

ABDUL-RAHMAN
ABDULLAH



The language of birds

MOORE CONTEMPORARY

Booth D3
Melbourne Art Fair
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ABDUL-RAHMAN ABDULLAH

The language of birds



This new body of work explores the deficits of language in describing a world understood through observation. In Abrahamic lore the *language of birds* represents access to a divine, esoteric form of communication shared by angels and birds alike. In earthly terms, language offers our best tool to carry the most meaning with the least weight and our relationship to the world cannot be understood without it. Like all relationships, language is transactional and we necessarily lose in order to gain.

Each bird, native to this continent and often deeply familiar in sight and sound sits atop a stack of fifty A4 notebooks, a Doric nod to the birder's task. Each carved and painted, wrought in wood with elements of plastic, glass and bronze, shifts of shape and sheen enough to signpost an entire species. Meeting at eye level, the birds are titled through a brief description of their voice, extracted from *The Complete Guide to Australian Birds*, by George Adams (2018). An apt reflection that encapsulates a familiar call; *Rollicking laughing chorus* to describe the Kookaburra; *Complex flute-like carolling*, the Magpie. Brief, poetic and perfectly suited to the familiar ear, yet if that were the only descriptor, what deficit lies between those few words and the complexity of birdsong? Imagine trying to describe human language in four words.

We understand the world through witnessing its passage and collecting knowledge to be shared through language - whether visual, written, spoken or sung. To communicate is to build on the experience of others. As human beings, it's one of our immense advantages, yet we must recognise the limitations and work magic in the shortfall.

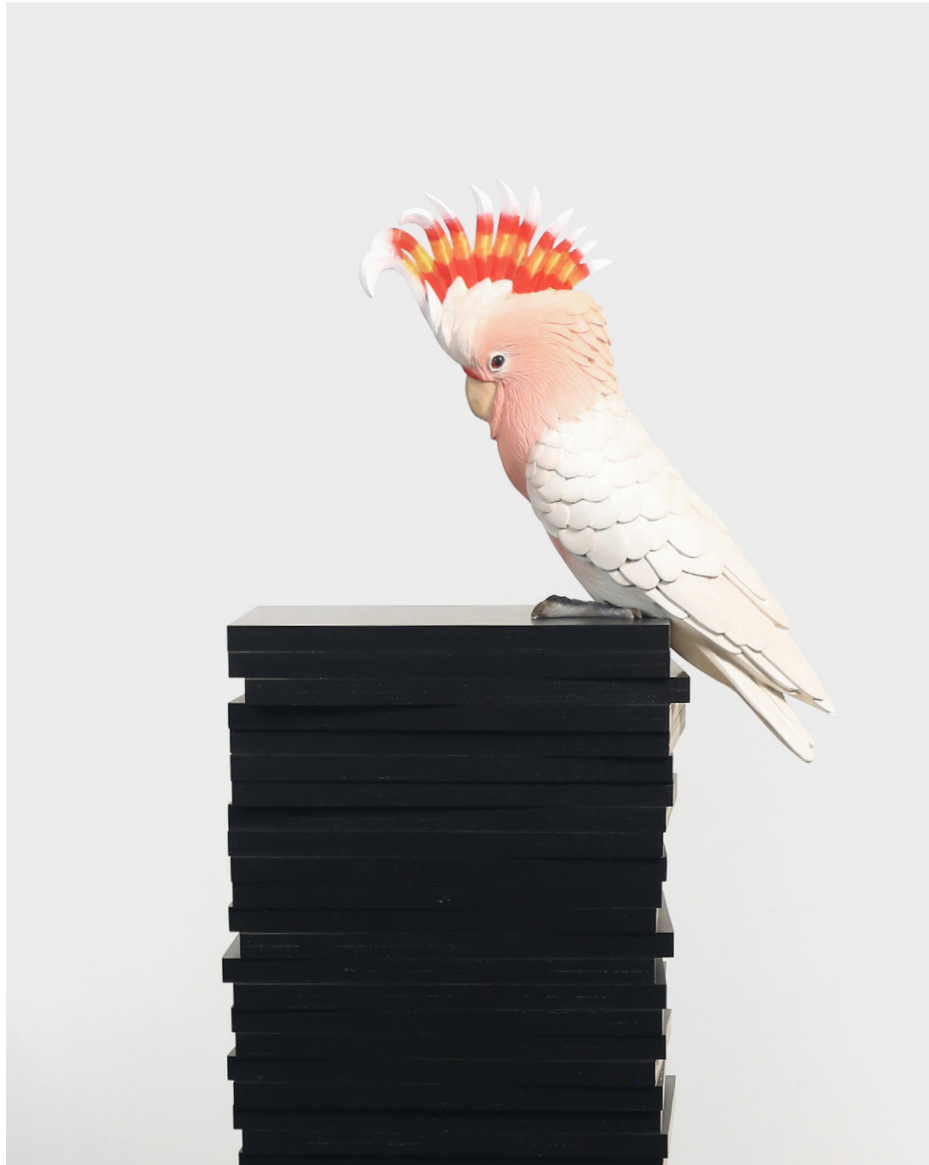
— Abdul-Rahman Abdullah



Long wailing last note, 2024
stained and painted wood, bronze
166 x 50 x 50 cm



Creaky grating squawks, 2024
painted wood
165 x 50 x 53 cm



Harsh alarm screeching, 2024
painted wood
167 x 50 x 50 cm



Complex flute-like carolling, 2024
stained and painted wood, bronze
161 x 50 x 50 cm



Sharp yapping at sea, 2024
painted wood
165 x 50 x 50 cm



Rollicking laughing chorus, 2024
painted wood
158 x 50 x 51 cm

ABDUL-RAHMAN ABDULLAH is an artist living and working on Wadjuk Nyungar country, on a cattle property in the Peel region of Western Australia. Working primarily in sculpture and installation, he explores the intersections of identity, culture and the natural world. His work has been described as magic realism, creating poetic interventions with the space it occupies. Living and working in a rural environment, Abdullah's practice offers alternative perspectives across diverse, and often disparate communities.

Since graduating from Curtin University in 2012, Abdullah has exhibited widely across Australia including Adelaide Biennial 2016 and 2022 (AGSA), The National 2019 (MCA) and Tarrawarra Biennial 2023. His work is held in the public collections of Artbank, Art Gallery of Western Australia, Art Gallery of South Australia, Bendigo Art Gallery, Wesfarmers, Murdoch University, Newcastle Art Gallery, University of Western Australia, Curtin University, Campbelltown Art Centre, City of Broken Hill, the Islamic Museum of Australia and numerous significant private collections. He was recently appointed to the Council of the National Gallery of Australia. He has been active as a board member for PICA, Arts Advisor for City of Perth, set designer for intercultural dance company Marrugeku and recently completed a creative fellowship with Regional Arts Western Australia.

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