

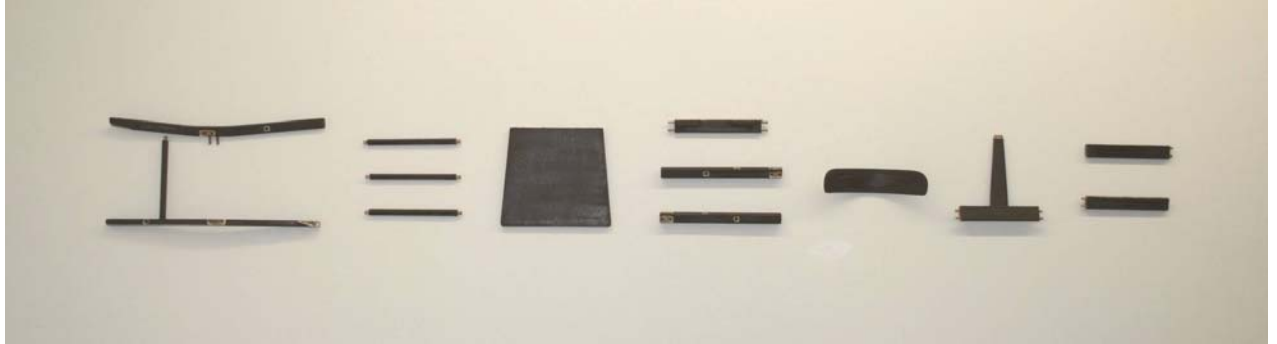
Artist statement:

Julie Gough

***Sentence (Ancestor)*, 2007**

wood, pyrography, soap

41 x 391 x 4 cm (H XW X D) 13 pieces



Sentence (Ancestor), 2007 was created to present visually some of the life story of one of my maternal ancestors, Woretemoeteyenner, who was born in about 1795 in North Eastern Tasmania and passed away in 1847.

I keep finding more and more partial information about her life that seems increasingly shocking and also shows this woman's great resilience.

These stories are embedded within much longer accounts held in archives and libraries from journals of missionaries, birth, death, baptism and shipping records, magistrate's reports, commandant's reports from Flinder's Island.

I determined to draw some of these passages out, and inscribe them pyrographically – by burning them into pieces of a disarticulated chair. The pieces of chair, separated, still promise the potential to be rebuilt. The pieces were pulled apart. The fragments remind me of furniture that, regularly and quasi skeletally, washed into shores in southern waters throughout the 19th century warning people of fresh shipwrecks. This work is a rendition of my own reading, or attempt to, across the distance of time, of the life of someone important to me. Embedded into the chair's texts is soap, in part a material that links Woretemoeteyenner's daughter, Dalrymple to my own grandmother, Eileen - remembering how hard Aboriginal women have worked over many generations in the role of servant to non Aboriginal people, amidst situations of loss, violence and secrecy.

The way I feel about Woretemoeteyenner's life is that slowly, over my own lifetime, I am coming to understand her more and more. Each fragment of information combines over time spent in her and my traditional Country, Tebrikunna, in north east Tasmania. Visiting places where she also spent time – is giving me limited but still valued insight, not only into this person and her children's lives, but frontier conflict and contact in the early and mid 1800s in Van Diemen's Land.

Woretemoeteyenner lived necessarily with two cultures, two of her children managed – perhaps with skills and insights inherited from their mother - to not only survive, but to give us, their descendants 6 or more generations later, great pride in our heritage and a determined responsibility to not forgot them.

The statements burnt into the furniture are:

SHE WAS SOLD FOR ONE GUINEA

**SHE WAS TAKEN MORE THAN 10 THOUSAND MILES OVER 3 YEARS
ON AT LEAST 5 VESSELS**

SHE WITNESSED THE SINKING OF "THE MARGARET"

SHE WAS THEN RENAMED MARGARET BY A GOVERNMENT AGENT

SHE WAS INCARCERATED BY THE GOVERNMENT FOR 11 YEARS FOR NO CRIME

SHE HAD ALREADY BEEN CAPTIVE FOR 20 YEARS TO MEN BEYOND THE LAW

HER DAUGHTER HAD BEEN A SERVANT SINCE BAPTISM

**HER DAUGHTER WAS SHOT AT AGED 12 BY HER 'MASTER' – APPARENTLY
MISTAKEN FOR A POSSUM**

**HER DAUGHTER, WHEN HERSELF A MOTHER, WROTE TO THE GOVERNMENT
REQUESTING HER MOTHER'S RELEASE FROM INTERNMENT TO HER**

HER ANCESTORS HAD LIVED IN AUSTRALIA FOR THOUSANDS OF GENERATIONS

**SHE DIED AGED ABOUT 50 HAVING LIVED MOST OF HER LIFE IN ENFORCED EXILE
FROM HER CHILDREN, FAMILY AND HER OWN COUNTRY.**

