

Annelies Jahn & Jane Burton Taylor

Bearing Witness

14 May – 11 June 2022

SLOT is proud to present this work, by Annelies Jahn and Jane Burton Taylor as our contribution to Reconciliation Week, 27 May - 3 June 2022. The work celebrates Paul Keating's; **Redfern Speech** delivered on the 10th of December 1992 in Redfern Park, only a short walk from here.

The speech was a courageous expression of reconciliation with Australia's first nations people. It stands among others: The Yirrkala bark petition of 1963, the referendum of 1967 that repealed section 127 of our constitution, which stipulated "aboriginal natives shall not be counted (in the Australian census)", the Gurindji strike of 1966 that led to Gough Whitlam symbolically recognising land rights in 1975, The "Mabo decision" of the High Court that overturned the legal doctrine of terra nullius ('nobody's land') paving the way for Native Title in 1993 and Kevin Rudd's apology to the stolen generation on behalf of the Australian Parliament in 2008. Courageous and humane as all these steps towards equality have been it cannot be denied that they were slow in coming, shamefully slow in coming.

In discussing the Aboriginal contribution to modern Australia through agriculture, exploration, commerce, sport, literature, music and art, Keating declared, "In all these things they (the first nations people) have shaped our knowledge of this continent and of ourselves. They have shaped our identity." It is a point observed by Jahn and Burton Taylor with a lament also drawn from Keating's speech, "how much we have lost by living so apart". Here it is offered in the maternal voice of "Mother Country" as opposed to the nationalistic voice of "Father Land". For here it is not a question of what we might harvest from our land but how we might nurture our land as a people led by our lands first inhabitants.

It is accidental that this exhibition also coincides with the 2022 Federal election where **The Aboriginal Voice to Parliament** is at issue. It is the next in the list of courageous steps that Australia must take towards nationhood, a step that Anthony Albanese has promised to take as a referendum held in the first term of his government. The voice was born as an idea in the 2017, **Uluru Statement from the Heart**. It is a hand held out by Aboriginal Australia to the settlers as a map of reconciliation. It identifies a shared future where we might comment - how much we have gained by living together.