

## Karla Dickens

Karla conducted her residency from 8 to 14 July 2010 as part of the program for her exhibition at Grafton Regional Gallery titled *The Black Madonna*. During her residency, Karla demonstrated her art practice in the Studio.

Karla is Wiradjuri, her parents are from Mascot, Sydney and she was born in Sydney in 1967; the Year of the Referendum, that gave Aboriginal people human status within the nation called Australia. A double dawn for Aboriginal people; a major national political and social shift and an innocent new born seemingly as yet without any connection to her history and Aboriginal heritage. As she tells, the process of moving from childhood to the present was a colourful and at times, destructive journey of self discovery. Ironically and literally a truly dark but noble 'Dickensian' life.



In the 1970s feminists spoke of being three times discriminated against – being Aboriginal, being a woman, and being gay. Karla's Aboriginality and sexuality do profoundly inform her work – yet her insight and breadth of artistic practice both embraces the notion of identity politics deeply and yet works with universal human experiences. Her work truly fosters an intra and cross cultural dialogue through the forum of contemporary art.

*The Black Madonna* exhibition presented a new series of works based on Karla's personal, cultural and spiritual memories. The richly textured collages are a personal adaption of the icon of The Madonna and Child reflecting Karla's life as a mother and Aboriginal woman of mixed Wiradjuri and Irish descent. Karla combines painting and collaging to create an intricate and colourful world placing The Madonna within Aboriginal culture and history.

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