



KARLEE RAWKINS

True Blue

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VIEW EXHIBITION ONLINE

11 February - 1 March, 2025

Opening event: Saturday 15 February, 1 - 3 pm

Please feel free to contact Claire Harris, Director with any enquiries or to make a time to view artworks once they arrive in the gallery. info@flg.com.au

Flinders Lane Gallery is pleased to present this latest exhibition of new works by New South Wales artist Karlee Rawkins.

Using depictions of Australian fauna to explore themes of strength and resilience *True Blue* aims to question our cultural values and relationship to nature. Through layers of underpainting and diverse mark-making, Rawkins creates a visual ambiguity between animal and landscape. This confluence highlights the complex issues of authenticity and contradiction that shape our relationship with the natural world. These new works continue Rawkins' exploration of states of transformation and change and seek to represent and document these processes through the act of painting.



ARTIST IN STUDIO



True Blue

Catalogue Essay by Kate Mcauley, 2025

For a long time, Karlee Rawkins shied away from painting Australian wildlife. The artist considered our native animals too clichéd and overly commercialised and instead took her inspiration from other avenues, including European folklore and mythology, where she felt she had free reign. It was during a recent encounter with the dingoes on K'Gari (Fraser Island), however, that Rawkins finally began entertaining the idea of a body of work dedicated to the wildlife of her homeland.

Often misunderstood as wild dogs in need of control by the broader public and the authorities, while remaining a species of cultural significance by the indigenous population, for Rawkins the dingo became the embodiment of the themes she wanted to explore for this exhibition, including vulnerability and resilience as well as cultural values across disparate social groups and their subsequent relationship to nature.

It also wasn't until a local First Nations friend asked Rawkins "When are you going to paint a Dungirr (koala)? I'm waiting for you to paint one!," that she was able to fully embrace the challenge. The sentiment acted as a kind of permission to go all in on the Australian fauna, and led to the creation of a full suite of works.

Entitled, *True Blue*, which is itself a cheeky nod to John Williamson's much beloved, yet some would say problematic 1982 hit folk song of the same name. Not only is the tune relevant to Rawkin's rural Queensland upbringing, but it has itself become a cliché, while also engendering feelings of authenticity and connection. It is with these complexities in mind that Rawkins expertly approached this series. Often taking inspiration from vintage illustrations and pictorial encyclopedias, where birds and marsupials appear awkward, as if frozen in taxidermy, Rawkins reintroduces them to the landscape.

Her intuitive painting style, guided by a studied understanding of form and anatomy, transforms these creatures into enigmatic presences. She captures just enough detail to distinguish a dingo from a dog, for instance, but dissolves her creatures into their surroundings, blending fur and plumage into riverbeds and sky.

This fusion of animal and environment is central. Rawkins' sensitivity—to her inner world, her family, and the broader environment—imbues every piece. Her paintings are as much about her creative process and her mental state as they are about the animals themselves.

In works like *Balancing Act*, she portrays three parrots inspired by an illustration from 'Birds and Animals of Australia'. The birds, which also serve as metaphors for her three noisy, colourful sons, sway and bob across the canvas, embodying her quest for equilibrium in life and art. Elsewhere, in *Creek Crossing*, a stoic emu strides forward, symbolising life's hurdles, while *Focus* captures an owl as an allegory for the challenges of maintaining concentration in a world full of noise and distraction.

Rawkins' paintings celebrate difference and vulnerability. By pushing the boundaries of representation to the edge of abstraction, she invites viewers to engage with uncertainty and complexity. Her use of texture, colour, and pattern suggests that beauty lies in ambiguity.

With *True Blue*, Rawkins has turned a once-intimidating subject into a profound exploration of identity, environment, and connection. Her work challenges us to see beyond clichés, to find meaning in the interplay between vulnerability and strength, and to celebrate the intertwined nature of all life.



[Balancing Act, 2025](#)

acrylic on canvas, 137cm x 210cm

\$9,000 AUD





Dingo in the Dunes, 2025
acrylic on canvas, 137cm x 210cm
\$9,000 AUD





[Creek Crossing, 2024](#)

acrylic on canvas, 121cm x 137cm

\$6,400 AUD





[Greetings, 2024](#)

acrylic on canvas, 137cm x 121cm

\$6,400 AUD



Focus, 2024

acrylic on canvas, 137cm x 121cm

\$6,400 AUD



Flying Sea Eagle, 2024
acrylic on canvas, 121cm x 137cm
\$6,400 AUD



[Quoll, 2025](#)

acrylic on canvas, 121cm x 137cm

\$6,400 AUD



"There is a unique and rugged quality to Australia's wildlife and landscapes. I was drawn to the potential to convey a sense of survival. These animals—and ourselves—are both vulnerable and resilient.

On a recent trip to K'Gari (Fraser Island), I had the privilege of seeing dingoes up close, and I've since completely fallen in love with them. There's so much misunderstanding around dingoes. The landscape they inhabit there is extraordinary—they're truly wild, yet our presence has led to complications. The dingo is a native species with cultural significance to First Peoples. As an apex species, genetically distinct from domestic dogs, the dingo plays a critical role in a healthy ecosystem. The idea that 'wild dogs' are a problem that need to be controlled is deeply harmful."

Karlee Rawkins, Artist Statement 2025





[Bingo Australia, 2025](#)
acrylic on canvas, 71cm x 61cm
\$2,900 AUD



[Plains Wanderer, 2025](#)

acrylic on canvas, 71cm x 61cm
\$2,900 AUD



[Major Mitchell, 2025](#)

acrylic on canvas, 71cm x 61cm

\$2,900 AUD



[Go Batty, 2025](#)
acrylic on canvas, 61cm x 71cm
\$2,900 AUD

Based on the north coast of New South Wales, award winning painter Karlee Rawkins' vibrant images of flora and fauna reflect the artist's deep fascination with the natural world and highlight the role creatures play within our imagination. Informed in part by the lush diversity of her local ecosystem, Rawkins' works depict a ceaselessly verdant world full of growth and possibility.

Her dynamic acrylics on canvas bring to the fore the enduring importance of cultural storytelling as a means of processing humanities relationship to nature. Echoing the designs and motifs of ancient Indian fabrics, medieval tapestries, folk art imagery or even the pages of a well loved picture book, the totemic characters Rawkins' conjures are full of powerful meanings and symbolic potential.

Rawkins trained at Southern Cross University and has exhibited extensively since 1994. In 2003 she was the recipient of The Brett Whiteley Travelling Scholarship and in 2004 she held a five month residency at Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France. She has been a finalist in the Mosman Art Prize (2020) and won the Margaret Olley Commendation Award in 2019. She has also been a finalist in the Clayton Utz Award (2019, 2018), the Korea-Australia Arts Foundation (2016) and the Prometheus Art Award (2007, 2005). Her work is held in collections including that of Maitland Regional Art Gallery and the Art Gallery of NSW.



[Visit Karlee Rawkins' artist profile webpage](#)

KARLEE RAWKINS

EDUCATION

- 1999 BA Honours (Visual Art) Southern Cross University, Lismore NSW
- 1998 BA (Visual Art) Southern Cross University, Lismore NSW

SOLO EXHIBITIONS AND RESIDENCIES

- 2025 True Blue, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2023 Never Neverland, Yarrila Arts and Museum (YAM), Coffs Harbour
- 2022 The Other Side of the Mountain, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2021 Hocus Pocus, Linton & Kay Galleries, Perth WA
- 2018 Kingdom of Plenty, Linton & Kay Galleries, Perth WA
- 2016 Pretty Wild, Linton & Kay Galleries, Perth WA
- 2015 Big River, Tweed Regional Art Gallery, Murwillumbah
- 2015 Never Never River, Flinders Lane Gallery
- 2013 Honey Gully, Flinders Lane Gallery
- 2012 Wild Fox Garden, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2011 Dark Wood Land, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2010 Big Rock Candy Mountain, Iain Dawson Gallery, Sydney
- 2010 The Deer Park, Anthea Polson Art, Main Beach, Qld
- 2010 Mekong Drift (duo with Marc Renshaw), Tweed River Gallery, Murwillumbah, NSW
- 2009 Orchard, Anthea Polson Art Gallery, Main Beach, Qld
- 2009 Zoo Tomorrow, Iain Dawson Gallery, Sydney
- 2006 Funny Bunnies, Byron Fine Art Gallery, Byron Bay NSW
- 2005 Minor Migration, Byron Fine Art Gallery, Byron Bay NSW
- 2003 Lollies, Byron Fine Art Gallery, Byron Bay NSW
- 2002 Amulet with Marc Renshaw, Gallery Paul, St Kilda VIC
- 2002 Pony Girls Rodeo, The Tub Art Gallery, Byron Bay NSW
- 2000 Flying with Elle Parsonson, Wood St Gallery, Darwin NT

GROUP EXHIBITION

- 2024 Horizons, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2020 Spring Salon, Flinders Lane Gallery Melbourne
- 2020 Mosman Art Prize Finalists, Mosman Art Gallery
- 2019 Mosman Art Prize Finalists, Mosman Art Gallery
- 2019 25 Years : 25 Artists, Southern Cross University, Lismore
- 2019 The Whiteley At 20, S.H.Ervin Gallery, Sydney
- 2019 Co.Lab.Arts, Work in Process, Coffs Harbour Regional Gallery
- 2015 The Piano Has Been Drinking (not me), Maitland Regional Art Gallery
- 2014 Celebrating 25 Years, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2014 Modern Women, Linton & Kay Galleries, Subiaco WA
- 2012 Greatest Hits, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2012 The Studio Show, Flinders Lane Gallery, Melbourne
- 2010 Big Paintings, Iain Dawson Gallery, Sydney
- 2008 Group show, Schubert Contemporary, Main Beach, Qld
- 2007 Brett Whiteley Scholarship Past Winners, Brett Whiteley Studio, Sydney
- 2007 Prometheus Art Award Finalists Exhibition, Merrimac, Qld
- 2006 Chrysalis The Emergence of Northern Rivers Artists, Lismore Regional Gallery, NSW
- 2006 Showcase, Piece Gallery, Mullumbimby NSW
- 2006 Oceans 11, Lismore Regional Gallery, Lismore NSW
- 2005 Summer Show, Brian Moore Gallery, NSW
- 2005 Sydney Prometheus Art Award Finalists Exhibition, Merrimac, Gold Coast QLD
- 2005 This Place Our Town, Piece Gallery, Mullumbimby NSW
- 2004 Exposition, Salles Edouard Marcel Sandoz et Michel David-Weill, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
- 2004 Selected works, Byron Fine Art Gallery, Byron Bay NSW
- 2003 Group Show and Sacred Heart Mission Auction, Gallery Paul, St Kilda Vic
- 2003 The Brett Whiteley Travelling Scholarship Finalists Exhibition, Brett Whiteley Studio, Surry Hills, Sydney

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- 2002 Annual Group Show, Waywood Gallery, Byron Bay NSW
- 2002 Group Show and Sacred Heart Mission Auction, Gallery Paul, St Kilda VIC
- 2002 Five Places To See , Byron Fine Art Gallery and Waywood, Byron Bay
- 2001 20000 Leagues Under The Sea, TheTub Art Gallery, Byron Bay NSW
- 2001 GOGA Art Exhibition, The Glennie School, Toowoomba Qld
- 2000 Festival of The Horse Art Exhibition, The Empire Theatre, Toowoomba Qld
- 1999 Odds On Honours Graduate Exhibition, SCU Lismore NSW
- 1998 11th Annual Bachelor of Arts Graduate Exhibition, SCU, Lismore NSW
- 1998 Selected works - Museum of Contemporary Art, SCU Lismore NSW
- 1995 Curators Choice -Visual Arts Gallery, USQ Toowoomba Qld
- 1995 Indonesian/Australian Student Show -Visual Arts Gallery, USQ Toowoomba
- 1994 Minister for Education's Excellence in Art Award Exhibition,
The Old Post Office Gallery, Toowoomba Qld

AWARDS & PRIZES

- 2020 Mosman Art Prize Finalist
- 2019 Mosman Art Prize Margaret Olley Commendation Award
- 2019 Clayton Utz Art Award Finalist
- 2018 Clayton Utz Art Award Finalist
- 2018 BAM Art Award Finalist
- 2016 Now Shoalhaven Contemporary Art Prize Finalist
- 2015 KAAF Art Prize Finalist
- 2007 Prometheus Art Award Finalist
- 2005 Prometheus Art Award Finalist
- 2003 The Brett Whiteley Travelling Scholarship Winner
- 2001 Pat Corrigan Artists Grant (NAVA & Arts Council Australia)
- 1999 William Fletcher Trust Grant
- 1994 Minister for Education's Excellence in Art Award Finalist

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2023 The Big Book of Little Art Essays, Flinders Lane Gallery
- 2013 Video about Karlee Rawkins' practice, created for ABC Open 2013 by Joelle Baudet
- 2012 Luxford, Phe, Wild Fox Garden, Exhibition catalogue, Flinders Lane Gallery
- 2011 Luxford, Phe, Dark Wood Land, Exhibition catalogue, Flinders Lane Gallery
- 2009 Fortescue, Elizabeth, 'Using Animal Instincts', The Daily Telegraph April 13, p.42
- 2003 Crisp, Lyndall, 'Crayon's trail leads to Paris', Australian Financial Review, September 19
- 2003 Higson, Rosalie, 'From paddock to Paris for a new art star' SMH Sept 19 p.3
- 2003 Lavery, Brendan, 'Whiteley Scholarship win for local artist' The Northern Star, Sept 20
- 2003 Verghis, Sharon, 'Artist's world opens up, with a Whiteley at her side', SSMH, Sept 19 p.3
- 2003 Verghis, Sharon, 'After the pain, growing anew', Sydney Morning Herald, p.17
- 2000 Hinde, Suellen, 'Young artists join forces' Northern Territory News, Aug 19 p.31

RESIDENCIES

- 2004 5 months residency, AGNSW Studio, Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
- 2001 3 months residency, North India and Nepal
- 2000 8 months residency, Darwin NT

COLLECTIONS

- Maitland Regional Art Gallery, NSW
- Art Gallery Of NSW
- Mater Private Hospital, Brisbane
- Sydney Children's Hospitals Foundation
- Gold Coast University Hospital
- Private collections in Australia



FLINDERSLANEGALLERY

Level 1, The Nicholas Building
cnr 37 Swanston St and Flinders Lane
MELBOURNE 3000
WWW.FLG.COM.AU
INFO@FLG.COM.AU
+ 61 3 9654 3332

Tue - Sat 11am - 5pm

