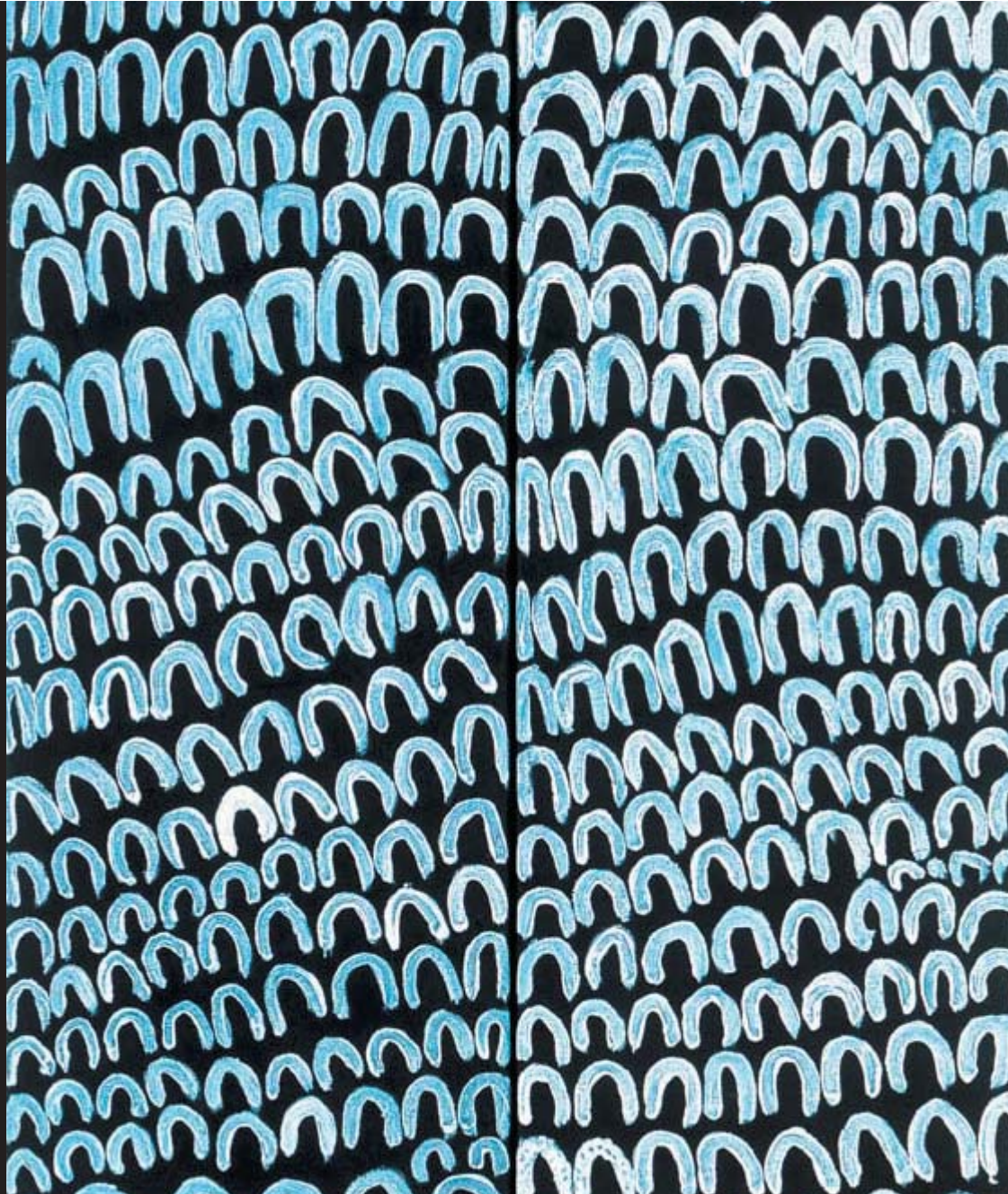


Telstra National Aboriginal &
Torres Strait Islander Art Award:

Celebrating 20 Years

education kit



Lena Nyadbi
Lissadell (detail) 2003

Celebrating

20 Years

Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award: *Celebrating 20 Years*

The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin initiated Australia's first Indigenous art award in 1984. When the *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award* was established, Aboriginal art was emerging as a significant force in the mainstream art world, though it was still not well appreciated or understood. The creation of a dedicated award was seen as a way of promoting this unique artistic expression as well as acknowledging its significant contribution to Australia's cultural heritage.

During its twenty years, the Award has grown in stature and size and is still the only dedicated award of its kind offered to Indigenous artists. The exhibition is held annually in Darwin and now attracts up to 400 entrants with around 140 works being exhibited. Over the years the Award has profiled a range of artwork whose changing content and style mirrors broader developments within Indigenous art practice, including a substantial growth in the number of practitioners and increased experimentation and diversification in content and media. Most importantly, during this time Aboriginal art in all its manifestations has been embraced as mainstream contemporary fine art.

In 1995 a national touring program was introduced to provide interstate audiences the opportunity to view some of the best works from each year's show. *The Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award: Celebrating 20 Years* is the first triennial tour, showing a selection of works from the 20th Award as well as acquired winning works from the 18th and 19th Awards.

The Award's success is owed to the efforts of many people including the principal sponsor Telstra, who has assisted with the development of the Award on many levels since 1992 and, most importantly, the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists whose creative talents never cease to enthral visitors. The Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory would like to express its thanks and appreciation to all those who have contributed to the Award and its success over the past twenty years.

Curator's Comments

The works in the *Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award: Celebrating 20 Years* touring exhibition provide a good cross section of contemporary art from around Australia. While we may classify these works as 'Aboriginal art', in reality this term covers a wide variety of styles, messages and media. Artists who are networked socially and ceremonially, express these connections through a distinctive style of painting. The dense figurative and cross hatched works from northeast Arnhem Land represented by Gawirrin Gumana's *Memorial Hollow-log Pole* or the classic desert painting by Eubena Nampitjin, are good examples of regional styles. Within these broad similarities there are also more discrete 'schools' of painting, with individual artists using a recognisable mode of illustration. Southern artists who have developed their highly individual way of painting may sometimes incorporate elements from these classic style regions from remote Australia to express aspects of their identity or the influences exerted through personal relationships. The Trevor Nickolls' painting *Kimberley Under the Stars* and Laurie Nilsen's *Come in Spinner* fishtrap reflect these cross-influences.

There are some general concerns that underpin many of the works – the theme of identity and relationship to place. This is more obvious in the artworks about ancestral beings that are part of the rich oral histories from each group – confirming and explaining the creation of all aspects of people's known world. Galuma Maymuru's bark painting *Gurwak* expresses her clan's relationship to her coastal homeland at Djarrakpi, in a similar way Makinti Napanangka's *Women at Lulpulnga* refers to an important site in her desert country. Canberra-based artist Danie Mellor on the other hand confirms his links to the Queensland Rainforest region with an illustration of its distinctive flora. Julie Dowling's *Coolbaroo Club* and Roy Kennedy's etching *How Soon They Forget* are more about social history, providing a rare insight into the personal lives of the artists and their community. These and other works in the exhibition reveal many such commonalities as well as individual differences among the artists.

The various works profiled in the touring exhibition reflect diversity as well as some of the changes in Indigenous art since the Award was founded twenty years ago. These encompass the increased presence of female artists, the widespread adoption of canvas painting, the development of a strong print-making industry, the resurgence of fibre work and growing interest in photography and digital media. The Award seeks to profile these ongoing developments each year and to highlight the invaluable contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists are making to Australia's visual arts heritage.



Margie West

Curator Aboriginal Art & Material Culture
Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory

Themes

1. Indigenous Art – Cross-influences

Focus works **Lena Nyadbi** *Lissadell*

Trevor Nickolls *Kimberley Under the Stars*

Trevor Nickolls was the first Indigenous artist formally trained at art college so he was somewhat of a pioneer for contemporary Aboriginal artists. His work reflects the connections that different Indigenous artists have made with each other across the country. Nickolls is of Irish and Aboriginal parentage and was raised in Adelaide. As with many urban-based people he grew up with very little knowledge of Aboriginal customary life. He developed an idea in his early work called *Dreamtime – Machinetime* in which he contrasts his city lifestyle with that of remote Aboriginal communities. His explorations of the 'Dreamtime' (more traditionally-based lifestyles) led to friendships with a number of artists from the northern and central parts of Australia including **Rover Thomas** from Warmun in the Kimberley. They exhibited together at the Venice Biennale in 1990 and Thomas invited Nickolls to visit him at his Warmun community. Thomas passed away before Nickolls could take up the invitation. However in 2002 Nickolls did visit the Warmun artists and produced a suite of works that have been influenced by the way of painting that **Rover Thomas** helped to found in this region.

Lena Nyadbi is a painter from the Warmun community and paints in the style that was pioneered in this region by artists like **Rover Thomas** and **Paddy Jaminji**. These artists originally painted images of their sacred sites onto boards held in the hand for dancing at ceremonies. Eventually these ceremonial designs were painted onto canvas. Well known Warmun artist, **Paddy Jaminji** taught Lena the techniques of grinding ochre and charcoal, and rubbing the charcoal into the canvas using her hands. You can see the similarities between her depictions of the landscape and the painting by **Trevor Nickolls**.

Lena Nyadbi

Nyawurru subsection

Gija language

Warmun WA

Lissadell

2003

Natural pigments on canvas 90 x 210 cm.

Courtesy of Warmun Art Centre



This painting by Lena on separate panels represents the varied landscape of her traditional family country - Jimbala, now commonly referred to as Lissadell Station. As a young woman Lena worked on the cattle station. She recalls working mostly in the kitchen and helping with various chores around the homestead. During the Christmas period, Lena and the other Aboriginal workers were often granted 'holiday time'. This is during the wet season and there was little that could be achieved at the station. It was during this holiday that Lena had the opportunity to walk around her country with her old people. Together they would visit and learn about the important traditional sites, burial and ceremonial places. (Warmun Art Centre)

Trevor Nickolls

Adelaide SA (resident)

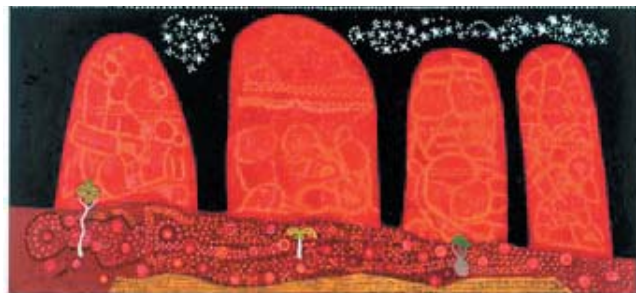
Kimberley Under the Stars

2003

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas 91.5 x 198 cm

Courtesy of the Artist and Vivien Anderson Gallery

Painted on an expedition in 2002 to Warmun (Turkey Creek) to visit Rover Thomas's country. The invitation was extended to Trevor by Rover when they exhibited at the Venice Biennale together in 1990. (Vivien Anderson Gallery)



Grades 4-7

At the exhibit

- Describe the natural features of the landscape in both these artworks.
- List or draw the shapes that you can see made by the stars in Trevor Nickolls' artwork.

At school

- Decorate 'dance boards' using painted images of a place that is important to you.
- Make your own paints from natural materials – clay, ground stone, crushed seeds and charcoal. Mix them with glue and experiment with them.

Grades 8-12

At the exhibit

- Discuss the visual perspective of these artworks. Is the artist looking down or looking sideways at the landscape?
- What elements of the respective landscapes do you think are most important to each artist?

At school

- Research Rover Thomas, his life and his contribution to Indigenous art.
- Both Lena and Rover have artistically represented the Kimberley region. Find pictures of this region and create your own artistic response to this country.
- Experiment using different media to paint a natural landscape that is significant to you eg. using coffee, food colouring, charcoal, beetroot, rocks, bricks.

2. Contact and Commercialisation

Focus works **Gabriel Maralngurra**

Contact Theme – The Berndts

Richard Bell

Scientia E Metaphysica (Bell's Theorem)

Indigenous artists have been making artwork for sale from the early colonial period onwards. The art and craft industry developed on a more substantial footing after the 1970s with government support, and today there are many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people making art for sale around Australia. Early on in some places, it was the missionaries or visiting researchers who encouraged people to sell their work. In **Gabriel Maralngurra's** painting *Contact Theme - The Berndts*, the artist has illustrated the anthropologists Ronald and Catherine Berndt who visited his Oenpelli community in 1947 and 1950. As part of their research they commissioned artists to paint for them. In this unusual work, the artist who normally paints his ancestral mythologies, has illustrated this early commercial transaction.

Richard Bell's work *Scientia E Metaphysica (Bell's Theorem)* refers to the way in which he sees the Indigenous art industry being largely controlled by non-Indigenous Australians. Hence the message in his painting 'Aboriginal Art It's a White Thing'. There are also other messages in his painting that refer to Aboriginal dispossession, racism and the history of race relations in Australia. For example on the left side he is making fun of the way in which people often deny being bigoted, in the words 'I am not a racist, I just don't like like aboze, wogz, slowpedz, reffoze' and so on. His work is called 'political' because it confronts people and makes them think about these difficult issues.

Gabriel Maralngurra

Ngalngbali clan

Kunwinjku language

Gunbalanya NT

Contact Theme - The Berndts

2003

Natural pigments on linen 104 x 195 cm

This painting is one of a series the artist is working on about 'contact'. Ronald and Catherine Berndt were anthropologists who worked for two years in the region, during 1947 and 1950, collecting bark paintings most of which are now housed in the Berndt Research Museum, Perth. During this time the Berndts sought to assemble a comprehensive collection of the region's ancestral stories. Some of the senior people remember the Berndts and spoke to Gabriel about their experiences. In this painting the Berndts have arrived at a family camp site to commission a bark from an old man shown bottom of the painting. (Injalak Arts)



Richard Bell

Gamillaroy language

Brisbane QLD

Scientia E Metaphysica

(Bell's Theorem)

2003

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas 240 x 360cm

Purchased 2003. Telstra Collection

Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory



Grades 4-7

At the exhibit

- Draw the combination of marks and shapes used by Richard Bell in this painting.
- Make two lists of the non-Indigenous and Indigenous objects you can see in Gabriel Maralngurra's painting.
- Describe the scene that Gabriel has painted as though you are reporting for a news story.
- Copy the bark painting, termite mound, shield, old fire, and shelter featured in Gabriel's artwork.

At school

- Using the cross-hatching method, draw a scene where you are shopping.
- Make a patchwork design (similar to Richard Bell's technique) using different shapes, colours and lines on a topic that interests you. Insert words to reinforce the message.
- Draw your hand or another object using the cross-hatch technique to show contours and shapes.

Grades 8-12

At the exhibit

- What do you think Richard Bell means by his main comment 'Aboriginal Art It's a White Thing'?
- Describe what is taking place in Gabriel's painting. How are the anthropologists different to the other people in Gabriel's painting?

At school

- Selling art is very important for the economy of remote Indigenous communities. What kind of issues might arise for Indigenous artists selling their work in the non-Indigenous market?
- Investigate the Berndts. Who were they and what did they do? What lasting contributions have they made to recording Indigenous culture?
- Explore the theme of contact in Arnhem Land. What is the contact history of the area where you live?

3. Land rights and Country

Focus works **Ray Thomas**

Waiting by the Lake for Native Title

Galuma Maymuru *Guwak*

Ray Thomas' work refers to the Gunnai/Kurnai Gippsland native title case. It depicts himself with his sons, who are claimants in this case, along with the native title lawyer Bryan Keon-Cohen QC. In 1993 the Australian Federal Government introduced native title legislation that recognised that Aboriginal people did in fact have claim to the land before English settlement. The Native Title Act provides Aboriginal people with procedures for dealing with their customary rights to land. The process is lengthy and complex. The difficult process of negotiating native title is symbolised here as a game of chess with brown and white pieces. The 'sorry' sign written in the sky refers to the process of reconciliation that was initiated by the previous Labor Government but has not been fully recognised by the current Liberal Government.

Galuma Maymuru's bark painting *Guwak* is directly related to the ownership of her clan country in north-east Arnhem Land. Here each clan group has its own specific design that relates to the ancestral beings who created their land. The possum is one of the beings associated with Djarrakpi – the place of origin for the Manggalili people. The ancestral woman Nyapalingu is also shown in the painting. She created the lake here and the sand dunes. The wavy lines on either side of the central motif are the Manggalili clan design that refers in part to the sand dunes and the fur-string spun by the ancestral possum. People from Galuma's community at Yirrkala showed how their clan patterns express their land ownership, when they presented the 'Bark Petition' in 1963 to the Australian Parliament. They were trying to stop mining on their land by presenting their traditional clan patterns as title deeds to their country. The 'Bark Petition' did not stop the mining then, but it led to a better understanding about Aboriginal land ownership.



Galuma Maymuru

Manggalili clan
Bangardijan subsection
Yirritja moiety
Dhuruputjpi NT (residence)

Guwak

2003

Natural pigments on bark 154.5 x 100 cm

This is a major clan painting about Djarrakpi, the Manggalili clan homeland at the tip of Cape Shield, a promontory overlooking the northern aspect into Blue Mud Bay. At Djarrakpi there is a lake of brackish water behind the massive coastal sand dunes. The other side of the lake is scrubby woodland. The Manggalili regard the lake as a place signifying fertility, whose sandiness is the domain of the spirit sisters Nyapalingu (symbolised by the X shapes). The other side is associated with the male Guwak people who were sent to find this place by the Yirritja Creator Being Barama. Upon arriving at Djarrakpi the Guwak alighted on the sacred Marawili tree, a gan'yawu or bush cashew tree. The Guwak men are shown here both in the guise of the Koel cuckoo and as a sacred object entwined in sacred possum-fur string. After the Guwak founded Djarrakpi they brought the Manggalili people there.

The wavy bands of cross-hatching are the sacred clan signature of the Manggalili and symbolise many things, including the sand country of Djarrakpi and the tracks left behind by the various totemic species at Djarrakpi, including Marrngu the Ringtail Possum and Gunyan, the scavenger Ghost Crab.

The Guwak is also associated with death and mortuary rituals. Guwak's companion, Marrngu the Ringtail Possum, spun its own fur into sacred string and anchored it on the sacred Marawili tree where it connects to the reservoir of Manggalili souls: The Milky Way. Depicted also is a yingapungapu – a ceremonial sand sculpture, for the confinement then release of the deceased's spirit. Wangupini - the feminine cumulonimbus thunderhead 'pregnant' with the wet season rains, is shown at the ends of the sculpture. The sandhills and winds also bear this mark. The spearthrower refers to Malwiya the Emu who dug with spears trying to find freshwater but found only water contaminated with salt. The Emu threw its spears in frustration over the dunes and into the sea. Where they landed, freshwater bubbled to the surface. These wells are exposed today at low tide. (Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Centre)



Ray Thomas

Brabralung clan
Gunnai language
Melbourne VIC (residence)

Waiting by the Lake for Native Title

2003

Oil on linen 198 x 198 cm

Courtesy of the Artist

Grades 4-7

At the exhibit

- Ray Thomas has painted himself into this painting. Describe the other figures in the painting. Write about what you think they are doing in this picture.
- Look at the left-hand corner of the painting. What does it reveal and why do you think the artist has done this?
- Look at the cover of the lawyer's file. It is a puzzle. Draw the puzzle. What do you think it means?
- Find the animals that show Galuma Maymuru comes from a saltwater place. List the other animals that you can see.
- Marrngu the Ringtail Possum is an important totemic species for Galuma's people. How many possums can you find?

At school

- Imagine that you have to prove that you belong to a particular place using a drawing of that place. What features and people would you paint? Insert a photo of yourself into the painting.
- Draw a picture of your backyard. Place all of the important landmarks in it. Now repeat the process but use the cross-hatch technique to illustrate your backyard.

Grades 8-12

At the exhibit

- Galuma Maymuru's clan painting contains intricate symbols of 'her country'. Can you find the reference to where the spears thrown by Malwiya the Emu landed exposing freshwater bubbles?
- Identify the games that are used by Ray Thomas in his painting. What do you think is the significance of these games to the subject that his painting portrays?
- What do you think are the important things about country that these two artists show in their paintings?

At school

- Research the Land Rights movement and Native Title Legislation. Write a report on how they show the different understandings of non-Indigenous and Indigenous people towards land ownership.
- Find out about the Bark Petition now housed in Parliament House in Canberra. Who initiated the Bark Petition, why and what messages are contained in it?
- Find out more information on the Native Title Claim depicted in this painting. Draw a map of your home. Pattern and colour each section/room in a style which best reflects each person who lives there.

4. Traditional role of fibre as a craft and the way that it translates into contemporary art

Focus works Regina Wilson

Syaw – Fish Net

Jack Maranbarra

Fish Trap

Laurie Nilsen

Come In Spinner

Lorna Jin-gubarrangunya

Conical Fishtrap

Fibre has always played a major part in the life of Aboriginal Australians – all areas of the continent had fibre traditions, many of which are continued today. Plant fibre was the most common material used to make a diverse range of functional items which supported daily activities.

The **Jack Maranbarra** and **Lorna Jin-gubarrangunya** fish traps were once widely used by the people in the central and western parts of Arnhem Land. These traps are made out of different materials for different purposes. The lighter one made from pandanus is used for catching smaller fish species, and the sturdy large trap made from Firevine is for trapping large barramundi and salmon catfish. The traps are inserted into a fish fence of upright wooden stakes, constructed across tidal creeks so when the tide runs out the fish are forced into the trap. Today these traps are rarely used as they have been replaced by nylon fishing lines and nets. Fish traps are still made for sale at the art centre because their sculptural beauty is now appreciated.

In his barbed wire fish trap *Come in Spinner*, Brisbane based artist **Laurie Nilsen** translates the form of these customary traps into a political sculpture. The fish in the shape of Australian Prime Minister John Howard has been ‘lured’ into the trap by the American flag illustrated on top of the trap – a comment on Australia’s involvement in the ‘war against terror’.

Customary fibre is also the inspiration for **Regina Wilson’s** *Syaw – Fish Net*. The artist is a skilled weaver of bags, baskets and fish nets. When her remote community of Peppimenarti, NT was introduced to painting onto canvas several years ago, some artists decided to develop their own painting style. The art form is new but the references are derived from the basketry traditions that date back thousands of years. Note how the texture and structure of a woven item has been translated into a visually-arresting grid of fine and complex line work.

Laurie Nilsen

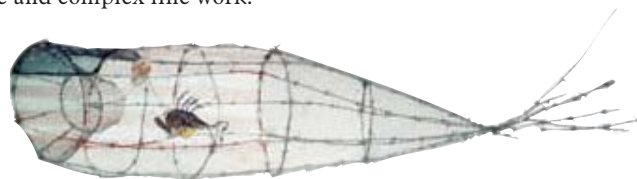
Mandandanji language

Brisbane QLD (residence)

Come in Spinner

2003

Synthetic polymer paint on cast aluminium and barbed wire 57 x 235 x 49 cm



‘The pieces produced now may still not easily fit into the category of traditional or ‘serious’ sculptures. But to me they are far more serious! As I get older and with a lot of political artworks behind me I’ve realised the powerful tool we have when mixing art and political comment. Because of this I’ve spent a lot more time and effort in the production of the new political fish series - with Hansen and Howard characteristics. I enjoy using barbed wire in this context as it conjures up all sorts of connotations. The challenge has been to take a subject I don’t like (most politicians!) and try to get them to assume a form I do like (most fish!)’. (Laurie Nilsen)

Lorna Jin-gubarrangunya

Galijan subsection

Jowanga moiety

Burarra (Martay) language

Yilan NT

Conical Fishtrap

2003

Fibre (*Pandanus spiralis*) 115.5 x 47.5 x 45.5 cm

Purchased 2003

Shell Development Australia Aboriginal Art Acquisition Fund

Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory



The Maningrida region is known for its conical fish traps. Traditionally, only men were involved in the construction of the large fish traps, but small children would crawl inside to assist with fixing the inner trap. Now women also sometimes make them. Traditionally the conical fish traps are inserted into barriers made with long mats or fences of upright wooden stakes wadded with grass, to divert fish into the trap.

Burarra and Kunwinjku people are particularly renowned for making fish traps. Burarra make conical fish traps called *jina-bakara*, using pandanus (*Pandanus spiralis*). The Kunwinjku people traditionally make two sorts of conical fish traps, one called *mandjabu* made from the vine *milil* (*Malaisia scandens*) and a smaller one called *manyilk mandjabu* made from the sedgegrass *manyilk* (*Cyperus javanicus*). The large *milil* conical fish trap is bigger and stronger than the *manyilk* variety and is used in tidal reaches of creeks to catch large fish. The smaller and lighter *manyilk* trap is used in flowing fresh water creeks to catch small fish and fresh water prawns. (Maningrida Arts & Culture)

Jack Maranbarra

Wamud subsection

Jowanga moiety

Burarra (Martay) language

Maningrida NT

Fish Trap

2003

Fibre (*Malaisia scandens*) 220 x 55 x 51 cm

Jack was assisted by his wife Bonny Burarngarra in making this one. Traditionally the conical fish traps are inserted into barriers made with long mats or fences of upright wooden stakes wadded with grass, to divert fish into the trap. (Maningrida Arts & Culture)



Regina Wilson

Marathiel language

Peppimenarti NT

Syaw - Fish Net

2003

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas 246 x 200 cm

This painting represents the stitch and weave of the *syaw* or fish net.

The weaving method is the same as the stitch used in weaving the *warrgarri* (dilly bag) except bigger. The *pinbin* (bush vine) grows near the river and is stripped into fibres which are then woven into the net. The *syaw* is used to catch fish, prawn and other edible living creatures in the creeks and rivers. (Karen Brown Gallery)



Grades 4-7

At the exhibit

- Draw a diagram to describe how fish traps are used.
- What materials are used in these three different fish traps?
- List other items you think could be made from fibre.

At school

- Make your own weaving using natural or synthetic fibres.
- Find out about the steps involved in making a fibre object. Write a step-by-step description.

Grades 8-12

At the exhibit

- These four artworks are of the same item, but each of them is different. Explain how they are different?
- What makes Lorna's fish trap unique in Aboriginal custom?
- Laurie says he likes "to take a subject I don't like (most politicians!) and try to get them to assume a form I do like (most fish!)". Choose a subject that you don't like and use a form you do like to express the subject.

At school

- Research Maningrida or other Arnhem Land communities and their artistic traditions.
- Find out more about the plants commonly used in making fibre objects. Research the steps involved in creating fibre objects such as these fish traps.
- The fish trap was a useful tool in Aboriginal communities, but now you see them in art galleries and museums as works of art. How does this change in use assist in the maintenance of the weaving tradition?

5. Identity

Focus works

Sylvia Huege de Serville

Assimilation Blues

Danie Mellor

Cyathea cooperi

Kenny Williams Tjampitjinpa

Tingari Men at Karrilwarra

Lily Morton Akemarr

Arreth

Alick Tipoti

*Kuiyk ar Mari – Head and Spirit
(Reincarnation)*

Rosella Namok

Old Girls, They Talk in the Sand

Aboriginal people express their identity in a variety of ways, through their languages, kinship relationships, cultural practices and ownership of the land. People's identity is also expressed through their art and the style in which they paint. In some areas, each clan group owns its own distinctive and exclusive pattern. In other areas people across a broad region may also share the same way of painting to express their identity. In the western desert region, artists use a common style using lines, dots, tracks and circles. These symbols are used for ceremonial decorations and have also been adapted for contemporary canvas painting. **Kenny Williams Tjampitjinpa** uses this desert style to illustrate an important rockhole in his country that was visited by some ritually important ancestral men long ago.

Lily Morton Akemarr belongs to the same broad stylistic region, however she has chosen a more representational way to illustrate her land and its medicinal plants. This new way of painting developed recently at Lily's community, and the way artists here paint in groups and learn from each other, means this landscape painting has become an expression of their local community identity.

Many Indigenous artists have developed new ways to express their cultural backgrounds: by reworking elements of their customary art styles or by creating totally fresh interpretations of central images or themes.

Alick Tipoti who comes from the Torres Strait Islands uses the decorative detail incised onto drums and masks for his contemporary linocut prints. In a similar way **Danie Mellor** expresses his affiliation with the rainforest culture of north Queensland through his prints of distinctive rainforest flora. Sometimes an artist will be inspired by an image that relates to a familiar activity in their daily life. **Rosella Namok** from the Lockhart River community in far north Queensland illustrates the fingermarks that old women make in the sand when telling a customary story. This emphasises the importance of art and illustration in a society whose oral traditions were once handed down the generations by word of mouth.

Artists in the remote areas who are still closely connected to their customary way of life tend to paint about their ancestral attachment to the land and its ancestral beings. In the areas where Indigenous people were most affected by western contact, identity is often seen in a more political way.

Sylvia Huege de Serville's work *Assimilation Blues* refers to the previous Federal Government's policy that sought to integrate Indigenous people into mainstream Australian culture. The policy was aimed at essentially 'breeding out' any physical or cultural Indigenous characteristics. Under the Assimilation Policy children of mixed descent were often taken from their Aboriginal mothers, placed in foster homes or adopted into white families so they would become more 'Westernised'.

Kenny Williams Tjampitjinpa

Pintupi language

Kintore NT

Tingari Men at Karrilwarra

2003

Synthetic polymer paint on linen 184 x 152 cm

This painting depicts designs associated with the rockhole and soakage water site of Karrilwarra, west of the Kiwirrkura Community. In mythological times a large group of Tingari men visited this site before continuing their travels north-east to Lake Mackay. Since events associated with the Tingari Cycle are of a secret nature no further detail was given. Generally, the Tingari are a group of mythical characters of the Dreaming who travelled over vast stretches of the country, performing rituals and creating and shaping particular sites.

The Tingari Men were usually followed by Tingari Women and accompanied by novices and their travels and adventures are enshrined in a number of song cycles. These mythologies form part of the teachings of the post initiatory youths today as well as providing explanations for contemporary customs. (Papunya Tula Artists)



Lily Morton Akemarr

Alyawarr language
Ampilatwatja, Utopia NT
Arreth

2003

Synthetic polymer paint on linen 137 x 182.5 cm

'Arreth - this is a strong bush medicine'. Courtesy of Lily Morton Akemarr



Rosella Namok

Aankum language
Lockhart River QLD
Old Girls, They Talk in the Sand

2003

Synthetic polymer paint on canvas 180 x 225 cm

Courtesy of Ian Thornquest

'From before time, Kuuku Ya'u, that's Sandbeach People - Lockhart River people, they talkin' the sand. Those old girls, they yarn to us, they remember before time. They were small girls, grandmothers for them, talk in the sand for them. When I was small I remember 'Queen' grandmother for me, remember she yarned to me, drew in the sand for me about before time. Mission came, teachers showed people how to draw and write, today kids learn to write, talk on the phone, but we still talk in the sand'. (Rosella Namok)



Danie Mellor

Canberra ACT (residence)

Cyathea cooperi

2003

Mezzotint 116 x 168 cm

Courtesy of the Artist

'I was walking up near Atherton one day and I saw (Cyathea cooperi). This print is about being in the rainforest. The image is a close up, a magnified view of uncurling fiddle backs on the fern trees in the Tablelands in north Queensland. This approach to exaggerating and emphasising the very small, follows the convention of shield designs from the area, in which animals and flora are shown as simplified designs, magnified many times so that they are almost abstracted.

The hairy frame in the picture refers to the fur on these fern trees as they unfurl, and the slightly unsettling nature of the rainforest with its constant and speedy cycles of decay and regeneration'. (Danie Mellor)



Alick Tipoti

Kala Lagaw Ya language
Horn Island, Torres Strait QLD

Kuiyk ar Mari - Head and Spirit (Reincarnation)

2003

Linocut 89 x 123.5 cm

Courtesy of the Artist

'This story recorded from my father Leniaso Tipoti. Story originates from Badu Island, Torres Strait'. (Alick Tipoti)



Sylvia Huege de Serville

Palawa Kani language
Perth WA (residence)

Assimilation Blues

2003

Synthetic polymer paint on linen 120 x 150 cm

Courtesy of Indigenart

'Assimilation Blues tells the story of the Stolen Generation who were placed into domestic servitude and farm labouring. The three babies at the top of the painting show the generational "breeding-out" of the Aboriginal culture as a result of assimilation, whilst the two main characters, a young man and a young woman, yearn to be together, but can't be. The design work is reminiscent of the area from which they originate'. (Sylvia Huege De Serville)



Grades 4-7

At the exhibit

- How many people can you find in Alick Tipoti's linocut? What do you think these people are doing?
- Draw thought bubbles for the two characters painted by Sylvia Huege de Serville in *Assimilation Blues*.
- What do the artworks tell you about the people who made them and the kind of place they live?
- Imagine the colours and patterns of your journey to school each day (traffic, falling leaves, raindrops, tyre marks, etc). Imagine your grandparents as children and draw the patterns and colours they may have seen.

At school

- Are there ways that your school can be identified from other schools, eg. uniform, language, sporting events, geographic location?
- Interview a grandparent or elderly person and gain a story that is significant for them. From that story choose a symbol that you feel represents their story. Present this in artistic form. Show them the painting and bring back to the class their reactions to these works.
- Divide into groups of two and using the fingerpaint technique, tell a story about your family or a significant event in your family's history. Share it with another class member. As a class look at the similarities and differences of finger marks used to describe events.

Grades 8-12

At the exhibit

- In Rosella Namok's painting, the marks tell a story, as though they were words. What story can you imagine she is telling?
- Sylvia Huege de Serville's painting is called *Assimilation Blues*. It relates to the issue of "Stolen Generations" and "assimilation". List the symbolic elements in her painting that illustrate these historic events. Why do you think she has used these symbols?
- Danie Mellor shows his connection to 'his country' in northern Queensland through his painting. Identify and explain the images Danie has chosen to identify 'his country'.

At School

- In groups devise your own artistic language. Create a response to a well-known landmark in your region and discuss your paintings in class.
- Each of these artists explores their identity. Who they are, where they have come from and what their family connections are. Map your identity and present it in a way that makes sense to you. Share it with your classmates.
- Find out about social structures in Aboriginal communities, eg. languages, kinship relationships, cultural practices, and ownership of the land.
- Choose a subject from the natural world and using a magnifying glass, or by using a photocopier and enlarging the subject, arrive at a design and embellish the border with a material that invites the viewer to touch.

Extended Activities

Primary

- Role play your own art award. The class decides on the categories for awards, makes the art, frames or mounts the art, hangs and displays the art, produces text panels and artist biographical details and produces a catalogue. Students decide on judges to view the works. An opening with speeches and invited press and gallery owners come to the show to talk with the artists or the artists' agents. Students develop a set of selection criteria for the award.
- Have students design a mural for a focal point in your school grounds to capture the essence of your school. Students use symbols and imagery that identify the most important elements of their school ethos. Draw a scale model of the mural and exhibit the images chosen by the students.
- Invite a local artist to talk to the students about his and her work, what inspires and motivates them. Students interview the artist and write an article for the school newsletter or an art magazine giving a profile of the artist's body of works.

Secondary

- Research artists in this exhibition through library, art centres and internet resources. Find out all you can about the artist: their language group, location, techniques used, social or political comments, body of works and market value of their artworks.
- Research the growth of Indigenous art from well known regional locations, eg. Papunya, Torres Strait Islands, Arnhem Land, Arnhem Land bark paintings, Western Desert sand drawings, Tiwi body art, Kimberley artists, Lockhart River artists.

This Education Kit is designed as a resource for the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award: *Celebrating 20 Years* travelling exhibition.

The kit explores five themes:

1. Cross-influences in Indigenous Art
2. Contact and Commercialisation
3. Land Rights and Country
4. Fibre
5. Identity

The Kit is designed for teachers of primary students from Grades 4-7 and secondary students from Grades 8-12.

The catalogue 'Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award: *Celebrating 20 Years*' is also available for purchase as a teacher reference.

An extended online format includes:

- History of *National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Award*
- Curator's Comments
- Colour images of selected works and background text
- Questions and activities for primary students Grades 4-7 and secondary students Grades 8-12

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