest, a fledgling and cockatoo tracks travelling up the left side. The cockatoo is a messenger bird. People with this totem are messengers for our people, delivering news, both good and bad, and their strength lies in how they deliver the message. Cockatoos sitting in a tree are a common sight in the Australian countryside and represent our need to gather with one another. To the right and along the kangaroo tail is a series of cockatoos in flight, with the symbol for wind surrounding the cockatoos on the tail. Above the adult cockatoo is the sun symbol.

Each cloak has linked concentric circles, which represent nations, clans and family groups that share kinship through these totems.

Lynette Riley  
Wisdom in our Country  
2013  
dimensions variable  
pokerwork, burnt etched design on kangaroo skins



**1** Refer to the artist statement to identify three totems and explain their meanings according to the artist. (structural: conceptual framework)

**2** List at least three other symbols or shapes that you can identify on the kangaroo cloaks. (structural frame)

**3** Research the use of animal skins in Aboriginal art practice in Australia. From your research, describe two techniques or approaches that are common to this practice. (structural: cultural)

**Key words:** totem, symbol, animal skins, Wiradjuri, Gamilaroi