



March 01, 2016

Dear Friends,

Here is the latest Kimberley art news from Broome - Enjoy!

Philippa & Geraldine

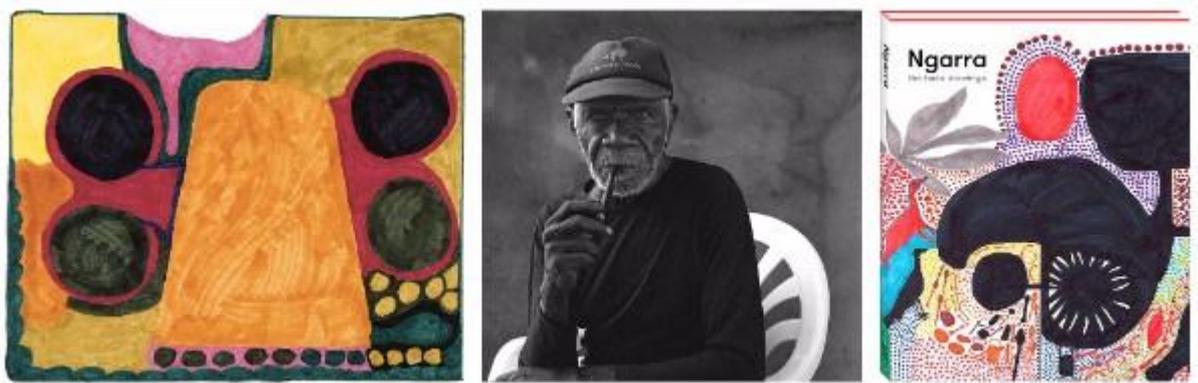


Image credit: (L to R) Manganda c. 1997,98 (Photo Con Macarlino) © the artist and Mossenson Art Foundation, Ngarra © Kevin Shaw, Book Ngarra: the texta drawings

From the Margin to the Centre; Ngarra, 'really artist' of the central northKimberley

Last November saw the publication of a monograph on a little known component of the body of work produced by Kimberley artist Ngarra: a collection of remarkable texta drawings, of which some 130 colour reproductions are included in the book alongside essays by Nick Tapper, Henry Skerritt and Kevin Shaw. We recommend this work not just for the revelation of the drawings but also the insight it offers into the life trajectory of an Aboriginal man born during the early days of white intrusion into the north Kimberley. Like many of his contemporaries, after a lifetime of exploitation and invisibility he decided to give voice to matters of vital importance to his generation via the one channel available to him – the flourishing national interest in Indigenous

contemporary art. This decision was made late in life with specific purpose and was maintained with a singular drive until physical fragility overtook him.

Ngarra was born around 1920 at *Kalkada* (now on Glenroy Station) in the central north Kimberley, the country of the little-known Andinyin language group. Prior to the early twentieth century this region sustained numerous small family groups who over generations had balanced social, cultural and environmental imperatives with the plentiful resources available to them. In the Kimberley it was one of the last areas to be settled owing to its rugged terrain and inaccessibility. Over the course of the first half of the twentieth century however the world of the Andinyin came to experience the radical social change imposed by a new order of European, Afghan and Asian settlers, participants in a pastoral industry rapaciously seeking new territory to exploit. Despite resistance, they had little hope of accommodating the newcomers' presence on an equal footing let alone holding their intrusion at bay. Subsequent decades of violence, disease, dislocation and forced labour decimated the original populations and wrought widespread social change, with minimal attention paid by the invaders to the individuals, lifeways and knowledge being lost. Aboriginal people who survived this period held their memories, oral histories and cosmological beliefs close however. Tourism and pastoralism now provide the most obvious stamp of human activity in Ngarra's ancestral country, but his art legacy is a pharos for the complex parallel world beneath... *To read the full article click [here](#).*



Shimmer: Shellwork **Exhibition on now until 6th March 2016**

'*Shimmer: Shellwork*' is currently showing at Wollongong Art Gallery (NSW). This exhibition celebrates and showcases historical and contemporary shell-working traditions in Indigenous Australia, from the south coast of New South Wales, to Tasmania, the Torres Strait Islands and the Dampier Peninsula of Western Australia. Its primary themes are described on the Wollongong Art Gallery website; 'Shimmer establishes a new framework for viewing Indigenous shellworks; focusing on technical

innovation, beauty and refinement, individual as well as community-led practice, and the historical, cultural and political contexts for Indigenous shell art practice’.

This group exhibition is a joint project curated by UNSW Art & Design Indigenous Programs Director Tess Allas, Tahjee Moar and the Kimberley’s own Darrell Sibosado of Lombadina. With pieces sourced from a variety of national and state institutions and community collections, the exhibition also includes artworks especially commissioned for the project by contemporary artists working with shell; Lola Greeno (Tasmania), Garry Sibosado (Western Australia), and South Coast artist Phyllis Stewart.

Representing Lombadina, the exhibited artworks by brothers Darrell and Garry Sibosado reflect the Bard people’s tradition of engraving white and gold-lipped *Pinctada Maxima* pearl shells from the coast of the Dampier Peninsula, today using modern techniques and tools as opposed to the stone and hard bone used traditionally. Both artists take inspiration from the traditional clan designs used on shell phallocks worn by men, incorporated in dance ceremony and used for trade with other groups. The Bard language name for these pearl shells is *Goowan*, once polished and worked with a design they are known as *Riji*.

Also included in the exhibition is a series of ten screen prints of these traditional clan designs produced by Darrell Sibosado. In an interview with ABC Radio National’s *AWAYE!* program (aired on 19/12/15) He explains; *‘I made the prints to get the designs down and to keep them at Lombadina forever so they have the designs quite clear’*. Displayed alongside other non-traditional mother of pearl carvings made by Garry Sibosado are contemporary versions of *Riji* worked in pearl shell. The designs all have traditional meanings and specifically represent different animals from the sea; turtle, dugong, whale, stingray, dolphin, sea tern etc. However Darrell clarifies the evident variations on these contemporary carvings, the body of the design is the same yet artists can include individual variations such as dots and dashes; *‘Traditional designs yet each artist adds a particular thing – these are from uncle who gave the boys the right to do them’*.

A traditional aspect of completing *Riji* is the process of rubbing ochre and a binder (such as fat) into the carved design. Fortuitously, an opportunity arose to demonstrate this process during the opening of the exhibition, when an old shell was re-ochred. An English missionary had collected a number of pearl shells from the Dampier Peninsula decades ago. These ended-up in a rock-garden in Cornwall, but thanks to the foresight of a descendent, their cultural importance was recognised and their return recently arranged. Garry Sibosado deduced that the design was originally made by someone from the Wiggan family. Both Garry and Darrell expressed that their return was a special moment and that they immediately felt compelled to remove the shell from its protective packaging and touch so that it could once again be held by Bard people.

Shimmer: Shellwork showcases the beauty of these important objects, but also the history and contemporary practices of some of the key shell-working communities across Australia. The exhibition is open till the 6th March and well worth a look. Check out the Wollongong Art Gallery website for more information and to watch a video discussion with curators: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aixUwMfE1o8&feature=youtu.be>



Image credit: Mary Teresa Taylor © Jason Thomas 2015, Mary Teresa Taylor, *Aru* 2014 Ochre pigments on canvas 140x100cm © Kira Kiro Art Centre

Artist Focus: Mary Teresa Taylor

Once described as a cantankerous sweetheart, 77 year old Mary Teresa Taylor's temperament is a delightful combination of brazen bashfulness. To the casual observer misinterpreting her brusque manner as the attribute of a cranky old lady and thereby merely dismissing her would be a big mistake. This is a talented artist, a woman who has experienced great love and tragedy in her lifetime. Tempered by the frank way she describes these events; equally revelations of the good and the bad, her candor has a sometimes shockingly confronting sincerity, a characteristic also conveyed through her art.

Asked to introduce herself on camera during an interview in Kalumburu recently Taylor is visibly shy, she first has a nervous laugh and then looks straight into the lens and loudly pronounces; *'My name is Mary Taylor and I born in Wyndham. My mother had two twins, my other sister passed away and I'm living.* [To cameraman] *You got it?* Throughout the course of filming Taylor would verbalise her uneasiness at being interviewed; *'So what now? Anymore?'*, then follow this up with personal revelations and sporadic bursts of wholehearted laughter... *To read the full article click [here](#).*

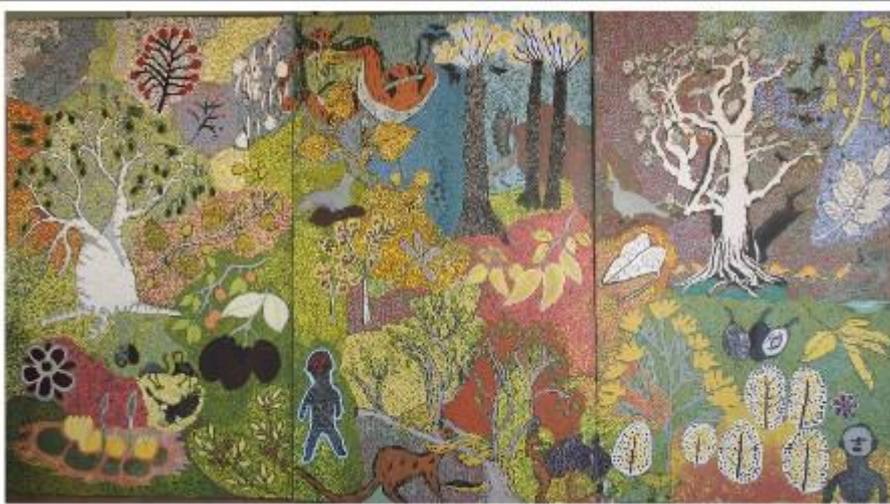


Image credit: Mangkaja Courthouse Mural © AGWA 2015

Courthouse Mural at Fitzroy Crossing

A visit to Mangkaja late last year offered the opportunity to have a close look at a public art project artists had just completed: three large painted wooden panels, now installed at the new Fitzroy Crossing Courthouse building.

These had been commissioned for prominent display at the new Fitzroy Crossing courthouse building. Executed in acrylic, they were painted by seventeen senior artists from the four main language groups which constitute the art centre membership (and Fitzroy community) – Bunuba and Gooniyandi from the river country, and Walmajarri and Wangkatjungka from the desert country to the south, as well as two Nyikina and Ngarinyin artists from a little further west.

We talked to Johnny Nargoodah, an artist and technician who has been an integral member of Mangkaja staff for many years, to gain some insight into how the panels were painted. An undercoat of dull forest green was first applied. The commission did not include a request for any particular theme, so the artists collectively chose to paint trees and other plants evidently significant to their art practice and cultural life in the central Kimberley. Nargoodah, for example, was responsible for the depictions of boab trees and embellished nuts, a practice at which he excels. The panels are alive with botanical and faunal motifs rendered in a combination of naturalistic and stylised figuration, with the whole brought into harmony with the lush background dotting of Penny K-Lyons, Rosie Tarku King and Jean Rangi. Nargoodah was emphatic that the painters involved were really proud of the beautiful finished piece, which rewards a long, close look. It will doubtless render the Courthouse a more welcoming place for those unfortunate enough to find themselves forced to be there.

Such commissions do raise questions about the role of art in such contexts however, particularly in remote areas where the overwhelming majority of people dealing with the justice system are Aboriginal. Indigenous incarceration and art have enjoyed an uncomfortable partnership in Australia since the earliest years of European

incursion. In Western Australia there are engravings on cell walls in the old Albany Gaolhouse (first used for Indigenous prisoners in the 1870s), and more recent wall paintings are included in tours of the decommissioned Fremantle Prison. Over decades prisons have served not only as canvases for expressions of prisoner distress and longing for home, but also as training grounds for painters and craftspeople needing meaningful occupation. Kurntika Jimmy Pike and Jack Wherra are two examples amongst many from the Kimberley.

Artwork commissions for police stations and courthouses could be met in a number of ways. They could be refused as a form of protest and disengagement from a system which is clearly failing many Kimberley people. Most of such buildings in the Kimberley feature Aboriginal artworks however so this doesn't seem to be the standard response. Waringarri artists in Kununurra have also recently completed a major public art commission for the town's new courthouse. These artworks are known as the 'family paintings', as up to four generations of one family worked on each board. The decision to take the commission was not an easy one, but after much discussion the artists decided that the paintings would '*make this place a better place for everybody*' (Peggy Griffiths). '*In the courthouse, they see all that painting what it means, what it means to them to change what they were doing and help them*' (Agnes Armstrong). The painters have made their mark on an often alienating system, thereby intervening in a process impacting heavily on younger generations in one of the few ways available to them.

Perhaps this motive was part of the decision to paint the Fitzroy Crossing murals, although other considerations might have been at play. The act of painting can be many things; aesthetic, cathartic, emotional, didactic, humorous... this public artwork appears to cover them all, and more.

With thanks to Johnny Nargoodah and Mangkaja staff for their time and for generously allowing us to view the mural prior to installation.

Desert River Sea would like to acknowledge three senior Kimberley artists who recently passed away

Mr C. from Warmun Art Centre, Jukuja Dolly Snell from Mangkaja Arts Resource Agency and Mr W. from the Dampier Peninsula. They will be greatly missed by their communities and continue to be fondly remembered and treasured widely for their art legacy.

Upcoming Event; Revealed – Emerging Aboriginal Artists from WA 2016

The *Revealed – Emerging Aboriginal Artists from WA* exhibition, art market, symposium and professional development program is on again! This is the fifth year for Revealed; the popular event saw approximately 7000 people attend at the Perth Cultural Centre in 2015. This year it will be hosted for the first time at the Fremantle Arts Centre from April 6 - 9.

The program aims to link emerging Aboriginal artists and arts centres from the Kimberley, Pilbara, Mid-West, Goldfields, Western Desert, Great Southern and metropolitan areas with audiences and opportunities in Perth. Over four days remote, regional and urban Aboriginal artists and art centre staff come together for professional development, a symposium focusing on recent stories and issues from the Indigenous art world, an exhibition of artworks by emerging WA Aboriginal artists and a Marketplace. The opportunity to socialise with peers from further afield is keenly anticipated by participants and often results in a lively cross-fertilisation of ideas and inspiration.

The Symposium, Exhibition and Marketplace events are a great opportunity for the public to meet artists from remote and regional WA face-to-face. The Marketplace particularly is seen as an opportunity to bridge the geographic and social distance between buyers and artists and art centre staff. With 20 Aboriginal art centres from across the State selling art work, visitors have the chance to buy paintings, textiles, woven items, artefacts, ceramics and jewellery. The art market is a free event and will be held at the front garden area of the Fremantle Arts Centre on Sat 9th April, from 10am-4pm.

Desert River Sea will be present to support and promote Kimberley Artists, make sure to drop by for a chat.

Revealed is supported by the State Government through the Department of Culture and the Arts, the Australian Government Ministry for the Arts and the Fremantle Arts Centre. More information about the event can be found on the DCA website: <http://www.dca.wa.gov.au/DevelopingArtsandCulture/indigenous/revealed/>



Image Credit: Sign at
Balgo © Warlayirti Artists

Warlayirti Artists call-out for Volunteers to Balgo

Interested in the art industry? Have you ever wanted to visit the desert? Would you like the experience of remote living in an Aboriginal community and do you want to get involved supporting an Aboriginal Art Centre in a meaningful way? Then a new volunteering program at Warlayirti Artists art centre in Wirrimanu (Balgo) might be for you. Warlayirti Artists is offering applicants a unique opportunity to meet and work with Aboriginal artists in their own community, giving applicants the opportunity to learn more about the dynamic Aboriginal art industry and about the people around whose work it revolves.

Warlayirti Artists is internationally renowned for its bright acrylic works on canvas and linen by artists such as Nora Wompi, Helicopter Tjungurrayi, Eubena Nampitjin, Boxer Milner, Patrick Tjungurrayi and Bai Bai Napangarti. The Warlayirti Art Centre is a busy and dynamic place and has some of the best purpose-built facilities in remote Australia. Functioning as a studio space for the artists as well as a large purpose-built gallery for the display and sale of the fine artworks produced, the art centre is also home to a stretching and packing room, a cultural Keeping Place and archive of national significance, as well as a new media and sound production studio. Operating in Wirrimanu since 1987, the art centre is an Aboriginal-owned corporation with an Aboriginal Board. It also services artists in the communities of Mulan and Kururrungku (Bililluna).

Wirrimanu is located on the edge of both the Tanami and Great Sandy Deserts: on first impressions it seems mostly flat, sandy and dusty with red dirt, it's fair to say however that the dramatic views overlooking 'The Pound' only 10 minutes from the Art Centre are truly spectacular. It gets very hot and humid in summer (the "wet") and can also get quite cold at night during winter (the "dry".) Warlayirti Artists is offering volunteers accommodation and facilities in exchange for their work at the art centre.

Warlayirti is keen to emphasise that volunteer positions are not for the faint-hearted and there are important cultural sensitivities that need to be understood and respected. Services at Wirrimanu are limited so applicants need to be healthy, resilient, self-sufficient, enthusiastic and have an aptitude for remote desert living. Also, in order to maximise the experience for the volunteer and the benefit that Warlayirti might receive, volunteers are asked to commit to staying for at least one month (with the possibility of staying on for up to three months.) The opportunity to volunteer is offered so that Warlayirti can further fulfill its commitment to the goals and aspirations of its members and is not an opportunity for people to further their own artistic aspirations.

If you are a willing worker Warlayirti Artists promises to keep you busy! Volunteers may be asked to assist staff or be expected to work on their own to: support senior and/or frail artists with meals, prepare canvases and art materials for distribution to artists, tidy, clean and maintain all areas of the art centre, assist with hosting visitors and tourists, administration tasks, stocktaking, cataloguing, photographing and packing artworks. Depending on the applicant's skills and interests, Warlayirti will assign tasks that make best use of an individual's specialised skills and talents for the most mutually rewarding outcome possible, these may include: IT management, marketing, grant writing & fundraising tasks, archive work including cataloguing, digitising historical records, multimedia/new media project work, conservation work or arts tuition.

For the right person, volunteering at Warlayirti would undoubtedly be a challenging, unforgettable and rewarding experience. Particularly for a student or anybody thinking of entering the arts industry, the insight into Aboriginal art and art centres this opportunity affords is priceless and we highly recommend it.

For the comprehensive information package on volunteering at Warlayirti Artists contact the Manager, Sheryl Anderson on director@balgoart.org.au Mobile: 0407 123 478 or visit the website www.balgoart.org.au



Image Credit: Sign painted
by Lulu Trancollino at
Yarliyl Art Centre ©
AGWA 2015

Position Vacant: Yarliyl Art Centre

Yarliyl Art Centre is seeking a Coordinator for a 3 Month Fixed Term. The acting position is a fixed 3 month period while the Board reviews its business plan. It is anticipated a permanent position will be advertised following this review.

Yarliyl Art Centre is an artist-owned and governed enterprise for the Aboriginal artists of Halls Creek. The Art Centre is supported by the Shire of Halls Creek who provides administration and management support to the Centre. The Centre is centrally located in the town of Halls Creek, in a new purpose built building with generous studio and gallery space.

The position will appeal to candidates who can proactively research, coordinate and manage a variety of arts and cultural projects. Previous experience in working with artists and facilitating their development is essential, along with experience in arts sales and in financial and general administration. Sound computer literacy with great interpersonal skills is also required. A 'hands on' work approach will complement the overall requirement of the position.

Applications close on Monday 7th of March 2016 at 4pm.

The position description and selection criteria are available online at www.hcshire.wa.gov.au To apply, fill out the application form available online or from the front counter at the Shire of Halls Creek. For further information on this position, please contact Jeannette Swan on (08) 9168 6723, mobile 0408 477 094 or email;ado@hcshire.wa.gov.au

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