

YAGU GURLBARL (BIG SECRET)



JULIE DOWLING: TAKING A CLOSER LOOK



NHUNDU BURANYMARDA! KAYA! HELLO!

ART ON THE MOVE would like to acknowledge that Australia's First Peoples are the traditional custodians of this land and we pay our respects to the Elders both past, present and future for their unique contribution to the cultural life of communities across Australia.

Our Act-Belong-Commit Engagement Program is for everyone. Our events and activities take place in the galleries we work with, online or at our home at 21 Beach Street and are inspired by the artists we tour.

We want to offer our community creative ways to engage with art and explore the positive impact creativity can have on our lives.

Our program includes artist talks, workshops, artist residencies and resources.

We work with a diverse group of artists across our exhibitions and collaborate with creative organisations across industries to develop a wide variety of audiences for the arts in Western Australia.

KAYA: "Kaya" means "Hello" in Noongar, the language of the Wadjuk people, custodians of the land from the Perth area, on which this learning resource is produced.

Sharing Our Stories

CONNECTING WITH ART

Sharing our stories can feel good. It gives us a platform to express our own experiences and can be empowering. The process requires us to connect with ourselves and to reflect on our past and our feelings. Sometimes this can be challenging, particularly if we are revisiting sad stories. Yet sharing difficult stories can also be cathartic.

What stories in your life are the most meaningful to you?

Art is an amazing tool for telling stories. Unrestrained by language, it can connect our stories with people across time, cultures and languages. As viewers of an artwork, we get a glimpse into someone else's experiences—the artist's—and the stories important in their life.

The artworks in **ART ON THE MOVE** exhibitions tell stories of people, places and experiences. They tell of relationships to family and home, interweaving the histories, meanings and knowledge connected to the important people and places in the artists' lives. The artworks become vehicles for remembering, as they pass on knowledge from the past to the future, from older to younger generations.

The activities in this resource offer ways to reflect on a selected artwork and its stories. They also offer ideas for connecting with your family, friends and the people close to you to share the stories that are meaningful to you.

Look carefully at one of the artworks. What story does the artwork share? Why do you think the artist might have chosen to tell that particular story? What story would you like to tell?

Act – Do something

Belong – Do something with someone

Commit – Do something meaningful

There is no word in Badimia for hello but instead we say **"NHUNDU BURANYMARDA"** which means: "you good?" Carol Dowling

ACT Looking closely (Adults and children ages 1 and up)

Looking closely requires slowing down and focusing our attention so that we can observe the many visual details around us. We are often so busy in our daily lives that we are not aware of the ways we perceive the world. Taking a moment to centre our energy on the sights, sounds, smells, tastes and touch of the things around us can be calming. It is also a great way to heighten our senses to engage more deeply with an artwork.

Alone or with a young person, **close your eyes** and take some time to **focus your attention** on each **of your senses**.

Listen attentively to the sounds around you.

Feel the movement of your body as you **breathe** and the sensation of your clothing.

Notice the air around you – its **temperature**, **motion** and **scent**.

If you have any food or beverage with you, take **a bite or a sip** and spend time **reflecting on its flavours**.

Now **look closely** at an artwork of your choice.

What **different colours, shapes, lines and textures** do you see in the painting?

Can you detect the **different brushstrokes** the artist used to create the painting?

'We chose our own liferafts – my sister
got into writing and I got into arts.
This helped us stay sane.'
Julie Dowling



Julie Dowling, *Molly & Dorothea: The Servant Shall Become the Master*, 2017

BELONG Listening to stories (Ages 6 and up)

Connect with someone close to you and ask them to share a meaningful story from their life. Before they begin to tell their story, try to clear your mind of any distractions so that you can focus on them.

As the **storyteller talks**, keep your **body directed toward them** and your **eyes engaged** with theirs.

Try to **be aware** of your own concentration levels and when you might be **losing focus**.

Once the storyteller has finished, **ask them questions** about their story.

How did they feel at the time the story took place?

How do they feel now reflecting on it?

Create a drawing of the storyteller with crayon or a texter.

Are there **certain elements from their story** that you could illustrate in the background?

Perhaps you could show **where the story took place**, the **time of day** or an **object important to the story**.

What title would you like to give to the story and your drawing?

Consider gifting your finished drawing to the storyteller.

COMMIT Celebrating everyday heroes (Ages 12 and up)

Spending time with the people we care about makes us feel good. They bring us joy and laughter and help to support us in times of need.

When we **share our respect and admiration** for them with others, it not only **makes them feel good** but it **makes us feel good**, too.

It also helps to **build a special connection** with other people.

When others **recognise our appreciation** for the people we care about, **we create a unique link** between them, our loved ones and ourselves, helping to **build understanding** between people.

Connect with a person in your life that you **admire** and **create an artwork that celebrates** them and their experiences.

Experiment with ways that you could tell their story in various art mediums, such as drawing, photography and collage.

Consider how you could make your **respect** for them a **central component** of the artwork.

Talk with them as you develop your artwork and get their thoughts and feedback. **Share** your final artwork with them and others.

ABOUT JULIE DOWLING

Julie Dowling **Self-portrait: Balu (She)**, 2017.
Image courtesy of the artist.



Julie Dowling was born in Subiaco, WA and grew up in both semi-rural and urban areas in a large Badimaya extended family.

She was awarded a Diploma of Fine Art at Claremont School of Art in 1989, a Bachelor of Fine Arts at Curtin University in 1992, an Associate Diploma in Visual Arts Management at Perth Metropolitan TAFE in 1995 and Honorary Doctorate in Literature (Honoris Causa) from Murdoch University 2002. Since her first solo exhibition at Fremantle Arts Centre in 1995, Dowling has been exhibited extensively in Australia and internationally.

Working in a social realist style, Dowling draws on diverse art traditions including European portraiture and Christian icons, mural painting and Badimaya First Nation iconography.

Dowling works like an ethnographer, recording the deep-seated injustices in the Indigenous community. Her pictorial works have a strong political edge, however, she speaks as a de-colonised subject and subverts the traditional power relations between the observer and the observed, the coloniser and the de-colonised.

In Yagu Gurlbarl (Big Secret), artist Julie Dowling explores the theme of the slavery of First Nations peoples both in past centuries and in current Australian society. The exhibition features a series of figurative paintings with embellished, glittering surfaces that draw in and engage viewers. Upon closer inspection, a strong political trajectory underlies the work, challenging the myth that First Nations peoples were/are lazy and a drain on society. The beauty presented in the works becomes a metaphor for the resilience and wisdom of First Nations peoples to overcome the narrow narrative that sanitises colonisation.

To hear Julie Dowling talk about her life, work and influences, visit [ARTONTHEMOVE.ART](#) and listen to the Julie Dowling podcast.

GLOSSARY

CATHARTIC: the process of releasing strong emotions through a particular activity or experience. This can be inspired by or through art, for example crying during a movie can be cathartic.

SOCIAL REALISM: Social realist artists reflect on the everyday life and conditions of ordinary people in realistic ways and comment on the underlying social structures.

ICONOGRAPHY: A particular range of visual images or symbols used in an artwork or artworks. For example, in Christian religious paintings a dove is a symbol for the holy spirit.

EUROPEAN PORTRAITURE: Portraits created in Renaissance and Baroque Europe during the 15th and 16th century, in which the artist tries to capture a persons' unique appearance. Renaissance and Baroque portraits follow a narrow list of conventional formats, for example, subjects are often portrayed in the profile view.

ICON: Originally a painting of Christ or another holy figure on a panel and used as an object of devotion. The term has become attached to any object or image that is outstanding or has a special meaning.

MURAL: Any type of artwork painted directly on a permanent surface like a wall or a ceiling.

ETHNOGRAPHY: The scientific study of people and cultures.

FIGURATIVE ART: Artworks that clearly represent real objects, forms or figures.

PICTORIAL: Illustrated, expressed in pictures

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & CREDITS



Front cover: Julie Dowling
Icon to a Stolen Child - Binna (Red), 2017

Back cover: **Icon to a Stolen Child - Garu Gabi (Quiet Water)** (Detail), 2016

All artwork images by Simon Cowling and courtesy the artist.

Yagu Gurlbarl (Big Secret) is an ART ON THE MOVE touring exhibition.

www.artonthemove.art

ART ON THE MOVE is supported by the State Government through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.

The Act-Belong-Commit Engagement Program is sponsored by Healthway promoting the Act-Belong-Commit message.

The Julie Dowling podcast is part of the ART ON THE MOVE Act-Belong-Commit Learning and Community Engagement Program, sponsored by Healthway, promoting the Act-Belong-Commit message. Soundscape is by Julie and Carol Dowling. Podcast by Meri Fatin.

Production:
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Learning Resource Design:
Studio Papa
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