



BOUND

You asked for it
in front of God
for better or worse
in sickness and in health
'till death do you part
hand-cuffs lock vows
obey

Not in front of the kids
reassure the unborn baby
pegging tiny singlets on the line
hands tied behind her back
dying desperate housewives
crippled by fear
pregnant

Home sweet home
black and blue poorhouses
with a high security guard
a decorated cell
common place anchors
dreams of great escapes
hung high by a worn heart-string

You're lucky you've got me
ugly whinging bitch
wrapped in tight cruelty
a social dress malfunction
out of date and damaged
drowning in shame
be grateful

You need me
Mummy's little helper visits daily
waiting on a chemical disaster
too lost to care
too numb to fight back
knots of effective confusion
disgraceful embarrassment

Impossible departure
in ropes with closed wallets
depending on a pittance
worthless money-makers
cutting off circulation
restraining the sunshine
imposing quiet punishment

Bondage isn't sexy
if an everyday tool
cover up the swelling
buckled up for pain
blood-stained devotion
promises of change
sorrys no more

Run

Karla Dickens, 2016



THE IDEAL HOME



at Penrith Regional Gallery

Previous page:

Bound by children; and Bound by beauty myths

This page: *Bound by land*, 2015, 210x55 cm detail

Opposite:

Top: *Bound by children*, 2015, 210x55 cm detail

Centre: *Bound by beauty myths*, 2015,

210x55 cm, detail

Bottom: Karla Dickens

Photographs by Mick Richards, courtesy of the artist and AndrewBakerArt, Brisbane

The Ominous Domestic and *Bound* formed parts of **THE IDEAL HOME** exhibition at Penrith Regional Gallery in March this year, on exhibition in the Lewers House gallery, formerly the home of the Lewers family.

Contrast these artists' works with the project of Mo Orkiszewski, *I dream of a world* in this issue where a 1950s **WEDDING DRESS** became the medium for many heartfelt expressions by textile artists from around the world. *Bound* and *The Ominous Domestic* are harsh and visceral, angry and retaliatory expressions.

EX de Medici's *The Ominous Domestic* is an explosive interplay of gender relationships and violence, with works commissioned by MAAS. The artist was given access to the Powerhouse's antique arms collection to enable her to reproduce the **DUELLING PISTOLS** she sets amidst bloodied flowers.

Bound is a major series by Karla Dickens which has been acquired for the MAAS collection at the Powerhouse. Dickens used techniques of appliqué and embroidery on six **STRAITJACKETS** to express the continuing experience of oppression within the home. Her poem *Bound* (previous page) tells it all.

Home is where our most intimate encounters take place. Home is where we hope we might be held safe and cherished by those we love. But these artists have taken the serene domestic and set it on fire — home and relationships in crisis, warring intimates, crushed hopes, families held together by threads...

KARLA DICKENS is a Wiradjuri artist who was born in Sydney. *Bound* was created in 2015 in Goonellabah, Lismore.

Dickens says: *I have two loves in life: art and family and a passion for protest, to ask questions, to give voice and light, with a desire for change. To protest as an individual, art is my voice, yet walking and standing alongside others smooths the powerlessness.*

There is a power in asserting objection shoulder-to-shoulder and disapproval of the obvious injustices, pains and truths of the unheard. It is an action that holds the hope that once a story is told, a change in the unacceptable will be born and grow.

Dickens uses her indigenous heritage, sexuality and life experience as a single mother as driving forces for her work.





'Art though not, fatal vision, sensible
 To feeling as to sight? Or art thou but
 A dagger of the mind, a false creation
 Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?'
Macbeth

EX DE MEDICI is a Canberra-based artist whose largescale intricate paintings explore the power structures holding society captive. Her work is held in many public collections including the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra and she has exhibited around the world.

In 2009 de Medici participated in the Artist in War Program as an Official War Artist through the Australian War Memorial, ACT, in the Solomon Islands Peace Keeping Mission. De Medici is also a tattooist.

These major new works by eX de Medici were commissioned by MAAS. Her multimedia installation at *The Ideal Home* at Penrith Regional Gallery explored the theme of gendered domestic violence, centred upon the three-metre watercolour (above) and an 18th century French 'love seat' (right) upholstered with machine-embroidered fabric.

Above:
 eX de Medici, *I killed her with my club*, 2017
 watercolour and egg tempera on paper.
 Collection MAAS.

Right:
The Seat of Love and Hate, 2017-18, embroidered sofa
 Collection: Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences.
 Photo by Rob Little RLDI

