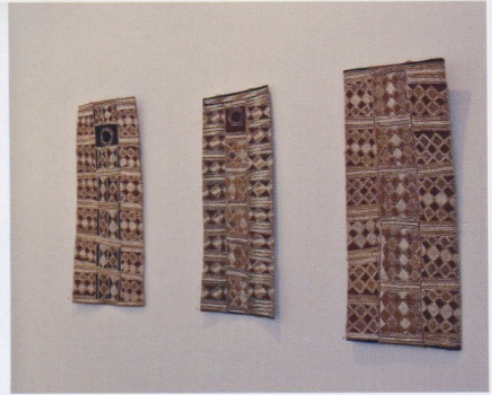


More Than Honeyed Words

By Jo Holder, Cross Art Projects



Mulkun Wirrpanda and Fiona McDonald met in 2007 at Mulkun's first solo exhibition held at Cross Art Projects. *One Lore, Two Law, Outlaw: Dhakiyarr vs The King* was an homage to Dhakiyarr and his legacy in the struggle for equal justice. Mulkun Wirrpanda is the daughter of the great Yolngu leader Dhakiyarr Wirrpanda and is a respected elder of the Dhudi-Djapu clan from Dhuruputjipi, on Blue Mud Bay, Arnhem Land.

A year later, the artists met again at Buku-Larrnggay Mulka and discussed Mulkun's recent paintings. Fiona later wrote about Mulkun's work for her thesis. Three years on this collaborative exhibition at Cross Art Projects, Sydney, is set against the background of the 2010 Biennale of Sydney.

The exhibition responded to a 'sub-theme' of the Biennale about the relationship between first and fourth worlds. Curator Jo Holder wanted to show Yolngu and Napagi/Balanda working together. The title *More Than Honeyed Words* gives the idea that

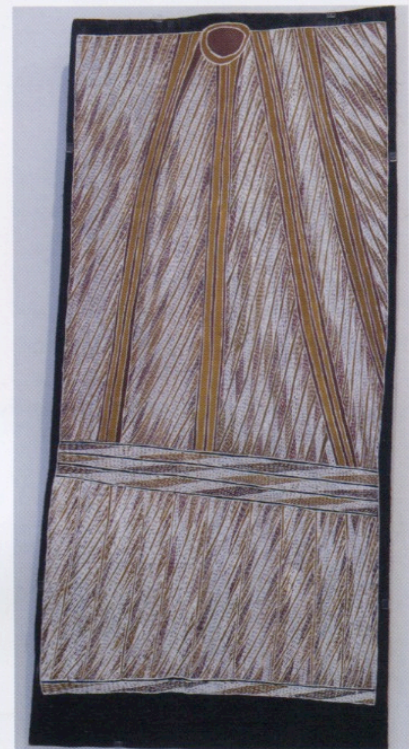
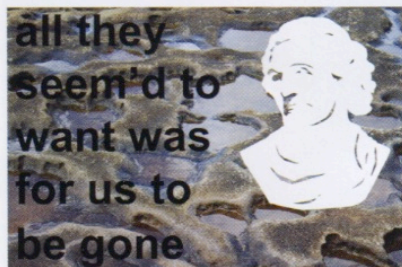
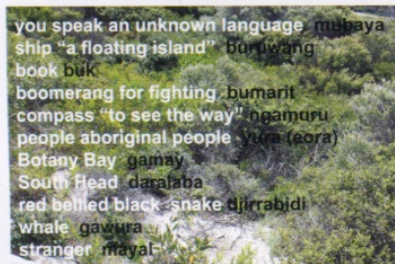
inequalities should be addressed in major contemporary art events. Meetings between very different civilisations at different parts of the Australian coastline are seen together in art works in the exhibition – Mulkun's paintings address the waters of Blue Mud Bay and Fiona MacDonald's prints the fateful encounter at Botany Bay in 1770 .

The title *Honeyed Words* is borrowed from Justice Michael Kirby's contribution to the 2008 Blue Mud Bay legal judgment:

'Although the National Apology ... reflects an unusual and virtually unprecedented parliamentary initiative, it does not, as such, have normative legal operation. ... Yet it is not legally irrelevant to the task presently in hand. It is an element of the social context in which such laws are to be understood and applied, where that is relevant. Honeyed words, empty of any practical consequences, reflect neither the language, the purpose nor the spirit of the National Apology.' (In Northern

Territory of Australia v Arnhem Land Aboriginal Land Trust [2008] HCA 29 (30 July 2008.)

The artists thank Michael Kirby for his apt message and hope to ask him to one day open another show on similar themes!



Top: Installation view of *More Than Honeyed Words*. Photo: Cross Art Projects.

Left: Fiona McDonald, *Drawing the Line No. 8 & 13* 2010. Photo: Courtesy the artist.

Above: Mulkun Wirrpanda, *Walu Daykun* 2007, ochre on bark, 157 x 68cm. Photo: Roslyn Sharp.