



Kaya by Margaret Fane



1. Homeless Woman
Acrylic on Canvas
96cm Width x 1.16mtres Height

I have created an image of a contemporary, homeless Aboriginal woman whom I know personally. The red blood sky symbolises the severity of her situation. She is a lady who sleeps on church property as she is unable to secure permanent accommodation. Her tears convey her sadness. The three angels seem to surround her and symbolize the protection she receives from

people around her as does the shield in front of her. The shield radiates her beauty from within and is a symbol of her Aboriginal heritage. The blue on her left breast symbolizes her humanity. To the left, I have painted two geese as a comparison to the stupidity of the European. The bottle of wine is used by many Aboriginal people to soothe the pain of being homeless; a way of escape. The

background is painted in earthy dark sombre colours with dark doorways evoking the alleyways where the homeless often sleep. The viewer is then led to the pink to the right which is a symbol of the Aboriginal woman's femininity. There is a bright green cross beneath the pink which is a symbol of hope and strength through the cross.



2. Aboriginal Man in Landscape
Acrylic on Canvas
122cms Width x 112cms Height

My memory goes back to a time I was travelling through the Simpson Desert on my way back to Perth from Darwin. I came across a group of Aboriginal people from the desert who had just arrived at a shop along the highway. I noticed a young Aboriginal man about 20 years of age and his appearance seemed so untouched by European civilisation. His demure was attractive and his complexion was clear and vibrant but I

noticed a sadness in his eyes which to me came across as being lost and fearful of the future. The landscape was beautiful which I have tried to convey in the painting however it is contrasted by the sadness of the Aboriginal man. The bags symbolize homelessness and poverty and the fire in the background is in the distance as the sun is setting.

The dingo and cat represent the old and the new ways. The abnormal shaped houses border on the contemporary world. The setting sun is the end of the freedom and beauty for this seemingly untouched Aboriginal man. The green, orange and yellow circles are soothing symbols of wholeness and hope for the future.



3. Aboriginal Lady in Sand Hills
Acrylic on Canvas
96cm Width x 96cm Height

This was a distressing image I remember seeing as a teenager living in Geraldton and it was a time when the Aboriginal people could not find accommodation in the town and lived in the sand hills. The despair I have tried to capture was confronting as they dressed in poor clothes and did not wear shoes. The jagged sand hills were home to stray cats and dogs introduced by the

European. The bag is a symbol of poverty and the rock is a symbol of the harshness of the terrain with the solace of the crows in the background. The hand and feet are clubbed through suffering and she is reaching in desperation to the friendship of the cat which is foreign to the Aboriginal people.

It is a metaphor for the desperation of the Aboriginal woman reaching out to the European way of life. The image I have tried to convey to the viewer is one of a struggle for the Aboriginal people trying to assimilate into the European's way of life which is completely foreign to them.



4. Aboriginal Deaths
Acrylic on Canvas
99cm Width x 98cm Height

I have made the sky blood red and emerging into a fiery background. The woman is sad and grieving over her dead child. The death rate for Aboriginal people is high due to alcohol and homelessness. I have painted the wine and the goose, comparing the goose to the uncaring attitude of the European who is unconcerned with the pain of the Aboriginal

people. The crows which are sacred to the Aboriginal people seem confused. Noongar people believe the crow takes the spirit to the other side (Thomson 2009). The bag is again a symbol of poverty and homelessness. The European man to the right is in a posture of shame as many of the children were borne by the white man and the

Aboriginal women were left without means to care for their children. The death rate for the Aboriginal population was high as compared to the European death rate (Byrnes 2018). I have painted the Aboriginal man too large for the coffin and in a resurrected position symbolising the belief that the Aboriginal spirit lives on in the form of the crow.



5. Contemporary Aboriginal Housing
Acrylic on Canvas
1.18mtres Width x 1.18mtres Height

In today's society, Aboriginal families often live together in a house supplied by the Government. The image in this painting is similar to an Aboriginal family living in our street. There is a sense of movement from the brush strokes and clouds as families often move from place to place. The faces of the Aboriginal women are similar as they are often related. They are sad and there is a

sense of yearning for their natural habitat on their faces. The child is happy and secure. There is a large number of Aboriginal people as prisoners in jails and I have indicated this in their clothing. The deformed chair on the roof symbolises a disrespect for the European way of life. It is the Aboriginal desire to return to their natural way of life. The shield at the front of the painting is

a symbol of spiritual protection. The house is indicative of today's housing with an emphasis on security which is evident in the windows. There is a paradox here as to whether the Aboriginals need protection from the community or the other way around. I have tried to evoke a feeling of movement and ongoing disregard for the Aboriginal situation in today's society.



6. Aboriginal Identity
Acrylic on Canvas
90cm Width x 95cm Height

There is much emphasis on superficial beauty in today's society and this has not changed in millions of years. The White Australia Policy 1901 banned immigration of non-European descent into Australia and fortunately was dismantled between 1949 and 1966 (National Museum Australia 2018). As well as trying to force the Aboriginal people

into the European way of life, it also discriminated against the colour of their skin. The face is once again sad and with tears with the bottle of wine as a way of escape from the harsh judgement of the European population. The goose is a symbol of the dysfunction of the system and the happy face of the European in the picture frame is contrasted

to the sad face of the Aboriginal woman. There is a deformity with the comb symbolising the desperation of the situation. The bag once again symbolises poverty and homelessness. The hand is feeling her skin and questioning "why". The water on her left breast is a symbol of her humanity.



7. Aboriginal Woman and Cockie
Acrylic on Canvas
99cm Width x 98cm Height

In this painting, I have tried to convey the inseparable unity between the Australian environment and the Aboriginal people. The woman is sad and the hills are calling out for attention and care. The sky is calm and peaceful as if waiting for something to happen. The solace of the Cockie is a contrast to the sadness of the

beautiful Aboriginal woman. The shield is a symbol of her spiritual protection. The painting is simple yet profound inviting the viewer to question and discover through the imagery, why the woman is crying which could provide the answer as to why the Aboriginal people are grieving to the present day.



8. Temptation and Abuse
Oil on Canvas
1.06mtres Width x 94cm Height

This Painting is a depiction of a recent event of the imprisonment of an Aboriginal woman who scratched a man's car for inviting her to pose nude for his photographs. The apple and the snake is symbolic of the sin of Adam and Eve. Here the woman is being abused by the man by exposing her to something immoral. The male's head is unattached to the

shoulders which indicates insanity. The blue and the green clash which evokes a feeling of discomfort. I have used the geese in the background to symbolise the stupidity and injustice of the system. There is a dark sinister shape behind the juicy yellow apple and the pink flesh and jagged hair of the male evokes a sense of immoral anxiety.



9. Aboriginal Lady with Crows
Acrylic on Canvas
95cm Width x 86cm Height

The main focus of the painting is the Aboriginal woman or girl. This is a metaphor for our own lives. We concentrate on the sadness within us, however, fail to notice the beauty around us. Here is an Aboriginal woman with justified sadness with the crows surrounding her in anticipation of taking her to the other side. The bag is again symbolic of poverty and homelessness.



10. Aboriginal Girl at School
Acrylic on Canvas
93cm Width x 93cm Height

My memories in this painting are about a young Aboriginal girl who was taken from the bush and placed in our school whilst I was at boarding school. She only lasted a few months due to her desire to return to the bush. I remember her sadness and frustration at her new environment and how she was unable to assimilate into the school community. This is also similar in some

aspects to my own experience when I attended University after many years of work, and I'm sure many can relate to this experience. The sadness and frustration are shown in her tearful face with the confusing placement of thongs, bags, and books within the composition. The stern owl looking down on her is a symbol of wisdom which is so foreign to her meaning of wisdom.

The crows are in the distance refusing to let go. The houses are a clutter and so foreign to her way of life. The orange sky is harsh and the white hand is inviting her to come into the land of the unknown.



11. On the Bus
Acrylic on Canvas with Gloss Varnish.
49cm Width x 40cm Height

This painting is based on a memory when I would catch the bus to go to school. The bus is in the shape of a pig. I remember at the time, the Aboriginal people were deprived of their hunting grounds and had to rely on shacks on farms for accommodation without running water and food. I remember they were always moving from place to place. For a short time, some Aboriginal children had to catch the bus to go to school. The best

seats were taken by the European school children and if there were free seats, the Aboriginal children were prevented from sitting next to them because of the smell from not being able to wash due to lack of water. I noticed children and even adults who used buses for interstate travel were forced to stand at the back of the bus. The Europeans in the seats appear to be so prim and proper in their comfortable seats with

the driver taking no notice of the discomfort of the Aboriginal people at the back of the bus. I have used a sombre blue as a contrast to the pink flesh of the Europeans. The Europeans are wearing hats to protect them against the harsh sun and this is contrasted by the vulnerability of the Aboriginal figures.



12. "And They Told Us To Jump"
Acrylic on Thin Sealed MDF
1.21mtres Width x 40cm Height

This is based on a story I heard about the treatment of Aboriginals in Tasmania. I have used thin MDF to symbolise the fragility of the story both in content and what is true but it moved me so much that I decided to paint what was conveyed to me. It was going back to the beginning of European settlement in Tasmania. There was much conflict between the British

soldiers and the Aboriginal people. It went like this: The British soldiers had hoarded up some Aboriginal people and placed them on the edge of a mountain. They lifted their rifles ready to shoot them and asked them if they wanted to be shot or to jump. The Aboriginals called out "Pome" which in their language meant "help me". The soldiers thought they were making fun of them

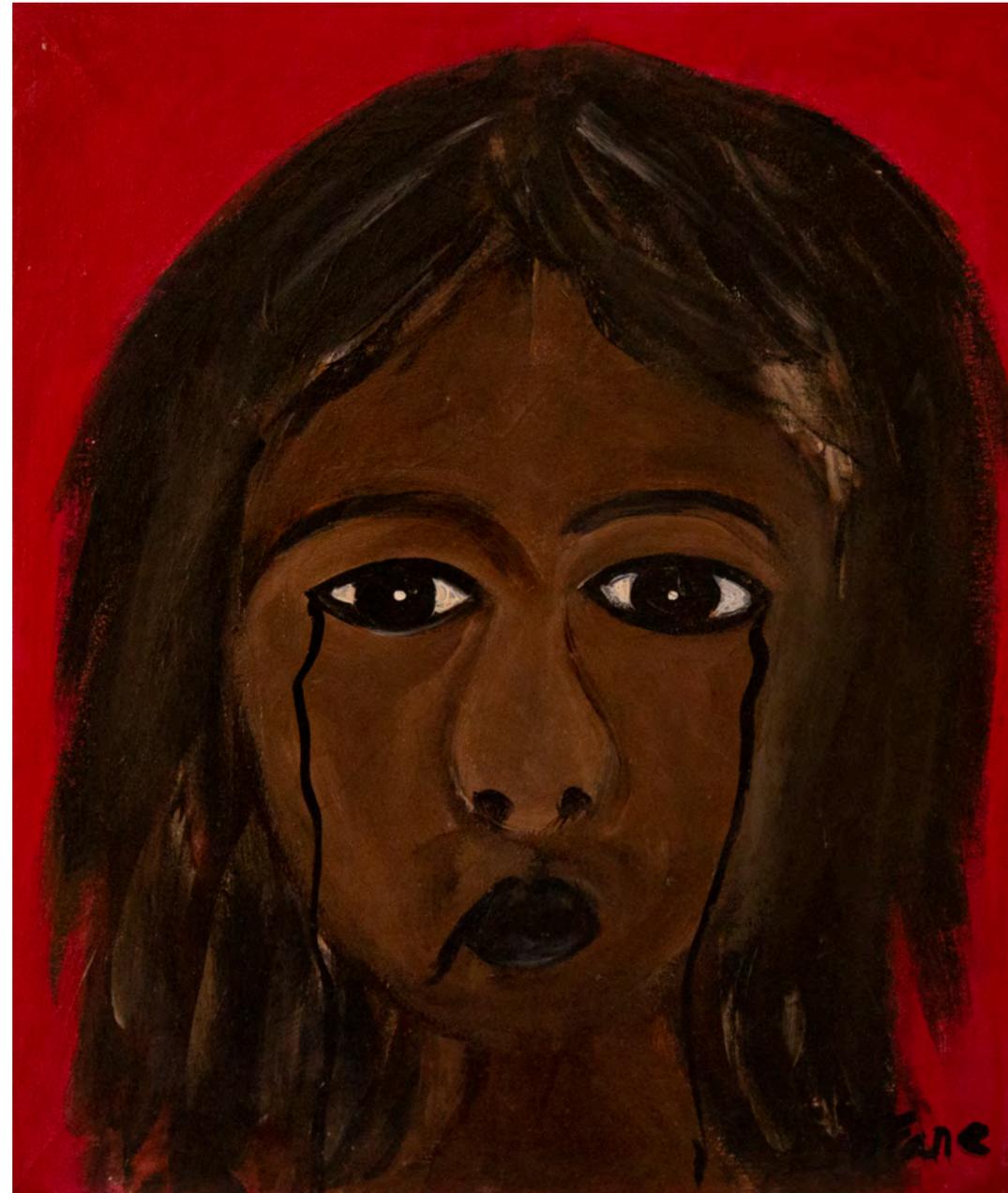
and shot them. I have tried to convey a sense of desperation and vulnerability on the faces of the Aboriginal figures. The work is sombre brown. Even today, this attitude is apparent in the way the system ignores the language of the Aboriginal people and sends them a confused message of wanting to jump or be shot.



13. Aboriginal and St Michael the Arch Angel
Acrylic on Un-Stretched Canvas
1.96mtres Width x 1.46mtres Height

I have made this painting large in order to convey to the viewer the importance of spirituality within the Aboriginal culture. I have used decorative shapes to create a pleasing atmosphere as contrasted to the solemnity of the Aboriginal figure. The white of the angel's wing is protecting her and the Cockie is showing the way. I have

tried to fill this painting with hope as I have used pleasing colours and shapes that evoke a movement that is positive. The swirling lines are elegant and the colours vibrant. I have tried to provide a positive outlook in respect to the sufferings of the Aboriginal people and within our own lives also.



14. Aboriginal Girl on Red Background
Acrylic on Cotton Duck
40cm Width x 47cm Height

This is an image that is a product of my memory. I am unaware of who she is or where I remember seeing her. She is an Aboriginal girl of mixed blood and referred to as “half-caste”. It is a distant memory from when I grew up in Geraldton. I do not remember seeing a happy Aboriginal person.



15. Aboriginal Reserves
Mixed Media on Plywood
60cm Width x 45cm Height

My painful memories take me back to a place in time when Aboriginal people were placed in reserves. It is a distant memory but my mother would often say the Aboriginals lived in reserves and the reserves were not very nice. I could only imagine the shacks they lived in when in the town and my mind often wondered how

they would have access to the waterholes and hunting grounds. I have tried to relay this memory in painting form. I have used iconic faces in my mind to capture the suffering and lack of freedom. I have put most of the water holes outside the fences where they have no access to them. I have used barbed-wire in the painting as a symbol of

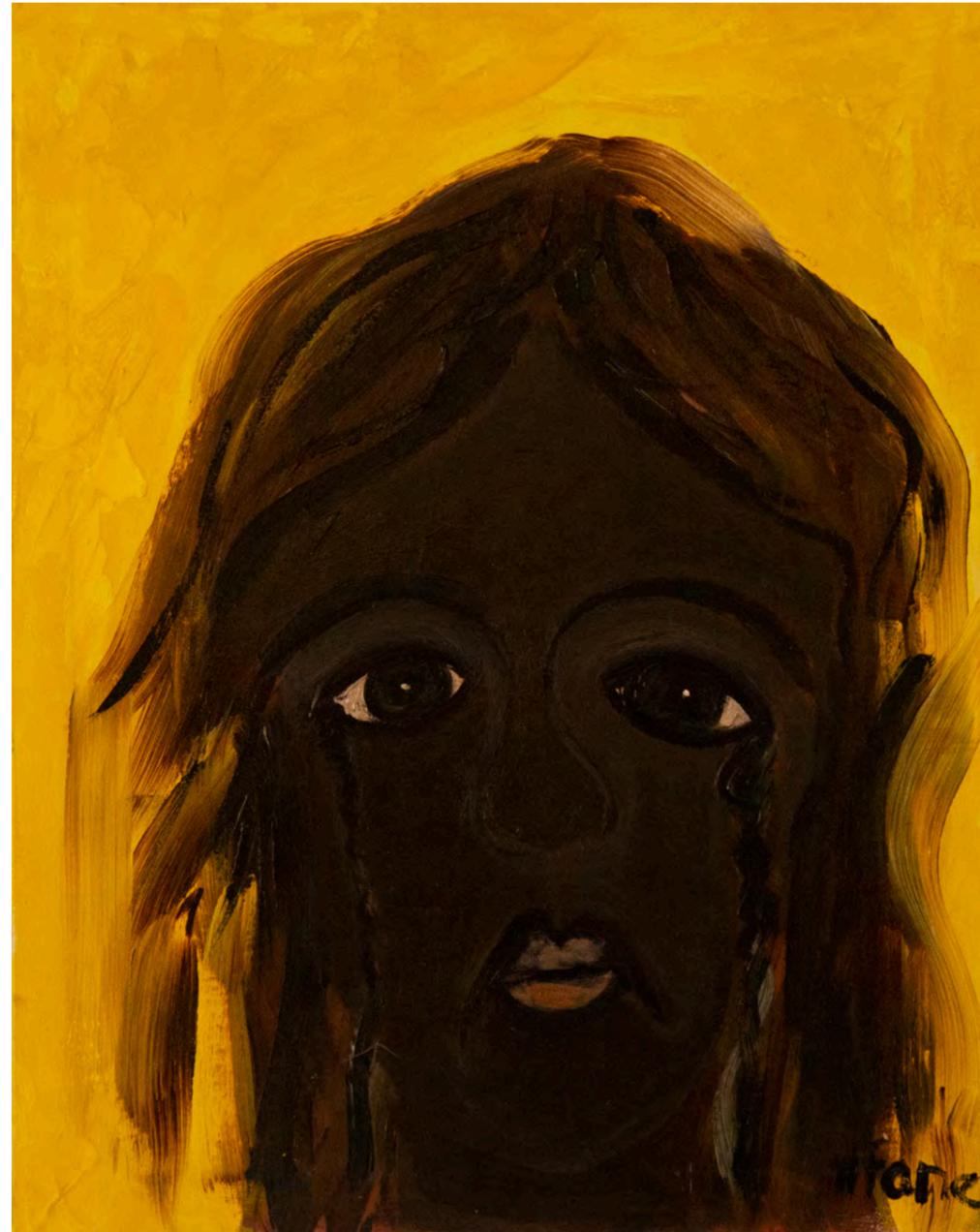
containment and to convey the harshness of their captivity. The orange colour of the land merges into the colour of blood red at the bottom and the army green in the mountains is evocative of the conflict between the European system and the Aboriginal people.



16. Broken Down Car
Oil on Canvas
61cm Width x 42cm Height

Many of the Aboriginal people could not afford cars and often would use broken cars loaded with their people to get from place to place. The land was subdivided which made it difficult for them to travel to places they would normally travel to. Often I would see broken down cars along the road or hear of accidents with many fatalities. The police would often capture them and put them in jail for breaking the road rule. I have used dark

cool colours for the background with a touch of warmth in the foreground. The hills are large and cumbersome separated by fences which are symbolic of oppression. The unsympathetic sky is dark blue to evoke a feeling of the oncoming night. This is another example of the oppression denying the Aboriginal people the freedom which is their heritage.



17. Aboriginal Girl on Yellow Background
Acrylic on Cotton Duck
46cm Width x 58cm Height

This is another image from my distant memory. Whilst the Aboriginal people were often referred to “half-caste” because of the mixture of coloured blood, my memory in this image is closer to a full blooded Aboriginal girl which I remember seeing during my childhood. The nose was large and the

eyes were big. The hair was often matted and the lips were full. I have used a yellow background as my feelings at the time were of beauty and yellow radiates the sense of beauty and childlike wonder that I was experiencing at the time.



18. Aboriginal Girl in the Mountains with Crows
Acrylic on Canvas
52cm Width x 47cm Height

The figure in this painting is larger than the mountains evoking an image of power. The expression on her sad tearful face is full of strength and anticipation for what is before her. The pink sky radiates her femininity and the circling crows happily await to assist. The colours of the mountains offer a glimmer of hope. This is a painting of 'going forward with anticipation' and can apply to all of us in similar situations.



19. Aboriginal Girl and Cockie
Acrylic on Canvas
41cm Width x 61cm Height

In this painting, I am trying to relay the beauty of the Aboriginal girl and her close encounter with the Cockie. It is an image of friendship between her and the bird. She relates to the bird in a spiritual way and this is seen often within the Aboriginal culture. Birds and wildlife are important

to the Aboriginal way of life. Even though there is sadness in the girls face she is consoled by the Cockie. The brush strokes are soft and whimsical with flecks of light in the background. I have tried to evoke a feeling of spirituality.



20. Aboriginal Cleaning Lady
Acrylic on Canvas with Gloss Varnish
55cm Width x 40cm Height

This is a scene I once saw where an Aboriginal lady was employed to do the cleaning for a European family. The European is looking smug and happy in her house whereas the Aboriginal lady is holding a broom with one foot on the step and one on the ground which is evocative of

displacement. The background is colourful but unstable with short broken brush strokes. The Aboriginal worker is giving prominence to the white face in the window and evokes an image of servitude.



21. Homeless Aboriginal Woman Sleeping
Acrylic on Canvas with Gloss Varnish
53cm Width x 40cm Height

This painting is reflective of the many homeless Aboriginal people living on our streets today. The gold background is symbolic of the “holiness and sacredness’ of sleep where all pain is eliminated and justice prevails. The two images of the sleeping Aboriginal woman and the European

women complement each other. There is a sense of unity between the two figures. The Aboriginal woman is united to the spirituality of the bird and the European lady is united to her sense of possession. Both are sacred, however, the white lady is awake and the large figure of the

Aboriginal woman, who is owning the composition, is engrossed in the sacredness of sleep. I have tried to convey a sense of Justice to the awkward situation of homelessness within the Aboriginal population. Justice comes to us in the dream-time.



22. Shattered Dreams
Oil on Canvas
1.10 metres Width x 1.48 metres Height

This is my final painting of my series on the sufferings of the Aboriginal people arising from memory and experience. These sufferings are experienced by all of us but more so for the Aboriginal population. It is an image of an Aboriginal woman hunting for worms but there is little space and the trees are dead.

The woman's face conveys anguish and loss. I have used cool blue with sharp white lines to symbolise the houses surrounding the park where the woman is foraging for food. She is wearing a purple dress symbolising the purple robe that was wrapped around Christ when he was led to the crucifixion. She is wearing a coat of many colours

relating to the coat of many colours Joseph wore when his brothers became jealous and tried to kill him. Her foot is placed on the colour red symbolizes the passion with the colour green and touches of yellow to evoke an image of hope.

A Series Of Paintings Drawn From My Memory Of The Sufferings Of The Aboriginal People.

Margaret Fane

Bachelor of Art (Fine Art)

I have named this body of work “Kaya”, a Noongar word which translates to hello. This body of work draws on my memory when I was a teenager growing up in Geraldton, Western Australia in the early 60’s. I have included some paintings based on present experiences. This work focuses on the sufferings of the Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people, at the time, were referred to “half-casts” because of the mixture of Aboriginal and European blood. However, being half-caste was also considered as being “the other” and they were rejected by society and lived in sheds and reserves. They were exempt from pensions and had to rely on the kindness of others for food or scraps (Korff 2018). The Aboriginal was often given “flaps” from the sheep carcass and other offal that the European would not eat. They were given the same food given to animals. I came from a non-conventional pioneering family from English and Irish descent which evoked in me an empathy for “the other” as I myself, even though I was of European

descent, I felt I was also “the other” growing up in a strict conservative environment. I have lived with these memories for most of my life and have been very conscious of the injustices towards the Aboriginal people and “the other” within our community. The work is a paradox because the sufferings can relate to each and every one of us and it is by acknowledging this injustice and facing and trying to address them within ourselves, we can only be healed as a person and as a community. I have only touched on the sufferings in this body of work and I can only imagine the experience of rejection within the Aboriginal people have gone far beyond being able to be healed or reconciled. If I can at least bring to attention the seriousness of the ongoing injustice to this beautiful and talented race of people, then I will feel I have achieved something. My hope is for a Museum or Art Gallery to purchase this body of work and to dedicate the proceeds to the support of people living in poverty and for the eventual reconciliation between

indigenous people and the newcomer. I have been painting for many years since graduating from Stella Maris College in Geraldton in 1965 passing Leaving Art. It wasn’t until 2000 when I became serious with my art after studying the spirituality of Art at the Franciscan Monastery under the direction of Irish Franciscan artist Joe Walsh OFM. He has been my mentor for 18 years. I have also studied Art at Perth Technical College, Fremantle Art Centre and Claremont School of Art. I completed a Bachelor of Art (Fine Art) at Curtin University in 2017. I have had many successful exhibitions throughout Perth over a period of 18years. I have been exhibiting my work at St Mary’s Cathedral and various Catholic parishes for the past 18 years and I have also had successful exhibitions at Ellis House Gallery, Moore’s Gallery, and Atwell Gallery. If you are interested in more of my work [please visit my website](#).

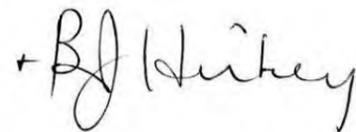
Archbishop's Postscript

With her keen eye and her skillful use of colour and image, Margaret Fane has recorded her experience of the suffering of many Aboriginal people living in the midst of affluence.

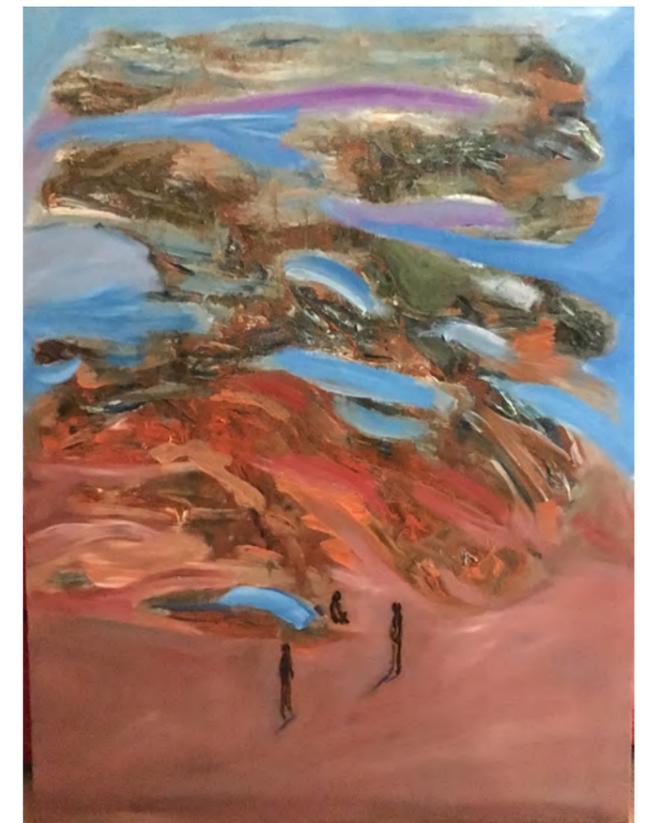
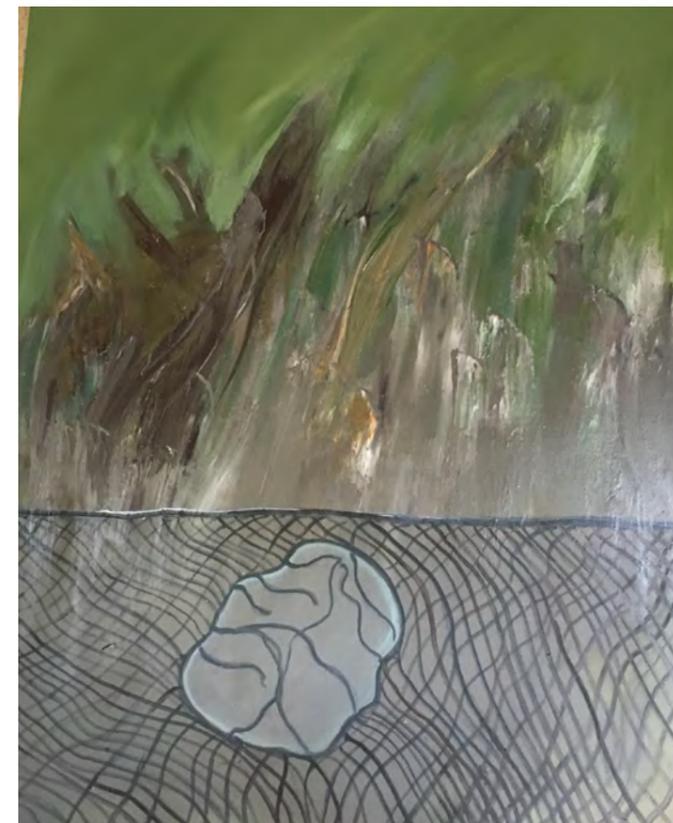
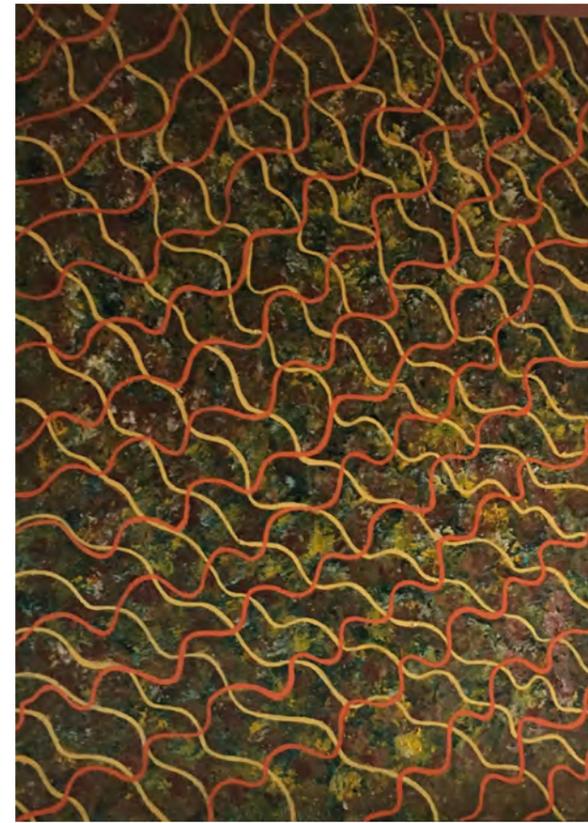
In her graphic capture of the elements of homelessness and street life Margaret shows us a sad truth with clarity and compassion. Her solidarity with the suffering of the people is obvious as is her enduring question of why.

Though many indigenous people have broken the shackles of the past and found their rightful place in Australian society, able to make their own unique contribution, others are still trapped in poverty and exclusion.

My hope is that this collection will find a wide and thoughtful viewing audience motivated to join together with them on the path to true reconciliation and with dignity and solidarity.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "B J Hickey" with a small cross symbol to the left.

Most Rev B J Hickey
Archbishop Emeritus of Perth



Recent Works By Margaret Fane (Homeless Project)

References:

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