

# MEDIA RELEASE

## WIRU – Julie Dowling

### OPENING CELEBRATION

Friday 25 May from 6:30pm

### VIEWING TIMES

15 May – 29 June, Wed – Fri 10am – 5pm and Saturday

Nationally renowned Badimaya artist Julie Dowling presents an exhibition of new works at Midland Junction Arts Centre as documentation of the revival of First Nations languages within local and global contexts.

For *Wiru* (Spirit), Dowling's suite of miniature portraits represents a community actively decolonising through documenting, learning and speaking their language, Badimaya on Country in the Mid-West of WA. Referring to the importance of preserving First Nation languages throughout the world, within each work of this series of paintings, language is represented as being full of knowledge, culture and a vessel for relationships to Country.

Classified as an endangered language, and with only a single fluent speaker, the Badimaya people are engaging proactively to learn and preserve their language. This exhibition takes the form of a visual thesis for the importance of cultural preservation on a personal scale.

The exhibition also features works which explore the history of Midland. These paintings by Dowling use Badimaia and Noongar words to pay homage to the cultural life of Midland as a hub for First Nations peoples.

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Working in a social realist style, Julie Dowling draws on diverse art traditions including European portraiture, Christian icons, mural painting, dotting and Indigenous Australian iconography. Dowling has established an ethnographic practice recording deep-seated injustices in the Indigenous community. Her paintings have a strong political edge, Dowling creates explicitly as a colonised subject with the intent to subvert traditional power relations between the observer and the observed, the colonizer and the colonized.

Since her first solo exhibition at Fremantle Arts Centre in 1995, Dowling has earned national and international reputation as an artist of extraordinary vision. Her work has been exhibited extensively in Australia and overseas, notably at Art Fair Cologne; Beyond the Pale: Contemporary Indigenous Art, 2000 Adelaide Biennial of Australian Art; the RAKA AWARD: Places that name us; & 'Strange Fruit' a retrospective at The Potter Museum of Art. Dowling is represented by Yamaji Art based in Geraldton.

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