

# RONALD EDWARDS PEPPER

Gunnai

## Colours in Country

Synthetic polymer paint on synthetic paper

15 parts

2022

“These paintings are my vision of how I see colours in Australia, how it used to be and how things are coming back to life. Knowing that the fires and floods are happening, it is like Australia is reborn again. It is like mother nature is doing it for herself. As you can see, I have many hand prints and many colours, they represent the different family members across all cultures in Australia, just like in the language map. Australia is made up of many different cultures. The hands represent sharing knowledge and education, sharing Aboriginal culture. They are also my signature or mark and represent passing on culture. They say, ‘give me your hand, this is our story’. The green represents the land and the grass and Australia, the regrowth of the habitat. The yellow represents the sun and happiness. The blue represents the river, the sky, it’s my favourite colour and makes me happy as an artist. The black background represents the Aboriginal people of Australia. The pink represents the beautiful in nature. Even though the Earth is unwell, you may see a flower in there, a sign that the Earth is regrowing. The white and silver handprints represent non-Indigenous people, sharing and telling the truth of Australia to move forward. I do this through art to break down the barriers.

The diamond designs represent the land and the Gunaikurnai. I paint that to be a strong Gunnai artist and to represent South Eastern Australia in art, and represent what I do today, but bringing back the old too.

The wavy designs are part of the Earth, part of the river running, the way the landscapes are built, the blues are rivers, browns the earth. I see the designs in the land and the way it was since day one.”

Ronald Edwards Pepper

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## To See Layers in Colours

Synthetic polymer paint on board

2022

“This story is about the land of many colours. The wavy lines are the beautiful Country, reborn after floods and fires. Aboriginal people look after the land by using fire to back-burn. The five lines represent the five clan groups of the Gunaikurnai. The spirals are very old designs, to me they mean people moving around Country, connected to other Aboriginal people in different cultures and colours. The smaller spirals are the younger ones and the bigger spirals are the adults. It reminds us how we have to learn to look after the land again, because it is unwell. Like a circle of life. The round board represents the Earth.”

Ronald Edwards Pepper

Collection of the artist

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## Borun's Dreaming

Synthetic polymer paint on board

2022

“The lines in this work represent the five clan groups of the Gunaikurnai and the colours that Borun created on Country. Borun, the pelican, made the Country. Borun is the Dreaming story of the Gunaikurnai people. As you can see there is the shape of a canoe on his head. Borun is travelling from Port Albert along Country, along the rivers, to the northwest of Corner Inlet, on his way making Country. He heard a constant tapping sound – ‘tap tap tap’. Borun put down his canoe to see what the ‘tap tap tap’ was, but couldn’t identify it. He looked over, there was a musk duck (Tuk), she was very beautiful, and she was the mother and he was the father of the Gunaikurnai people, made up of five clan groups. Brayakaulung is the clan group that covers the area including Morwell, Churchill, Moe and Traralgon.

I paint layers on layers. The outer round shape represents the Earth, then Australia, then South Eastern Australian Aboriginal culture. The dark background is the night sky and you can see the stars and Borun, just like the Emu in the Sky. April is the time of year that you will see the Emu in the Sky.”

Ronald Edwards Pepper

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## I Will Return (Boomerang)

Synthetic polymer paint and mixed media on canvas

2022

“I have painted differently-coloured boomerangs because we go out to different Country, different Country belonging to different groups, but we always return home. In this painting you can also see Borun, the pelican.

Borun made the Country. Borun is the Dreaming story of the Gunaikurnai people. As you can see there is the shape of a canoe on his head. Borun is travelling from Port Albert along Country, along the rivers, to the northwest of Corner Inlet, on his way making Country. He heard a constant tapping sound – ‘tap tap tap’. Borun put down his canoe to see what the ‘tap tap tap’ was, but couldn’t identify it. He looked over, there was a musk duck (Tuk), she was very beautiful, and she was the mother and he was the father of the Gunaikurnai people, made up of five clan groups. Brayakaulung is the clan group that covers the area including Morwell, Churchill, Moe and Traralgon.”

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## Borun's Five Canoes

Synthetic polymer paint and mixed media on canvas

2022

“This painting shows five shields representing the five clan groups of the Gunaikurnai and Borun's canoe as well, as though he is coming down the mountains, creating the Country of the Gunaikurnai. They all come from the land, from bark. The footprints represent people walking on Country.

The reason I use gold is that the land is like gold, valuable to Aboriginal people and culture. We have a deep connection to Country and have to look after the land.

In my artworks I don't use many dots, I use lines to represent the culture of South Eastern Australia. I have also included printed images from some of my older paintings.”

Ronald Edwards Pepper

Collection of the artist

# RONALD EDWARDS PEPPER

Gunnai

## I See Colours in Country

Synthetic polymer paint, ink and mixed media  
on canvas

2022

“In Aboriginal culture we have different stories and different designs, as you can see from the line work in this painting, representing the culture of South Eastern Australia. I don't paint dots, they are from another area and that's about cultural respect. In this artwork, we have a main meeting place in the middle and walking tracks. Looking at it from a distance, it looks like a cross and that represents the mission time of that area. As you can see there are articles and past designs that I have cut out, to share what I have been doing in my past, to bring that into today's world. I am a contemporary artist, but also use the old traditional ways of telling stories in my artworks. The hand prints represent all different cultures in Australia and colours. We have Borun, the pelican, an Aboriginal Dreaming story from the South East. We have Bundi, spears, shields and artifacts that you would see in museums and galleries today, so in my painting I am bringing back old ways of making, my way, in today's world. By making it colourful, in a beautiful happy way. Colour makes me happy and hopefully it will make everyone happy and find a way to move forward and look after Country. All the designs I have depicted in my artworks are from South Eastern Australia.”

Ronald Edwards Pepper

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## Beautiful Land

Synthetic polymer paint, ink and mixed media  
on canvas

2022

“In this artwork I have many elements and layers and stories to tell. In Aboriginal culture there are all different stories to tell. These are stories from South East Australia. I have some of my past paintings, that I have layered in the artwork, so people will know the designs, such as the line work, and where they are from. As you can see there are articles and stories of an artist who wanted to become an educator through his art. It all began when he won the ‘Lin Onus Award’ in the 2008 Victorian Indigenous Art Awards, shown in the article in the middle of the painting. Winning the award was a very important time in my life. Knowing the Dreamtime stories of South Eastern Australia, I wanted to get them out for people to know about. There are all different stories across Australia and there are all different designs (dots and lines). As you can see, I have been over to Japan, as well as travelling around to other places to share culture and educate people, to break down barriers through my art.”

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## “It’s Time” Emu Uluru (Land of Many Colours)

Synthetic polymer paint, mixed media, gold leaf and glitter on canvas

2022

“Back in the Dreamtime, Australia, the land of many colours. In the Dreamtime Aboriginal people looked after the land, they survive off the land. As you can see I have painted Uluru. It’s time to start the conversation about giving back Country. It represents the time Country was given back to the Traditional Owners of the area, an important milestone in Australian history, how to do things right in a positive way and to move forward.

As you can see the moon is in the background in the distance and it is the night time, the Dreamtime. You can see the emu emerging in the sky and that’s the Dreaming that takes you back to Aboriginal people living on Country and traditional ways. When you see the starry night, you see the same thing. Looking at the sky is like another map in Country. Aboriginal people know what season it is and which way to go, when it is time to travel along Country. The seasons and the stars give direction, where to go to find food and meet for ceremony at certain times. I see it all starting from this place.

You can see the rain on each side, and it is colourful, it is bringing the colour to Country.

I have also painted Australia, how we look at Australia now. Over the years it would have looked different. Now there are floods, fires and mother Earth is sick. Aboriginal people look after the land, knowing how to share and live with others. So it’s time to think about life and look after Country and share and be happy to move forward for the next generation.”

Ronald Edwards Pepper

Collection of the artist