

## Holding Ceremony

*Holding Ceremony* is an installation that explores how images, objects and cultural signs accumulate meaning over time, and how those meanings shift, dissolve or are reactivated in the present.

Across this body of work, using experimental methods of mark making, collage, sculpture and assemblage, I draw on romanticised historical images of Aboriginal people from my own Wiradjuri Nation and neighbouring Nations. Some of these visual references emerge from the nineteenth-century archive of the naturalist William von Blandowski, including the etchings produced by the illustrator Wilhelm Mutzel during Blandowski's expeditions along the Murray River. Within this project these historical images act only as points of departure.

The figurative forms and many other elements have been reworked and embellished by me as the artist, interrupting the authority of the colonial archive and re-presenting these images within layered visual environments that question the permanence and certainty of such representations.

These images are not simply reproduced; they are disrupted, reframed and transformed through symbolic interventions. I introduce my own visions of symbolic nature into these compositions—floating eyes, listening ears, celestial forms and other references to spiritual iconography and surrealist imagery. These elements operate as metaphors for witnessing and listening. The repeated presence of eyes and ears suggests presences that see and hear the echoes of ceremony carried across time, acknowledging that histories and cultural memory continue to resonate within the present.

At the centre of this project is the act of **holding ceremony** within the artwork and within the exhibition space itself. For me, holding ceremony involves both active and quiet forms of ritual. It acknowledges that images, materials and cultural objects carry relationships—to people, to Country and to memory—and that those relationships continue to unfold through time. The exhibition space becomes a place where these relationships can be encountered again, where viewers move through a field of signs that hold traces of past and present connections.

Some of the paintings incorporate small cultural materials embedded directly within the works, including echidna quills, ochre and small bells, alongside other objects that have been gifted to me by family and friends. These materials carry personal and relational significance and are carefully attached within certain works.

Their presence acknowledges kinship, exchange and shared responsibility, suggesting that artworks can hold traces of obligation and connection. Through these gestures the works become quiet ceremonial sites—spaces where memory, material and relationship are held together.

Through the layering of archival imagery, personal materials and symbolic interventions, *Holding Ceremony* asks a series of questions: what do these inherited images, signs and objects mean today? What do they reveal or conceal? And how might new symbolic forms disrupt the authority of the past while opening other ways of seeing, remembering and healing?

The resulting compositions form a complex visual web where the romanticised archive meets contemporary intervention, and where representation itself becomes uncertain, contested and generative. In this sense, *Holding Ceremony* is both an artistic method and a conceptual proposition. It suggests that symbols—whether cultural, spiritual or invented—remain active agents in how we imagine identity, history and belonging.

Mixing metaphor and iconography, reality and imagination, the installation attempts to hold multiple meanings at once, inviting viewers to enter a contemplative space where the symbolic, the ceremonial and the speculative coexist.

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