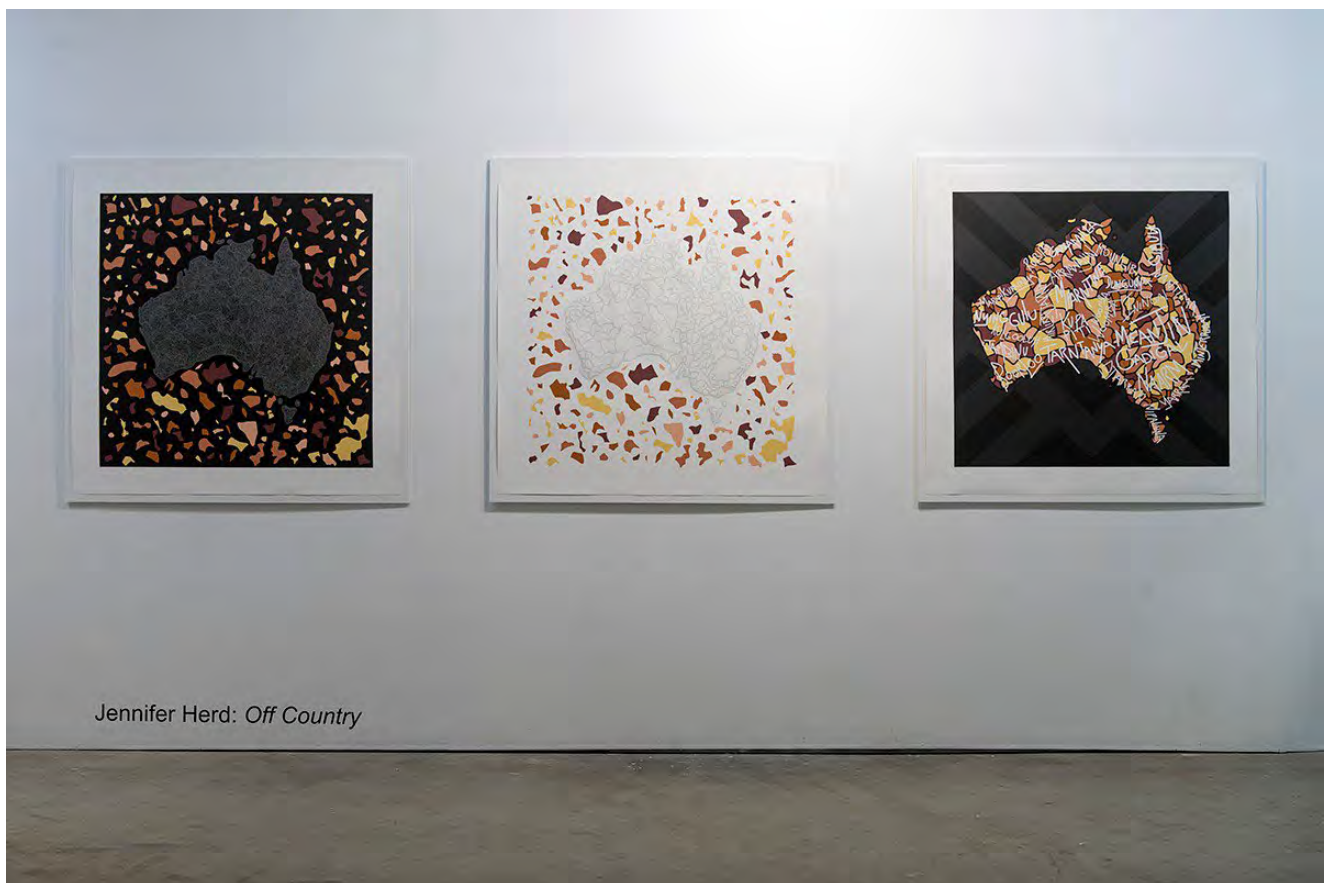


Jennifer Herd

Off Country

& other stories

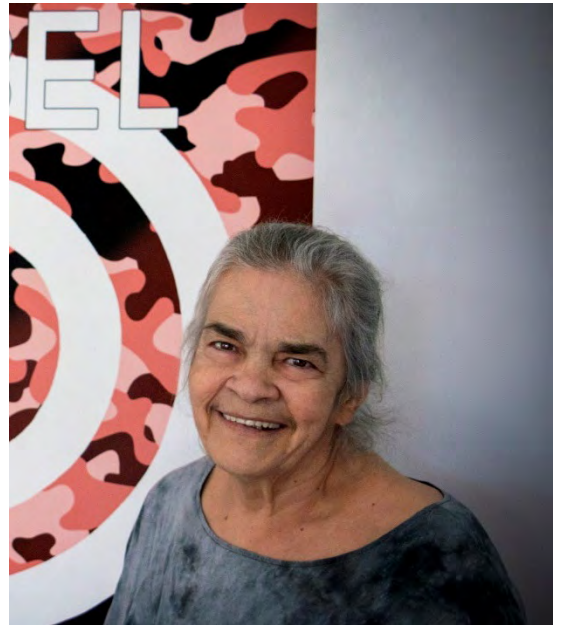


JENNIFER HERD BIO

Region: Eumundi QLD
Language group: Mbararrum
Born: 1951, Brisbane

Jennifer is an Aboriginal woman with maternal connections to North Queensland. In the 1970s she studied a Certificate in Fashion Design at Queensland College of Art, Seven Hills and worked in theatre, fashion, and fine art. She then went on to complete a Diploma of Teaching (Early Childhood Education) from Queensland University of Technology.

Her creative practice began in installation, painting and sculpture influenced by iconic fashion designer Mary Quant, modernist artists such as Mondrian, Pop Art (Jasper Johns and Robert Rauschenberg) and protest/poster art. Much of her work speaks directly to her training and work in fashion incorporating fabric, haberdashery (such as buttons and needlework), printmaking, and painting. Jennifer is well known for use of pin holes (as a metaphor for bullet holes) in works on paper



In 2003 she won the Queensland College of Art Graduate Students prize, the Theiss Art Prize, for her Masters of Visual Arts and later became the convenor of the Contemporary Australian Indigenous Art program at the Queensland College of Art.

Jennifer Herd is a founding and current member of ProppaNOW Artists Collective.

ARTIST STATEMENT

Jennifer Herd's practice is delicately poised yet politically charged, driven by a commitment to truth-telling and the illumination of Australia's veiled frontier history—particularly in the region of her Mother's country in North Queensland. Her work explores themes of resistance, identity, and cultural memory through a refined visual language that Professor Margo Ngawa Neale describes as "an iron fist in a velvet glove." Herd's 2025 solo exhibition, *Off Country* marks a personal evolution, reflecting not only on historical trauma but also on Herd's own experiences of displacement, identity erasure, and cultural reconnection. Using motifs such as North Queensland shield designs, concentric circles depicted as targets, maps and camouflage patterns, Herd confronts colonial narratives while celebrating the strength and solidarity of Aboriginal communities.



PINHOLES

I have used pinholes to highlight the bloody intersection of two cultures. They symbolise the many rainforest shields punctured with bullet holes during these frontier conflicts. As Christie Palmerston, an explorer at the time so chillingly wrote:

"Their shields may answer very well for the purposes of their wars, but my rifle drilled through these as if they were sheets of paper."



Roots of Rebellion I 2025 pin holes on 320gsm Sihl paper 227x55cm FW22881

Roots of Rebellion II 2025 pin holes on 320gsm Sihl paper 227x55cm FW22882

Roots of Rebellion III 2025 pin holes on 320gsm Sihl paper 227x55cm FW22883



Roots of Rebellion II (detail) 2025 pin holes on 320gsm Sihl paper 227x55cm FW22882

Roots of Rebellion III (detail) 2025 pin holes on 320gsm Sihl paper 227x55cm FW22883



Resistance & Revelation I 2025 pin holes on 320gsm Sihl paper 48x36cm FW22884
Resistance & Revelation II 2025 pin holes on 320gsm Sihl paper 48x36cm FW2288

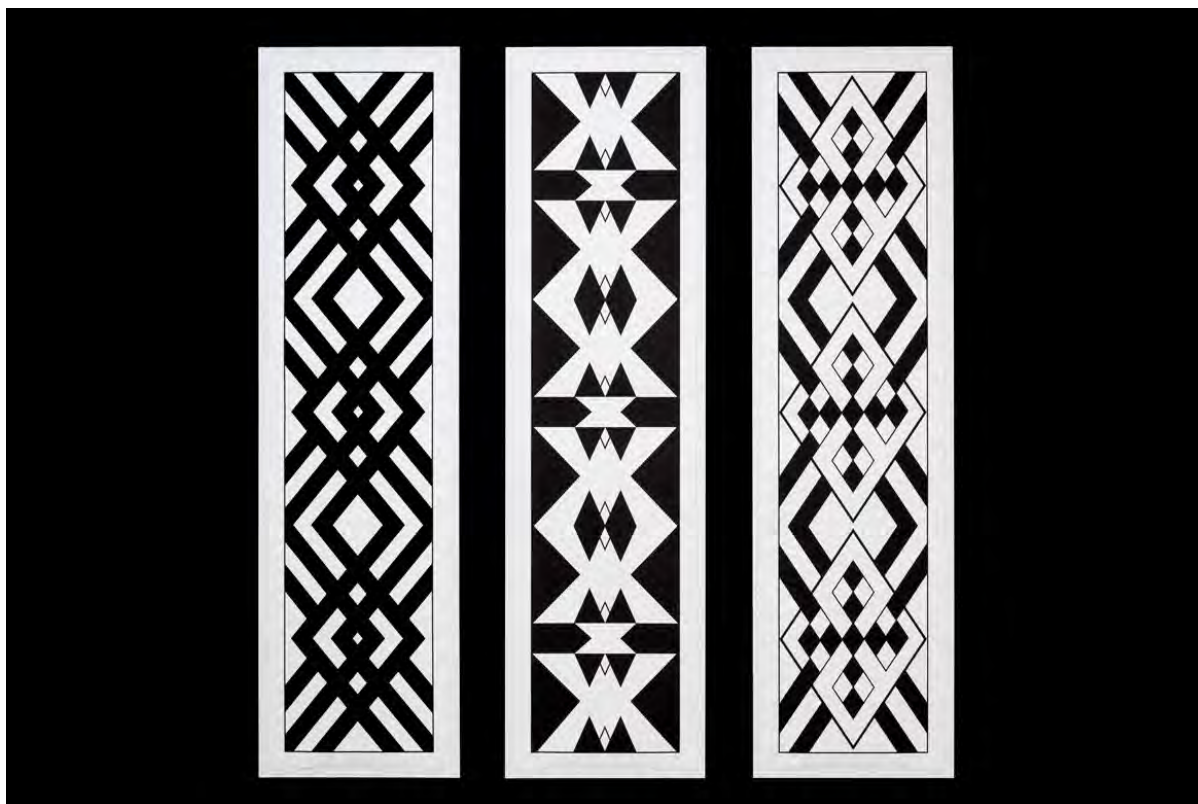


Resistance & Revelation IV 2025 pin holes on 320gsm Sihl paper 48x36cm FW22887

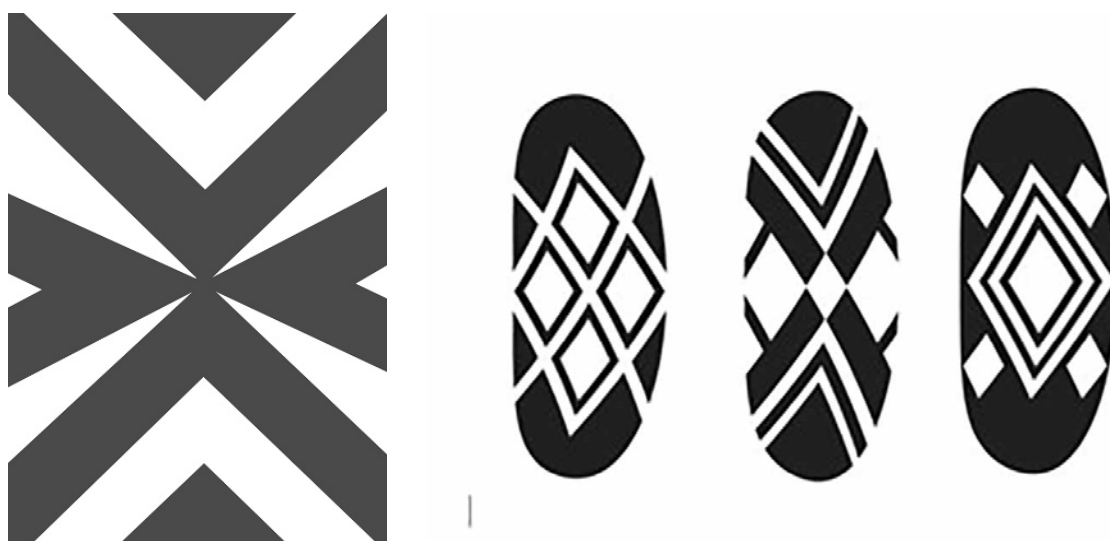
NORTH QUEENSLAND SHIELD DESIGNS

These works pay tribute to the Bama warriors of the North Queensland rainforests in the Atherton Tableland region. These warriors fought valiantly over many generations to defend their ancestral lands from frontier expansion. The geometrical designs in the work reference the traditional painted shields unique to the region. These shields were not only objects of defence but also symbols of identity and conveyors of cultural knowledge and place.

Shield designs are my way of connecting to my culture and have been an abiding research interest of mine for over 25 years. Shields were and still are an important part of North Queensland heritage and culture. My shield designs are presented as a stark reminder of truth, frontier resistance and the aftermath of cultural identity stripped bare.



Lineage I 2022 archival ink on 320gsm Sihl paper 227x55cm FW21193
Lineage II 2022 archival ink on 320gsm Sihl paper 227x55cm FW21194
Lineage III 2022 archival ink on 320gsm Sihl paper 227x55cm FW21195



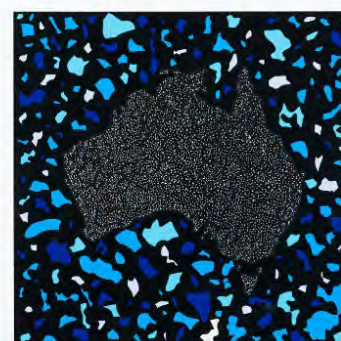
Shield III 2021 archival ink on 320gsm Sihl paper 84x60cm FW20052
Standing your ground ed. 1/10 2021 screen print on Achers paper (framed) 57x77cm FW20111

OFF COUNTRY MAPS

The "Off Country Maps" are a visceral response to the AIATSIS and Norman Tindale maps. They aren't about literal accuracy; they're designed to continue shattering the myth of *terra nullius* and underscore the immense, pervasive loss of Aboriginal lives and land. The colonial frontier spared no First Nation, clan, or tribe from tribulation. Pinholes scar the paper, marking the frontier conflicts, forced dispersals, and missionary campaigns that displaced Aboriginal people across the country. The "country elements" encircling the maps mimic camouflage, highlighting the systemic erasure and invisibility of Aboriginal people within colonial systems. Yet, their bold aesthetic declares a powerful truth: **we're still here**. Unsettled but unbroken, we continue to resist, rebel, and reclaim our rights to this land.



Off Country 2025 archival ink 320gsm Sihl paper 120x120cm FW22908



Off Country (Desert) II 2025 archival ink & pin holes on 320gsm Sihl paper 36x36cm FW22895
Off Country (Saltwater) I 2025 archival ink & pinholes on 320gsm Sihl paper 36x36cm FW22831
Off Country (Saltwater) II 2025 archival ink & pinholes on 320gsm Sihl paper 36x36cm FW22832

SHIELD DESIGN GARDEN LIGHTS

In an exciting evolution of her practice, Herd has introduced a series of six sculptural garden lights—three crafted from stainless steel and three from Corten steel. These works translate her signature pinholed shield designs into perforated metal forms, allowing light to shine through the patterns. The result is a striking interplay of shadow, steel, and storytelling, extending her cultural motifs into the realm of sculptural installation.

Bama Nights I 2025 corten steel 83x36cm FW22905

Bama Nights III 2025 stainless steel 83x36cm FW22904



CAMOUFLAGE AND TARGETS

The overlaying elements suggest defence and disguise- as a form of cultural identity- that has become a mode of survival. *Camouflage* remains a bold icon of modern war and one that also relates to the (documented and un-recorded) conflicts, dispersals and dispossession waged on Aboriginal people by colonial expansion since 1788. Conflated with the image of a *target*, these combine to take aim at historical and contemporary perceptions of these injustices. As we stand our ground, this piece asks broader society to lift their gaze, look through the camouflage and remove this target from the hearts and minds of Aboriginal people.



Combat (A/P) 2020 archival ink & pinholes on 320gsm Sihl paper 100x310cm FW22161

Window Pain - Portal to the past

This work echoes the idea of home truths breaking through a framed colonial world view. It is composed as a portal to the past revealing glimpses of frontier resistance too often camouflaged in the nation's narrative.

Central to the work are references to Jennifer's geometric shield designs. These diamond elements are perforated signposts to past skirmishes and the wounds of contested ground. The diamonds work with the composition of the federation style window frame to provide a sharp focal point, channelling one's view to what lies beneath the colonial fabric. Standing on the inside looking out, it suggests the viewer might see through a different lens, to gaze through the elements of obscurity (camouflage) and give attention to Aboriginal perspectives of the colonial frontier portrayed by the blood red warrior image set as the backdrop*.

The work is presented as a closed window installed on a wall. In this form it is presented to symbolise the shutting out of uncomfortable conversations. The work is flexible however and can also be implemented within a hinged frame, allowing the windows to be left ajar to give the background image more exposure.

* These historical figures emerged from the artist's research into colonial views and the frontier wars in Queensland. A key reference is the work, *Two of the Natives of New Holland, Advancing to Combat 1773*, by Thomas Chambers (after Sydney Parkinson) (Russell Grimwade collection). They are seen brandishing shields and spears in acts of resistance and defiance.



Window Pain - Portal to the past 2023 repurposed Federation window, vinyl decals & digital print on dibond aluminum 149x100x10cm

WARRIORS

For some of Jennifer's earlier works included in this show, historical figures from the artist's research into colonial views and the frontier wars in Queensland. A key reference is the work, *Two of the Natives of New Holland, Advancing to Combat* 1773, by Thomas Chambers (after Sydney Parkinson) (Russell Grimwade collection). They are seen brandishing shields and spears in acts of resistance and defiance.

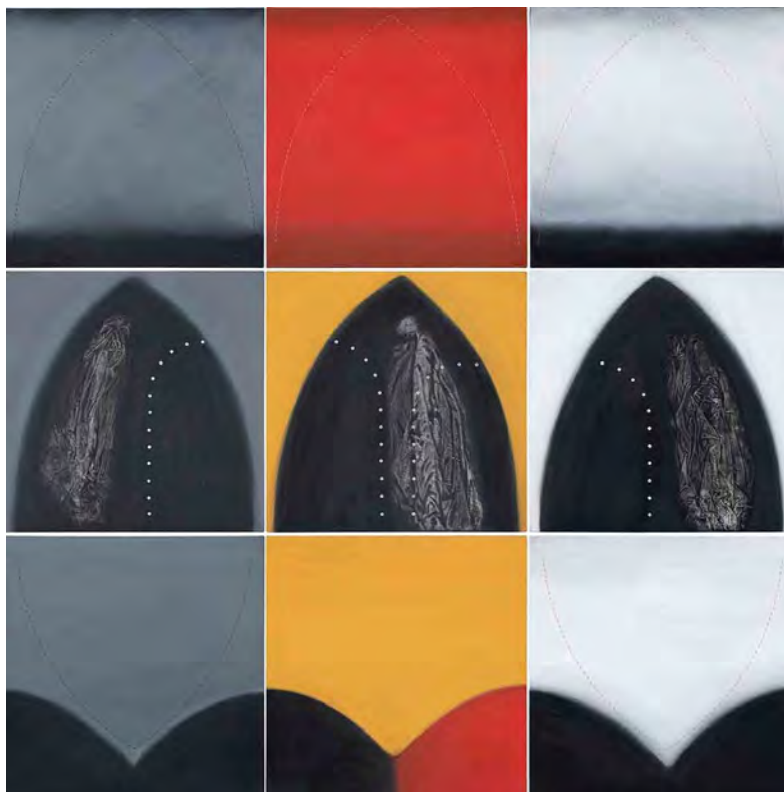


Undersiege 2020

available as limited edition print on paper edition of 5 60x60cm or canvas edition of 3 100x100cm

Irvinebank Massacre

The work reflects my own personal perspectives concerning what might be a fitting memorial for the people of Far North Queensland. Articulated through this work is a firm connection to the land and culture, which remains the primary inspiration for many Urban Indigenous artists today. It is presented in a variety of media that demonstrate an understanding of the importance of recounting history from an Indigenous standpoint and reconnecting oneself with country. The act of transforming these ideas into artistic work has afforded me a unique opportunity to acknowledge the strength of culture and traditions in a contemporary way. Against a variety of backdrops and variety of art traditions, the work informs us about the past, present and a vision for the future.



Irvinebank Massacre 2005 acrylic, thread & buttons on canvas 300x300cm FW18571
Collection of the Australian War Memorial

COLLECTIONS

Artbank
Australian War Memorial Canberra
Caloundra Regional Gallery
Diamantina Group
Griffith University Art Museum
Home of the Arts Gold Coast (HOTA)
Museum of Brisbane
Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art
QUT Art Museum
University of Queensland Art Museum

LINKS

Webpage

<https://www.fireworksgallery.com.au/artist/jennifer-herd>

State Library of Queensland Jennifer Herd extended Oral History: The James C Sourris AM Collection 2020-21

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5YIN_HMtJ5A

State Library of Queensland Portrait of An Artist Evening

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gU16My4vTeQ>

The Art Show ABC Know My Name S2 ep 6: Jennifer Herd

<https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/the-art-show/know-my-name-s2-ep-6:-jennifer-herd/13734378>

Underfire 2021 Exhibition video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FVvk98O_1lIE

Mother's Country 2022 Exhibition Video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSjJfGHGQZ0>



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