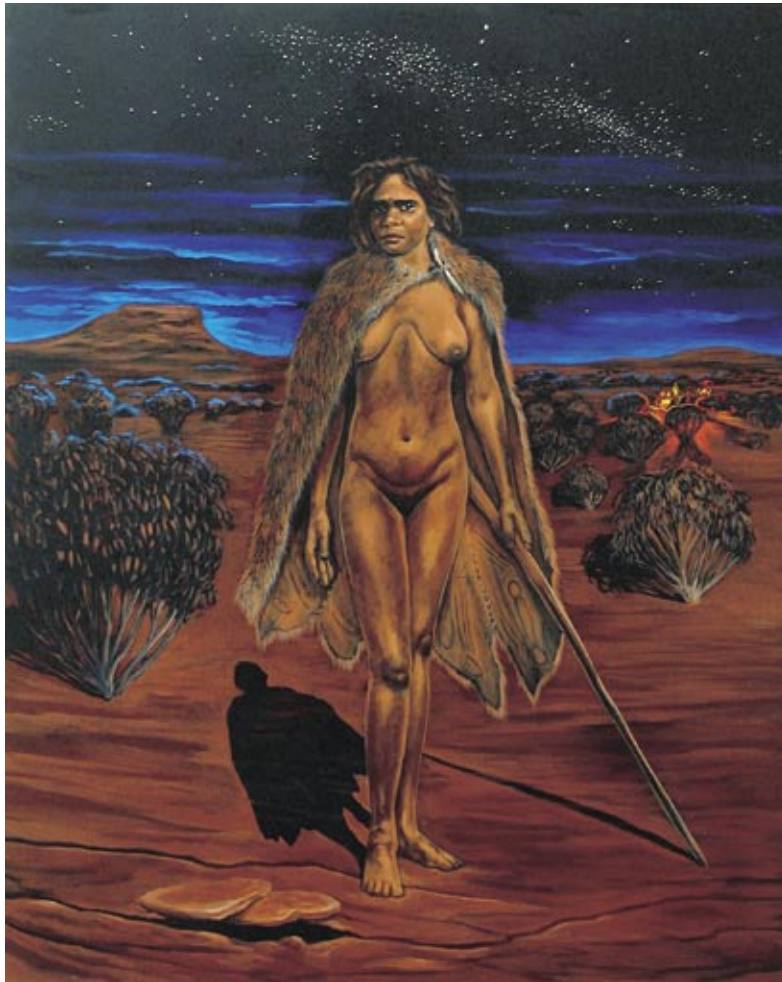


# Julie Dowling

## ‘Warridah Sovereignty’

3rd July - 25th July 2004



**Warridah Melburra Ngupi** 2004, acrylic & red ochre on canvas, 150x120cm

Translation for this painting's title is:

Warridah: Wedge Tailed Eagle (a significant creation being for my family)

Melburra: The Badimaya name for my great great-grandmother, Melbin

Ngupi: The word for water

This painting shows my great great-grandmother, Melbin in a Kangaroo cloak (known as a Booka). She stands on a cold night, navigating by the stars to find water for her people. It is an imagined image of Melbin before white contact in a heroic gestural style of Valesques, Ingre and Goya.



“Dispossession Series: Me, Myself, Julie”

Selected Biography

**Born** Subiaco, 1969 , Badimaya - Yamatji

**Education**

1992 Bachelor of Fine Art, Curtin University  
 1989 Diploma of Fine Art, Claremont School of Art

**Solo Exhibitions**

2004 ‘Warridah Sovereignty’, Artplace, Perth, WA  
 2003 ‘...Yes, Boss!’, Fortyfivedownstairs, Melbourne  
 2002 ‘...big womanhead...’, Artplace, Perth  
 2001 ‘Melbin’, Span Galleries, Melbourne  
 2000 Artplace, WA  
 1999 Festival of Perth, Artplace, WA  
 Adelaide Festival Centre, South Australia  
 1996 Artplace, Western Australia  
 1995 ‘Secrets About Being Strong’, Fremantle Arts Centre , WA

**Selected Group Exhibitions**

2004 ‘Holy Holy Holy’, Flinders University and Adelaide Festival and then touring nationally  
 ‘Spirit & Vision: Aboriginal Art’, Sammlung Essl, Vienna, Austria  
 98-04 15-21st Telstra National Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Award, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory  
 2003 ‘Places that Name Us’ Kate Challis RAKA Award 2003: Contemporary Indigenous Visual Arts #3, The Ian Potter Musum of Art, The University of Melbourne  
 The 2003 Portia Geach Memorial Award, S.H Ervin Gallery, Sydney  
 ‘ART AUSTRALIA - Zeitgenössische Kunst’, travelling exhib., Germany  
 ‘Heat’, Noosa Regional Gallery  
 2002 ‘Spirit Country’ Gantner Myer collection, Melbourne Museum  
 ‘It’s a beautiful day’ New Painting in Australia: 2, AGNSW and Ian Potter Museum, Melbourne  
 Native Title, touring exhibition  
 Archibald Portrait Prize - Art Gallery NSW  
 2001 Federation, National Gallery of Australia, touring exhibition Blake prize, touring exhibition  
 Bunbury Biennale  
 2000 Beyond the Pale - Adelaide Biennale, Art Gallery SA  
 Mum Shirl Tribute Exhibition - Boomalli Sydney  
 Doug Moran Portrait Prize - touring exhibition  
 ‘Side by Side’, Art Gallery of WA  
 ‘Across’, Canberra School of Art, National touring exh.  
 Mornington Peninsula Works on Paper Prize,  
 1999 ‘Aboriginal Kunst aus West Australian’, Galerie Gaswerk, Schwabach, Germany  
 Ceremony, identity and community’, South African National Gallery, Capetown  
 1998 RAKA Exhibition, Ian Potter Museum of Art, University of Melbourne  
 ‘Ceremony, Identity and Community’ Flinders Art Museum Gallery, Adelaide  
 1997 Gabrielle Pizzi Gallery at Art Fair Cologne, Germany  
 ‘Daughters of the Dreaming’, Art Gallery of WA  
 1996 Out of Australia, curated by John Stringer, PICA, Perth  
 ‘H.J Wedge and Julie Dowling’, Gallery Gabrielle Pizzi Melbourne, VIC  
 Wijay Na .....? 24HR Art, Darwin  
 1995 ‘Urban Belonging: The Raw Edge’, Art Gallery of WA, Perth  
 ‘On a Mission’, Boomalli Aboriginal Arts Coop, Chippendale, Sydney  
 11th NATSIAA Art Award  
 ‘bur-ran-gur- ang (court out) - Women and the Law’, Lawrence Wilson Gallery  
 1993 National Graduate Degree Show, PICA, travelling exhibition

**Grants and Awards**

2003 Finalist RAKA Award  
 2002 Finalist Archibald Prize  
 2001 The People’ Choice and NATSIAA Art Award  
 2001 Finalist Archibald Prize  
 2000 Winner - Mandorla Award for Religious Art  
 Winner (Painting) - 17th NATSIAA Award  
 Finalist - NAIDOC Aboriginal Artist of the Year  
 Finalist - Doug Moran National Portrait Prize  
 1998 Australia Council Development Grant  
 Artist in Residence, Curtin University  
 1995 Australia Council Development Grant

**Publications and Reviews**

2004 ‘A powerful display of Aboriginal art’ Terry Ingram, Saleroom pg45, *The Australian Financial Review*, 22nd April  
 2003 ‘Vorwort’, pg 6, Indra Wussow & Ralf-P.Seippel, ‘Art Australia’, p7, Barbara Alms, ‘Julie Dowling’, pg22, Ralf-P.Seippel and ‘The Contemporary Art Scene in Australia’, pg46, Peter Hill, ART AUSTRALIA exhibition catalogue  
 “...Yes, boss!”, Jodi Hoffmann, Arts section p37, *The Koori Mail*, May 21st  
 “We are bosses ourselves...” Carol Dowling, “...Yes, boss!” exhibition catalogue, Artplace  
 “Review” Ted Snell, *Art & Australia*, Vol.40 #3, p 499 -500  
 “Listening to the land” *National Indigenous Times*, p27, January 22nd  
 2002 “All ages show leaves one lusting after virtuosity” Anne Loxley, www.smh.com.au, November 27th  
 “You beauty!”, Peter Hill, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, Nov 22-28  
 “Happy 30th, you mad little beauty” Ted Snell, *The Australian*, November 22nd  
 “Our new icon” Jane Faulkner, *Melbourne Age*, October 21st  
 “A fair to remember” John McDonald, *The Aust. Financial Review*, October 10th  
 “Fine art of programming” Ron Banks, *The West Australian*, Sept 11  
 “Art round-up: Perth” David Bromfield, *Art Monthly*, # 153, Sept.  
 “Deep Pockets”, Ted Snell, *Artlink*, Volume 22 #3  
 “The New Artplace”, Andrew Nicholls, *Artlink*, Volume 22 # 3  
 Native Title Business, Contemporary Indigenous Art, exhibition cat. It’s a beautiful day, New Painting in Australia:2, Bala Starr, exhib.cat.  
 “Cultural directions”, Andrew Nicholls, *SHOUT*, pg.8, July  
 “In person”, Sarah Palmer, *The West Australian*, July 20th  
 “Big Womanhead opens at Artplace”, *National Indigenous Times*, July 17th  
 “When hard labour is a beautiful thing” Ashley Crawford, *The Age*, July 17th  
 “Wisdom, humour and solidarity”, Ted Snell, Arts p21, *The Weekend Australian*, July 13-14th  
 “Judgement day”, Robert Cook, *The West Australian*, July 13  
 “Hybrids all, let us rejoice” Arts, *The Australian*, Friday July 12th.  
 “Picture of popularity”, Sarah Palmer, *The West Australian*, July 3rd  
 “Henry’ a finalist”, Jodi Hoffmann, *The Koori Mail*, June 26th  
 “Being a big Womanhead” Carol Dowling, ...big womanhead... cat. Australia’s 50 most collectable artists, *Aust. Art Collector*, issue 19  
 “A Different Way to the Future”, Judith McGrath, *Aust. Art Coll.* issue 19  
 2001 “The Double life of Julie Dowling”, Victoria Laurie, *The Weekend Australian Magazine* November 10th  
 “Cultural Reflection”, David Bromfield, *The West Australian*, 4,8, Australia’s 50 most collectable artists, *Aust. Art Collector*, issue 15  
 2000 “Why Nostalgia Corrupts”, David Broomfield, *The West Aust.*, November 11th  
 ‘Beyond the Pale’ D.Mellor, *Art & Australia*, May  
 ‘Unflinching Portraiture’, Bruce James, *Aust. Art Collector*, issue 14  
 ‘Seven sins is not a sorry affair’, Ted Snell, *The Australian*, June 16  
 ‘Art can reveal but never resolve’, Humphrey McQueen, *Art Monthly*, April  
 “Festivals King Hit”, Bruce James, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, March 11th  
 ‘Art indigenous and incredible’, Ruth & Vincent Megaw, *Adelaide Advertiser*, March 6th  
 ‘A Sorry Story’, Joanna Mendelsohn, *The Bulletin*, March  
 1999 ‘Shock of colours’, Christine Nicholls, *Adelaide Advertiser*, Dec 29th  
 ‘Private eyes’, Victoria Laurie, *The Weekend Aust. Review Arts*, 11-12  
 ‘Butcher Chere Janangoo, Julie Dowling, Julie Gough’, Judith McGrath, *Artlink*, 19:2.  
 ‘Perth Festival: Unfolding from the margins’ Andrew Nichols, *Real Time*, April  
 ‘History and memory’, Philippa O’Brien, *Artlink*, 19:1, May  
 ‘Grandmother’s mob and the stories’, Lavinia S Ryan, *Artlink*, 18:1  
 1997 ‘Shooting stars -Brigitte Braun’s Artplace’, Dorothy Erickson, *Artlink*, 17:3, December  
 ‘Inside the Visible’, Barbara Bolt, *Real Time*, April-May, p. 6-7  
 ‘Daughters of the Dreaming’, Ted Snell, *The Australian*, February 7  
 1996 ‘Sisters act’, Victoria Laurie, *The Bulletin Arts*, *The Bulletin*, Nov 19  
 ‘An urban aboriginal artist and her sense of family’ Anna Herriman, *Periphery* no 28  
 ‘Honest dialogue’, Judith McGrath, *The Western Review*, August  
 1995 Artist in Residence, John Stringer, Sandpiper Press, Perth  
 Carol Oakes, *Artlink*, Vol.15, No. 2 & 3,  
 ‘Festival neglects the visual arts’, Dorothy Erickson, *Artlink*, Vol.15, No. 2 & 3  
 ‘Show examines women and law’, Nikki Miller, *The West Aust.* March 19  
 ‘bur-ran-gur ang - Women and the Law’, University of WA

**Collections**

Art Gallery of WA, Curtin University, University of Western Australia, Berndt Museum of Anthropology - UWA, Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University, Artbank, Royal Perth Hospital, King Edward Memorial Hospital, Hyphema - Perth, National Native Title Tribunal, Kent-McNeil Inc. Canada, Sir James and Lady Cruthers, Dr Ian & Sue Bernadt, Kerry Stokes, Carrillo Gantner, Charles Sturt University, Kelton Foundation California, New Norcia Monastery, Flinders University, University of Southern Queensland, National Gallery of Australia, City of Wanneroo, Town of Vincent, Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory, Reconciliation Council of Australia, National Gallery of Victoria, Wesfarmers, Bunbury Regional Gallery, Museum of Western Australia, Art Gallery of SA, Adelaide Festival Centre



## Unfinished Business By Carol Dowling, twin sister to the artist

'Warridah Sovereignty' is a protest exhibition concerning Badimaya/Noongar sovereignty painted by my sister, Julie Dowling. The Warridah (Black Wedge-tailed Eagle) is a significant creation being with a story closely connected to our family in the country around Paynes Find and Yalgoo in the Gascoyne region of Western Australia. Ironically, Warridah was also the name taken to name a sheep station originally run by the Oliver family. It was Edward Oliver who took our great great-grandmother from the bush and named her Melbin after his favourite town (Melbourne).

The Warridah holds a map of the land and continues to soar over our country protecting it and brings healing. The National Native Title process did not address our family's dispossession from our country. That is why this exhibition is a statement about the suppression of our sacred endowments as Indigenous peoples. We feel that we do not have religious and cultural freedom in this country. Julie is using this exhibition as an assertion of her human rights and her own artistic rights as a Badimaya/Noongar woman.

### "Dispossession Series: My Sista, Carol"

These pictures document Julie's understanding of her place in our family and work as a translation for our empowerment. More importantly, they are statements of our own governance. Julie has also attempted here to resolve or theorise her dilemmas as an Indigenous artist between post-colonialism and post-modernism. She claims not to express the truth about either but rather builds a document about the rights of Badimaya/Noongar people. These are not 'special rights' but rights held by all people worldwide. Often referring to anti-imperial enlightenment, Julie has continued her theme of transformation from oppression. This exhibition is about hope and it is about our freedom.

Photographs are important tools for our communities to help understand colonisation. Photographs of our family were used as ethnographic evidence by the authorities to determine how assimilated we had become. This is seen in the work entitled, **This Side of the Fence**, depicting our grandmother, Molly and great-Aunt, Dot, visiting their family from the orphanage. They pose for an invisible observer, all standing hard against a newly constructed fence, where the bush has been cleared and divided just as they themselves had been from their land and its lore. Our elders stand with their children ready to be judged as assimilated or passable to the western eye. Such images reveal truths about our struggle and record our forced journey to a mythical white acceptability.

Our family now use photographs as tools to record reunions and departures. They are used to find long-lost relatives and they reveal their power to us about who we are and to celebrate our survival. The tensions in such photographs revealed layers of relationships as seen by **The Invincibles** where our warriors play cricket to gain acceptance and respect in our earliest colonial contacts. These early images are not frozen in time. They have adapted and changed in their meaning just as much as we have as a people. Such adapting is seen in **The Gauntlet** where our grandparents present the respectability and conformity required in the 1950's with eyes and opinion dictating our family's conduct.

In our lifetime, Julie and I have experienced these tensions as well as a new set of unspoken restrictions as seen in **The Boat People** and **Learning how to be Stupid**. Our own family photographs reveal our positioning as children growing up in this confusing and contradictory reality. Julie has been able to represent vividly the tension of being pressured to act white but feeling and being Indigenous. Historian Henry Reynolds (1996) best surmised this when writing about Australia as never being able to become one nation in the foreseeable future. He said, "We may share a country, a continent and a state, but not a nation" (1996:179). Julie believes that such divisions continue to exist so long as there are such tensions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this country.

Julie asks if our dispossession will continue. With the recent abolishment of ATSIC, she asserts that it is illegitimate for government and the courts to impose a definition of Aboriginal sovereignty. Our self-determination is not an experiment. It is a matter entirely determined according to our systems of law and we cannot be given sovereignty just as we cannot be given self-determination. We must claim it, define it and exercise it as Indigenous peoples. If we want to be treated as sovereign nations then we must act like sovereign nations. This exhibition is an assertion of that sovereignty and should be recognised as complementary or of mutual benefit to all Australians.

*By viewing Aborigines and Islanders as either actual or potential nations we can dispense with the concept of race. In doing so we can avoid those constant attempts to relate Aboriginality to racial characteristics, to distinguish between 'real' Aborigines and the rest, to talk of people as being 'half-castes' or of 'mixed blood'...It is, after all, politics not pigment that matters if it is nationality we are talking about (Reynolds 1996:180).*

Julie seeks broader community recognition of our family's legitimate efforts to reconstruct elements of our sovereignty, our governance structures and systems of law that may have been lost. We wish to remain sovereign peoples. A treaty is about recognition of the ongoing dimension of that sovereignty and we desire to be free to build and expand our scope of sovereignty so that we can determine our own future. The visual arts have become one of only a few ways Indigenous people can truly express their voice against oppression. Such art becomes a political voice of resistance.

Julie paints these pictures to highlight the silence in the Australian Constitution about the presence and rights of Indigenous peoples. The relationship between Aboriginal peoples and the Australian state has not been settled. A treaty may be one way. However, ATSIC, although flawed, was the only representative body to promote discussion about a treaty concerning its benefits, its difficulties, its form and its content. Will such a discussion now cease? A treaty would affirm and protect our rights as Indigenous peoples where the Australian constitution has not yet done so. This exhibition is about 'unfinished business' and calls for a more just society where we can truly make decisions for ourselves. Wudjulas (non-Aboriginal people) have always known – even when they tried to actively forget – that in reconciling the place of us as Indigenous peoples, they will establish just terms for their own place in this land. The opportunity now exists for a treaty to be negotiated where the equality of peoples are valued and provides the context for the issues between us to become resolved. Indigenous Australians are now saying that sorry is not enough and it is time to say 'sovereignty'. That is why Julie protects our ways by retelling our survival for future generations.

### References:

- Bradfield, S. (2003) Treaties and Agreements: Towards decolonisation, AIATSIS, Canberra  
Reynolds, H. (1996) Aboriginal Sovereignty: Three Nations, One Australia?, Allen & Unwin, Sydney



**Dispossession Series:**  
**My Great Uncle George**, 2004  
 acrylic & red ochre on canvas,  
 120x100cm



**Dispossession Series:**  
**My Nana, Molly**, 2004  
 acrylic & red ochre on canvas,  
 120x100cm



**Dispossession Series:**  
**My Mum, Ronnie**, 2004  
 acrylic & red ochre on canvas,  
 120x100cm



**Just because you feel it,  
 doesn't mean it's true!**, 2004  
 acrylic & red ochre on canvas,  
 100x120cm



**The Gauntlet**, 2004  
 acrylic, red ochre & plastic on canvas,  
 120x100cm



**Didn't you know you were aboriginal?**, 2004  
 acrylic & red ochre on canvas,  
 120x150cm



**The Invincibles**, 2004  
 acrylic, red ochre & plastic on canvas,  
 100x120cm



**The Boat People**, 2004  
 acrylic, red ochre & plastic on canvas,  
 120x100cm



**The Citizen King**, 2004  
 acrylic & red ochre on canvas,  
 100x120cm