



THE ESSENTIAL INTRODUCTION TO ABORIGINAL ART (25 FACTS)

Authors Jilda Andrews, Fenelle Belle, Nici Cumpston and Lauren Maupin

The Art Gallery of South Australia acknowledges and pays respect to the Kaurna people as the Traditional Custodians of the land on which the Gallery stands. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are respectfully advised that this publication may contain the names of people who have passed away.

THE ESSENTIAL INTRODUCTION TO ABORIGINAL ART (25 FACTS)

There's a lot of misinformation out there about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and art. That's why this guide was created, in collaboration with leading Aboriginal curators.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art and culture is the oldest continuous tradition on the planet. In recent decades it has also emerged as one of the world's most important contemporary art movements. Whether on bark, canvas or in new media, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists have used art to express the power and beauty of their culture, across cultures: to show their enduring connection to, and responsibility for, ancestral lands and the continuity of their identities and beliefs.

In our increasingly globalised world, this ability to speak across cultural borders without forsaking any of its distinctive identity makes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art some of the most innovative and challenging contemporary art being produced anywhere today.

image: Daniel Boyd, Kudjla/Gangalu peoples, far north Queensland, born 1982, Cairns, Queensland, *Treasure Island*, 2005, Canberra, oil on canvas, 192.5 x 220.0 cm; Purchased 2006, National Gallery of Australia, Canberra, Courtesy of the artist and Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney.

image detail (cover): Trevor Nickolls, Ngarrindjeri people, South Australia, born 1949, Adelaide, South Australia, died 2012, Adelaide, South Australia, *Brush with the Lore*, 2010, Adelaide, synthetic polymer paint on linen, 119.5 x 182.5 cm; Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2018, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Estate of Trevor Nickolls/Licensed by Copyright Agency, 2018.

I. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES ARE DIVERSE, AND THEIR ART IS TOO.

Some people are familiar with the Western Desert art movement, sometimes known as “dot painting”. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are diverse, and so is their art practice, just like artists anywhere. In fact, there are two overarching groups of people who are Indigenous to Australia: mainland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples, who live on the islands off the northern coast of Queensland. There are about five distinct language groups among Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their art and cultural traditions are very different. Altogether there are over 120 distinct indigenous languages spoken today, although there were more than 500 languages and dialects before European settlement.



image: Erub Arts Collaboration, Erubam people, Torres Strait Islands, *Emarr Totol*, 2017, Erub, Darnley Island, Torres Strait Islands, Ghost nets (reclaimed fishing net and rope), 160.0 x 160.0 x 52.0 cm; © the artists, courtesy of Erub Arts, photo: Lynnette Griffiths.

2. WHAT MATERIALS DO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ARTISTS USE?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists use a wide variety of materials, including: natural pigment as well as synthetic polymer paint on eucalyptus bark, canvas and composition board; sculptures made from various materials including wood, glass and fibre; ceramics; photography; video art; street art; printmaking; and many more.



image: Grace Lillian Lee, Meriam Mir people, Erub (Darnley) Island, Torres Strait, Queensland, born 1988, Cairns, Queensland, *Intertwined*, 2015, Cairns, Queensland, cotton, 43.0 x 38.0 cm; Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2016, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, courtesy the artist.



image: Yvonne Koolmatrjie, Ngarrindjeri people, South Australia, born 1944, Wudinna, South Australia, *Sister basket*, 2015, Berri, South Australia, woven spiny headed sedge (*Cyperus gymnocaulos*), 47.0 x 27.0 x 11.0 cm; Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2015, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy of the Artist and Aboriginal & Pacific Art, Sydney.



image: Yhonnie Scarce, Kokatha/Nukunu people, South Australia, born 1973, Woomera, South Australia, *Burial ground*, 2011, Melbourne, glass, Perspex, 33.0 x 133.0 x 38.0 cm (variable), 97.0 x 206.0 x 81.0 cm (plinth); Gift of the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2012, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy of the Artist and THIS IS NO FANTASY + dianne tanzer gallery, Melbourne.

3. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART IS SOPHISTICATED.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists make art for a lot of reasons and in a lot of ways, just like any artist. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art draws from a sophisticated system of connections between people and place. These complex relationships have been refined and adapted over thousands of years.



image: Maringka Tunkin, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1959, Mulga Park, Northern Territory, Matjangka Nyukana Norris, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1956, Victory Downs Station, Northern Territory, Mary Katatjuku Pan, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born c.1944, Rocket Bore, South Australia, Betty Kuntiwa Pumani, Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1963, near Perentie Bore, South Australia, Antjala Tjayangka Robin, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1941, Apu Ininti, South Australia, Alison Munti Riley, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1966, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Carlene Thompson, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1950, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Tjungkara Ken, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1969, Amata Community, South Australia, Puna Yanima, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1955, De Rose Hill Station, South Australia, Yaritji Young, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born c.1956, out bush near the creek Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Jeanne Wallatina, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1976, Indulkana, South Australia, Tjariya Nungalka Stanley, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1939, Wingellina, Western Australia, Manyitjanu Lennon, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1940, outbush north of Watarru, South Australia, Judy Wallatina, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1981, Indulkana, South Australia, Sylvia Ken, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1965, Amata, South Australia, Iluwanti Ungkutjutu Ken, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1944, Watarru, South Australia, Nyurpaya Kaika Burton, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1940, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Beryl Jimmy, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1970, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Sandra Goodwin, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1969, near Mimili, South Australia, Tjangili Tjapukula George, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1950, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Angkaliya Eadie Curtis, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1928, Miti, South Australia, Wawiriya Burton, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1928, Pipalyatjara, South Australia, Freda Brady, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1961, Amata Community, South Australia, Betty Muffler, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1944, near Watarru, South Australia, *Kungkarangkalpa – Seven sisters*, 2016, Fregon, South Australia, synthetic polymer paint on linen, 300.0 x 500.0 cm; Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artists and Ernabella Arts, Iwantja Arts, Kaltjiti Arts, Mimili Maku Arts, Tjala Arts, APY Art Centre Collective.

4. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART IS CONTEMPORARY.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been making art for more than 55,000 years, and the contemporary Aboriginal art movement is very strong. While frequently anchored by traditional belief systems, artworks produced today are products of today, and as such, are examples of contemporary art.



image: Reko Rennie, Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay/Gummaroi people, New South Wales, born 1974, Melbourne, OA_RR, 2016 17, Walgett, New South Wales and Melbourne, 4K three channel digital video, PAL, stereo sound, 7 minutes, 47 seconds; Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist and blackarrprojects, Melbourne.

5. ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART IS ALWAYS CHANGING.

Just as non-Aboriginal Australian art or European art has changed a lot over the last 400 years and continues to change, you can expect that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art has changed a lot over 55,000 years and is continually evolving. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists are maintaining traditions while innovating every day.



image: John Mawurndjul, Kuninjku people, Northern Territory, born 1952, Kubukkan near Marrkolidjban, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, *Billabong at Milmilngkan*, 2002, Milmilngkan, central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*), 186.0 x 78.5 cm; Santos Fund for Aboriginal Art 2003, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © John Mawurndjul/Licensed by Copyright Agency, 2018

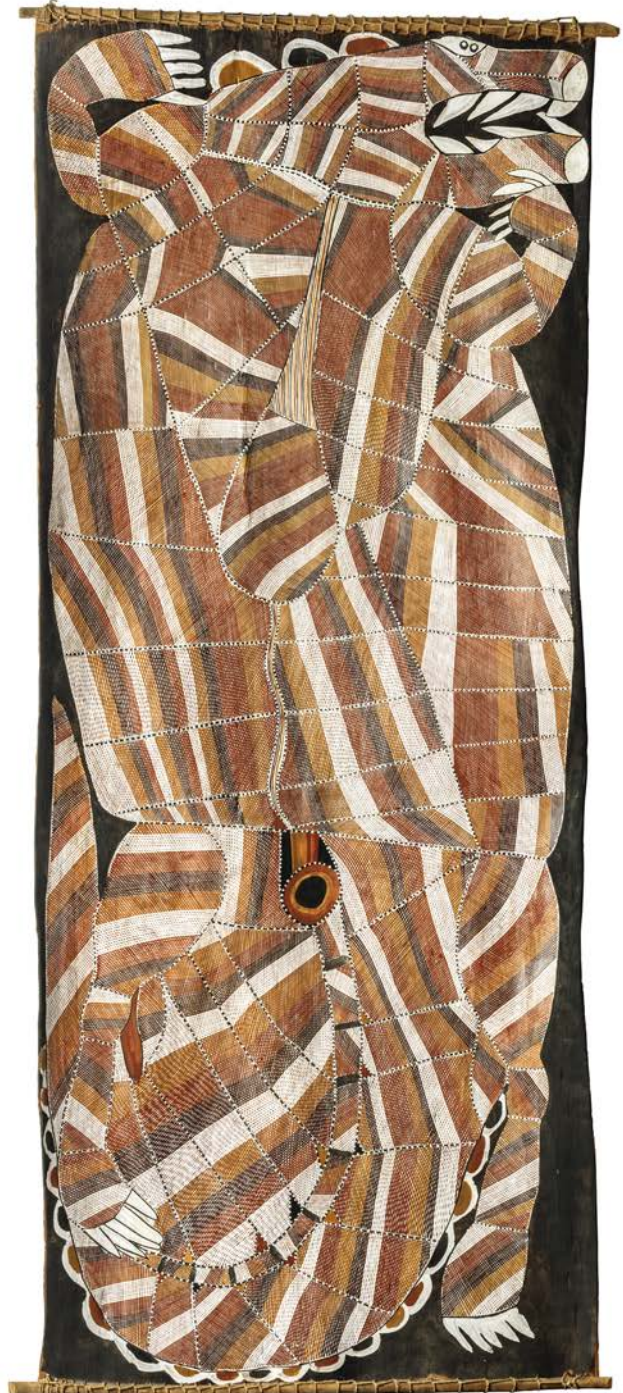


image: John Mawurndjul, Kuninjku people, Northern Territory, born 1952, Kubukkan near Marrkolidjban, Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, *Namanjwarre, saltwater crocodile*, 1988, Mumeka, central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, earth pigments on Stringybark (*Eucalyptus tetradonta*), 206.0 x 85.0 cm (irreg); Maude Vizard Wholohan Art Prize Purchase Award 1988, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © John Mawurndjul/Licensed by Copyright Agency, 2018.

6. WHAT IS THE OLDEST ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART?

As of 2018, the oldest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art has been confirmed at about 40,000 years old, in the Kimberly region of Western Australia, but is presumed to have existed throughout more than 55,000 years. Art at several rock shelters in northern Australia is dated at more than 25,000 years. Rock art includes carvings (petroglyphs) and painting using ochre, a natural pigment. Some rock art sites are in active use, maintained and repainted as they have been for generations.

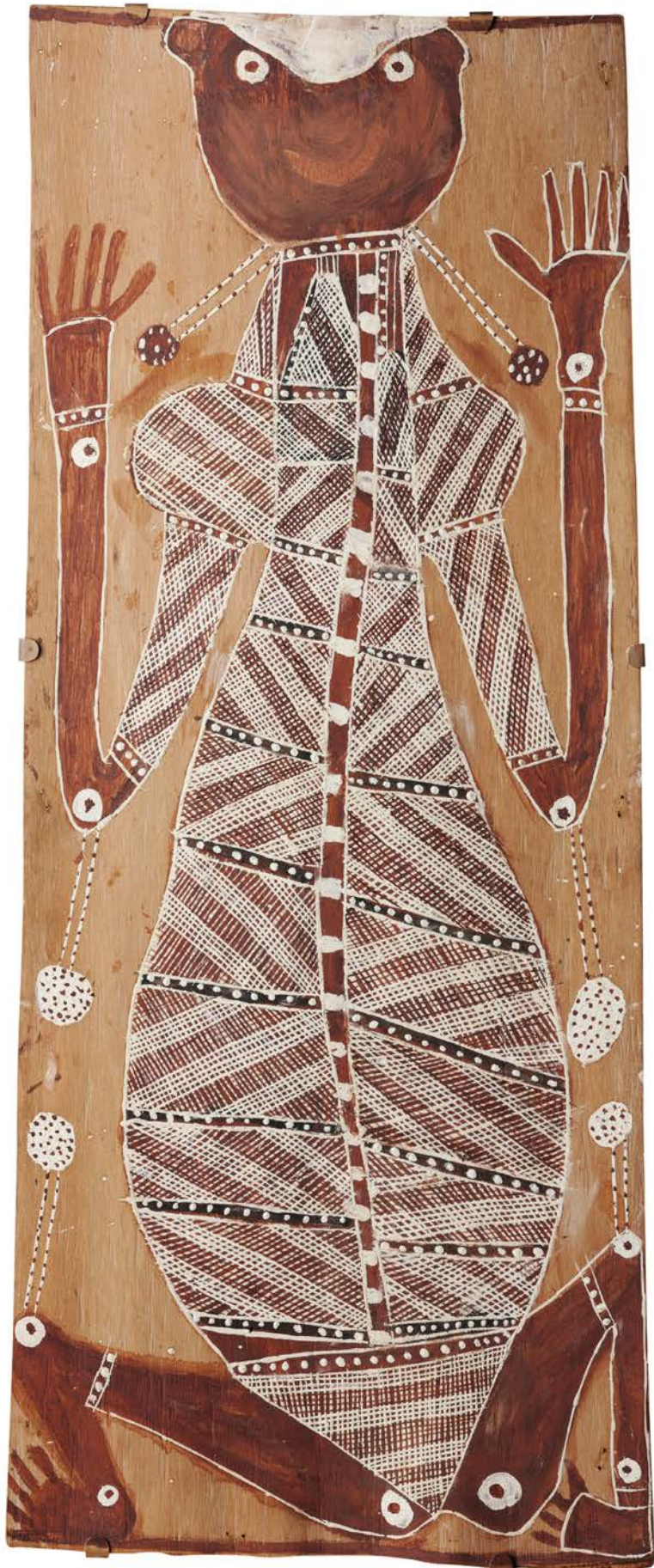


image: Billy Yirawala, Kuninjku people, Northern Territory, born 1903, central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, died 1976, central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, *Lumahlumah with magic power bags*, c.1972, Marrkolidjban, western Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, natural ochres on eucalyptus bark, 76.8 x 31.0 cm; South Australian Government Grant 1972, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide. © Estate of the artist/Licensed by Aboriginal Artists Agency, 2018.

7. WHERE IS ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART CREATED?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art is made everywhere that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples live across the entire continent of Australia, as well as in other countries.



image: Alair Pambejan, Wik Mungkan people, Aurukun, Cape York Peninsula, Queensland, born 1968, Aurukun, Cape York Peninsula, Queensland, *Walkal-aw (Bone Fish Story Place I)*, 2014, Sydney, ochre on canvas, 150.0 x 120.0 cm; Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2015, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Image courtesy the artist.

8. A LOT OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART HAS TO DO WITH “COUNTRY”.

The term “Country” is all-encompassing, and includes the land, sea, sky and everything contained therein. Artist and curator Nici Cumpston explains: “Country is spoken about in the same way non-Aboriginal people may talk about their living human relatives. Aboriginal peoples cry about Country, they worry about Country, they listen to Country, they visit Country and long for Country.”

Some artists represent features of the landscape in their artwork to communicate their profound, ongoing relationship with Country. Other artists raise awareness about the dispossession of Country as a result of invasion, using art to assert their rights as traditional owners of land and sea.

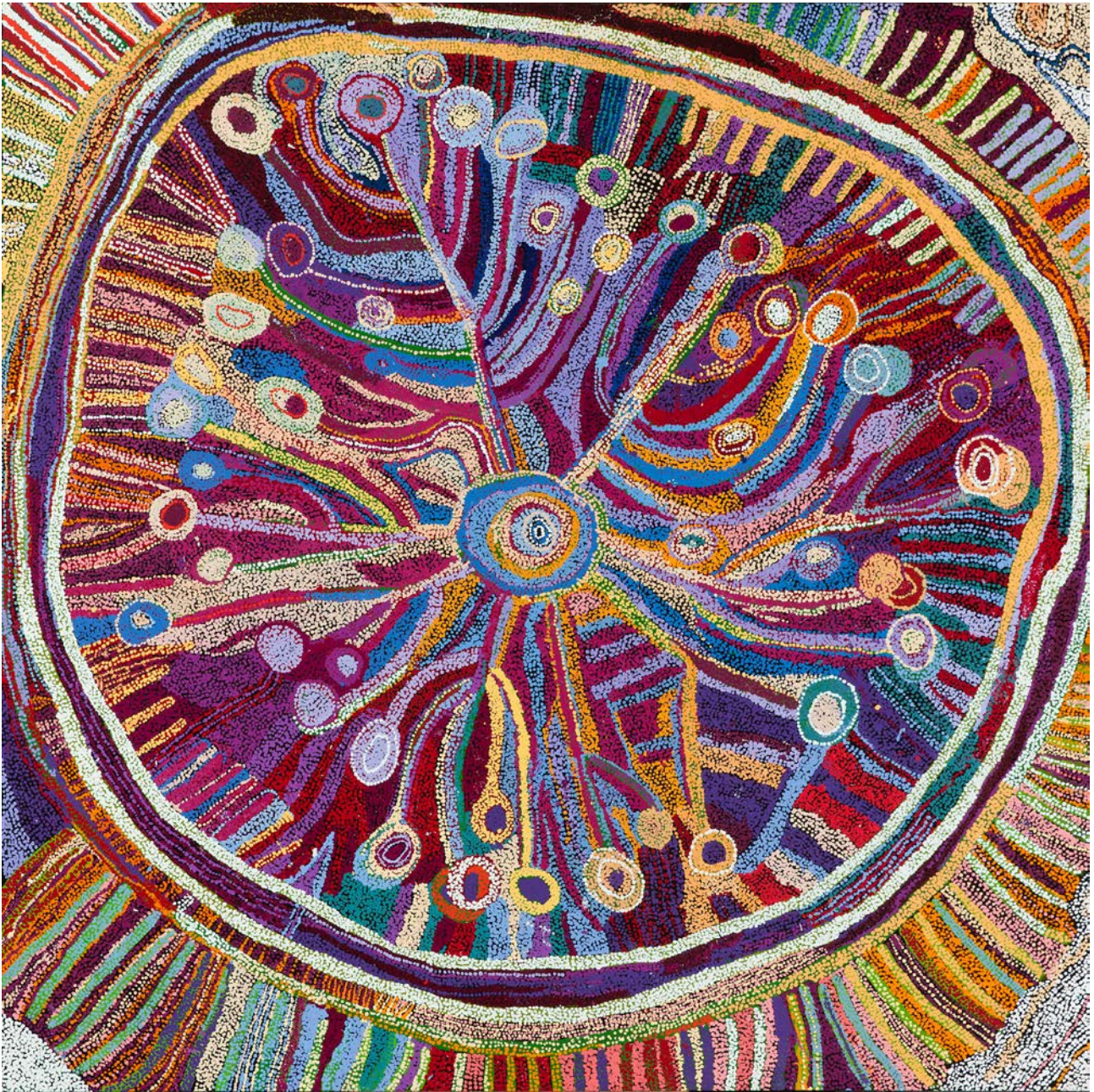


image: Wawiriya Burton, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1928, Pipalyatjara, South Australia, *Ngayuku ngura – My country*, 2012, Amata, South Australia, synthetic polymer paint on linen, 198.0 x 198.0 cm; Gift of Lisa Slade and Nici Cumpston 2013, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist and Tjala Arts.

9. WHAT IS THE DREAMING?

According to teacher Jeannie Herbert Nungarrayi (Warlpiri), the Dreaming is "...an all-embracing concept that provides rules for living, a moral code, as well as rules for interacting with the natural environment... [it] provides for a total, integrated way of life." The western terms "Dreaming" or "Dreamtime" refer to the diverse spiritual beliefs, cultural knowledge and creation stories of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. However, these Western terms are problematic, because they oversimplify the complex worldviews of culturally distinct groups within Indigenous Australia. These beliefs are deeply intertwined in everyday life with notions of Country, survival, family and the ceremonies associated with keeping culture strong. Creation stories depicted in art revolve around ancestral beings, who could take many forms and who created people, animals, plants and features of the landscape.

They also established social, ceremonial and environmental practices that continue to shape daily life. It is easy to assume that these events happened at a particular time, but the Dreaming is not marked by a year, a date or an event. It exists in the past, present and future, and artistic expression is one of many ways that it affects daily life. While some information embedded in these stories is appropriate for the public, the rest is often considered "secret/sacred" and is reserved for initiated members of the community. Learn more about the Dreaming and how it relates to the making of art in the article by Christine Nicholls 'Dreamtime and the Dreaming – an Introduction'.



Kunmanara Minyintiri, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born c.1915, Pilpirinyi, Western Australia, died 2014, Ernabella, South Australia, *Wati wiilu ku inma Tjukurpa*, 2011, Ernabella, South Australia, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 155.0 x 184.0 cm; South Australian Government Grant 2011, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy Estate of the artist and Ernabella Arts.

10. WHAT ARE SOME ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SYMBOLS AND WHAT DO THEY MEAN?

While there are commonalities across some artworks, no two paintings are alike. On some websites you will find problematic diagrams that clearly identify what each symbol means, leading you to believe that you can easily “decode” Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art. These diagrams only refer to symbols from one specific regional art movement in Australia, and often an artist will use the same symbol to mean different things, or one symbol will have multiple layers of meaning. The symbols used are part of a deeply layered understanding of the world, and artists will often provide interpretations of their work to communicate its significance.

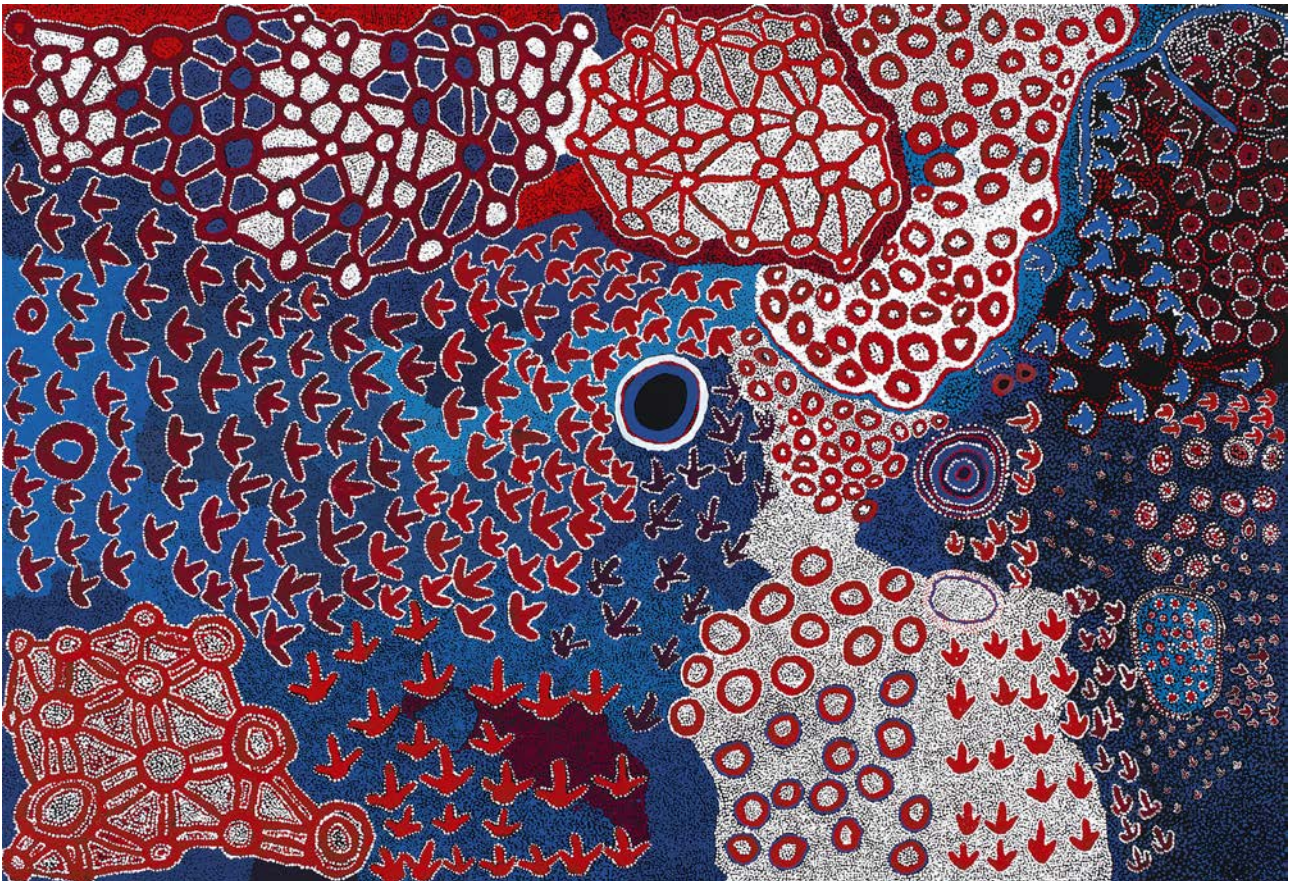


image: Byron Brooks, Pitjantjatjara people, Western Australia, born 1951, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia, Fred Grant, Pitjantjatjara people, Western Australia, born 1943, Ukatjatjara, Western Australia, Simon Hogan, Pitjantjatjara people, Western Australia, born c.1930, Paltju, Western Australia, Lawrence Pennington, Pitjantjatjara people, Western Australia, born c.1934, Urlu, Western Australia, Patju Presley, Pitjantjatjara people, Western Australia, born 1945, Itaratjara, Western Australia, Ian Rictor, Pitjantjatjara people, Western Australia, born c.1955, Artulin/Tuwan, Western Australia, Kunmanara Underwood, Pitjantjatjara people, Western Australia, born 1937, Tjutajara area, Western Australia, died 2018, Tjuntjuntjara, Western Australia, Lennard Walker, Pitjantjatjara people, Western Australia, born 1946, Tjukaltjara, Western Australia, *Ilkurlka*, 2015, Ilkurlka, Great Victoria Desert, Western Australia, synthetic polymer paint on linen, 198.0 x 290.0 cm; Gift of Barbara Fargher, Roger J Lang, Lipman Karas, Mark Livesey QC, Joan Lyons, Diana McLaurin, Robert Pontifex and Henry Rischbieth through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation Collectors Club 2015, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artists and Spinifex Arts Project.

11. IS IT OK TO USE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SYMBOLS IN MY OWN ARTWORK?

No! Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists are often deeply offended by this practice. It is considered cultural appropriation (when a person from a dominant culture uses the designs or patterns of a minority culture without their permission). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander designs are specific to those cultures and don't have anything to do with your own culture and identity. Appropriating or stealing their symbols would disrespect their true meanings and limit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists' capacity to interpret and represent their own cultural traditions.

12. ARE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PAINTINGS MAPS OF LAND?

Sometimes. Some artists from the deserts of Australia appear to use an aerial perspective to map out their Country in their paintings. This perspective comes from their lived experience of walking their Country, knowing every aspect of the land and then depicting that in their works of art. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists who paint come from many different backgrounds, so their paintings have vastly different meanings and perspectives particular to the artists themselves.



image: Waal-Waal Ngallametta, Kugu-Uwanh people, Queensland, born 1944, Around the Kendall River, south of Aurukun, Cape York Peninsula, Queensland, died 2019, Aurukun, Cape York Peninsula, Queensland, *The beach at Iklet*, 2010, Arukun, Queensland, synthetic polymer paint and ochre on linen; South Australian Government Grant 2010, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Waal-Waal Ngallametta.

13. WHY DO ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ARTISTS USE DOTS?

For centuries, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in various parts of Australia have used a dotting technique to share stories, either by drawing in the sand, painting on rock or as ceremonial body decoration. Artists in Papunya were using dots when they began painting in 1971, along with many other forms of mark-making. Some sources will explain that dots are used to disguise secret/sacred cultural information, and this was true at a certain moment in the 1970s for a few artists who covered their entire canvas or board in dots. Most artists who use this technique today are located in the

desert regions of Australia and this is the technique they use to share their ancestral creation stories. The dotting technique creates a sense of motion or pulsing in the artwork, with a decorative quality of sparkle and shimmer that many artists and collectors seek out. The dots themselves are not a sacred form of patterning, and there are some artists, whose work is purely commercial, who use dots so that non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can easily identify their artwork as "Aboriginal".



image: Tim Leura Tjapaltjarri, Anmatyerre people, Northern Territory, born c.1939, Napperby Creek, Northern Territory, died 1984, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, *Death Dreaming*, 1978, Papunya, Northern Territory, synthetic polymer paint on board, 52.5 x 60.6 cm; South Australian Government Grant 1993, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Estate of the artist/ Licensed by Aboriginal Artists Agency, 2018.

14. DO ALL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ARTISTS USE DOTS?

No. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art is as diverse as any other art form in both material and style. In many cases, you wouldn't know a work of art was made by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artist unless you looked at the label.



image: Janice Peacock, Meriam Mir people, Torres Strait Islands, born 1955, Mareeba, North Queensland, *Crocodile crate*, from the series *Ailan Crates and Traits in the Straits*, 2004, Brisbane, Queensland, plastic bags, seagrass, raffia, rope, string, wire, paint, Queensland emu feathers, bamboo skewers, shells, Erub Island/Torres Strait seedpods, Papua New Guinean wooden spear, linoleum, 127.0 x 97.0 x 57.0 cm (irreg.); South Australian Government Grant 2005, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Janice Peacock.

15. WHAT HAPPENED AT PAPUNYA AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Papunya is a town in the central desert of Australia that was established in 1959 following many years of drought in the larger surrounding desert region, which made bush food and water scarce. Aboriginal people from multiple Indigenous language groups were removed from their country and brought together to live in this small community. Historically these people would never have lived this close together. By the late 1960s, Papunya was overpopulated, and conflicts among groups were rising. In 1971, senior men at Papunya painted a collaborative mural, which was a welcome opportunity to remember their country and express their close relationship to it. This event propelled the men to begin painting with acrylic on board and canvas, and then together they established the first Aboriginal owned and managed company that still exists today, Papunya Tula Artists, Pty Ltd. The artists and their paintings formed an art movement which gained recognition from the international art market and inspired neighboring desert communities to do the same.



image: Daisy Leura Nakamarra, Anmatyerre people, Northern Territory, born c.1938, Umbungurru Creek, Northern Territory, *Women Dreaming*, 1982, Papunya, Northern Territory, synthetic polymer paint on canvas, 59.0 cm (diam); Lisette Kohlhagen Bequest Fund 1982, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist/Licensed by Aboriginal Artists Agency, 2018.

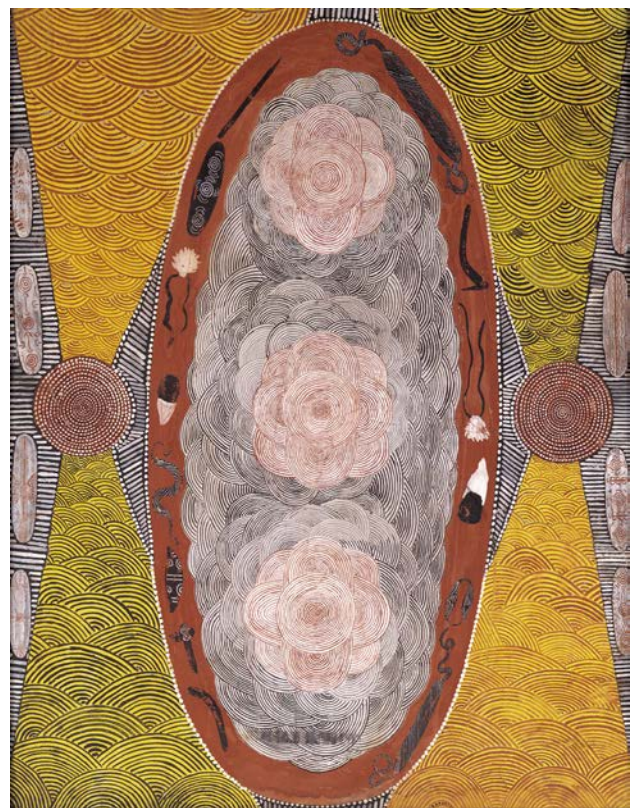


image: Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri, Anmatyerre people, Northern Territory, born c.1934, Napperby Station, Northern Territory, died 2002, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, *Honey Ant Ceremony*, 1972, Papunya, Northern Territory, synthetic polymer paint on board, 104.0 x 81.4 cm; Elder Wing Centenary Gift of The Foundation 2001, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy estate of the artist, Licensed by Aboriginal Artists Agency, 2018.

16. WHAT IS AN ART CENTRE?

Art centres are community-based arts organisations, often in remote communities, but not always. Usually they are owned, governed and operated by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander peoples of the community. They provide materials and studio space for artists, and manage the sale and marketing of artwork on a national and international scale. For example, when the painting movement began at Papunya, the artists founded Papunya Tula Artists Pty Ltd as their art centre.

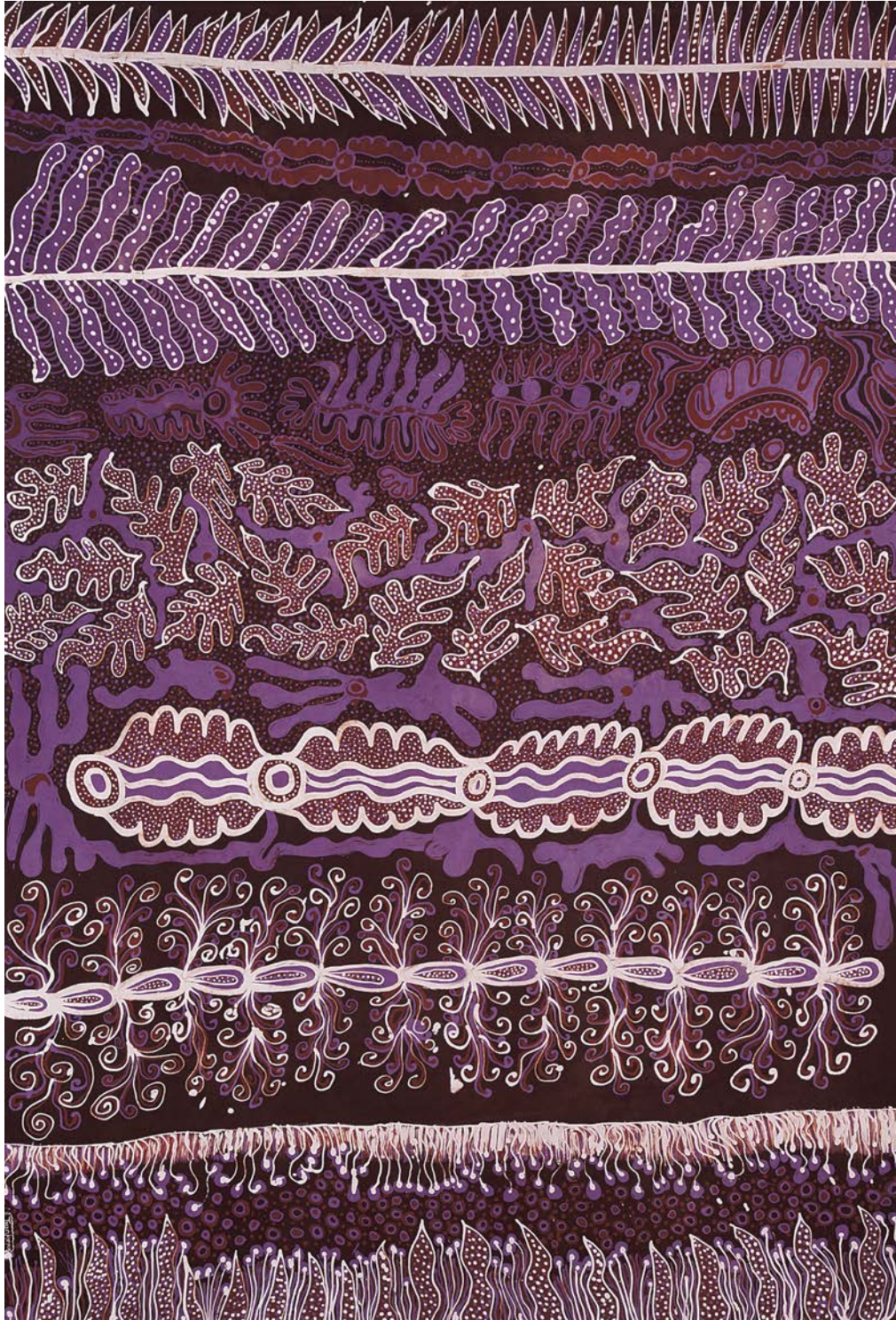


image: attributed to Yipati Riley Munti, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1966, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, ERNABELLA ARTS INC., est. 1948, *Length of fabric*, c.1982, Ernabella, South Australia, batik on cotton, 212.0 x 102.0 cm; Gift of the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2012, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © the artist and Ernabella Arts/Licensed by Copyright Agency, 2018.

17. WHO IS EMILY KAME KNGWARREYE AND WHY IS SHE IMPORTANT?

Emily Kame Kngwarreye (1910–1996) was an artist of the Anmatyerre language group who worked alongside women in her community, initially using the batik technique to paint their ancestral creation stories on fabric. She was a dynamic, freely expressive artist who went on to produce more than 3000 paintings in her eight-year painting career, which began when she was around 80 years old. As one of Australia's most significant artists, her artwork *Earth's Creation* sold for \$1,056,000 in 2007. This made her the first Aboriginal artist and the first female Australian artist to exceed the \$1 million mark. In 2017 the same painting sold again for \$2.1 million. To find out more visit the National Museum Australia website.



Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Anmatyerre people, Northern Territory, born c.1910, Alhalkere (Alalgura) soakage, Northern Territory, died 1996, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, *Untitled*, 1992, Alalgura, Utopia, Northern Territory, synthetic polymer paint on metal (car door), glass, 110.0 x 84.0 cm (irreg); Gift of Hon. Diana Laidlaw MLC 1995, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Estate of Emily Kame Kngwarreye/Licensed by Copyright Agency, 2018.

18. WHEN DID ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART BECOME FAMOUS?

Since they arrived in 1770 and earlier, many non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists have been fascinated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural objects. These objects were frequently stolen and sent back to England and Europe as examples of an “exotic” culture. Early exhibitions of Aboriginal art were often used to justify the invasion of Australia by suggesting that Aboriginal peoples were “primitive” and their culture was disappearing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists quickly capitalised on this offensive practice by making art specifically for sale to this audience in order to support their communities and preserve their culture. It was not until the 1960s that opinions about the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art began to change, and in the late 1980s and early 1990s museums and collectors began to embrace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art as an important contribution to the contemporary international art market in its own right.



image: Jeanette James, Palawa people, Tasmania, born 1952, Launceston, Tasmania, *Echidna quill necklace*, 2007, Moonah, Tasmania, echidna quill on hand made flax thread, 50.0 cm (approx length); Rhianon Vernon Roberts Memorial Collection 2007, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Jeanette James.



image: Julie Gough, Trawlwoolway people, Tasmania, born 1965, Melbourne, *Malahide*, 2008, Hobart, coal, antlers, 200.0 x 133.0 x 35.0 cm; Lillemor Andersen Bequest Fund 2008, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist

19. ARE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ARTISTS MAKING POLITICAL ART?

In some ways, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art is political because each artwork is an expression of continuing existence and belonging to place after invasion. Some artists explicitly reference histories and realities of violence and oppression toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and/or the land, or challenge stereotypes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



Tony Albert, Girramay/Kuku Yalandji people, Queensland, born 1981, Townsville, Queensland, *We can be heroes*, 2013, Sydney, 20 pigment prints on paper, 124.0 x 115.0 cm (overall), 28.5 x 19.0 cm (sight, each sheet); Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2014, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney.

20. THE STEREOTYPES ABOUT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES TELL AN INCOMPLETE AND UNTRUE NARRATIVE.

Stereotypes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have created racially discriminatory ideas and biases about the value and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, art and people, by simplifying their diverse identities into a single story and assuming that everyone is alike. However, there is no singular Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, people or identity and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures have always been dynamic and changing. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples come from all walks of life, have a wide variety of skin colours and facial features, connect to their land and culture in very different ways, all while making unique and meaningful contributions to our global, contemporary world. By reflecting on our biases, highlighting complexities, talking to people about their stories and acknowledging the limitations of singular narratives, we can confront stereotypes and prevent their continued use.



Judy Watson, Waanyi people, Queensland, born 1959, Mundubbera, Queensland, *Red rock*, from the portfolio *Crossroads: Millennium Portfolio of Australian Aboriginal Artists*, 1998, printed by Fred Genis, published 1999 by 21C, Sydney, colour lithograph on paper, 56.0 x 76.2 cm (image), 57.2 x 76.2 cm (sheet); Gift of Leo Christie through the Art Gallery of South Australia Foundation 2015. Donated through the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Judy Watson/Licensed by Copyright Agency, 2018

21. WHAT MAKES ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART AUTHENTIC?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art is any artwork made by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander artist. An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person is of Indigenous descent, who identifies as such and is accepted as a member of their community.



image: Danie Mellor, Mamu, Ngagen and Ngajan people, Queensland, born 1971, Mackay, Queensland, *Postcards from the edge (in search of living curiosities)*, from the series *Multiple Histories*, 2011, Canberra, mixed media on paper, 152.5 x 221.5 cm; d'Auvergne Boxall Bequest Fund 2011, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy of the artist. Represented by Caruana & Reid Fine Art, Sydney and Jan Murphy Gallery, Brisbane.

22. WHERE CAN I BUY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART?

The best way to buy Aboriginal art from remote communities is to purchase from the art centres. See our Resource List for lists of art centres and organisations that support them. To purchase artwork by urban-based artists, consult our list of festivals and annual exhibitions list at the end of this resource.

23. WHAT IS THE CORRECT TERM: ABORIGINE, ABORIGINAL PERSON, ABORIGINAL, INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN?

In a way, none of these are correct. Like many Indigenous peoples around the world, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prefer to be identified by their specific language group(s). Each language group is a sovereign nation, uniquely identified by its connection to Country. But, if you need to generalise, “Aboriginal person”, “Aboriginal people”, and “Torres Strait Islander” are respectful terms; “Aborigines” and “Aboriginals” are not considered respectful.

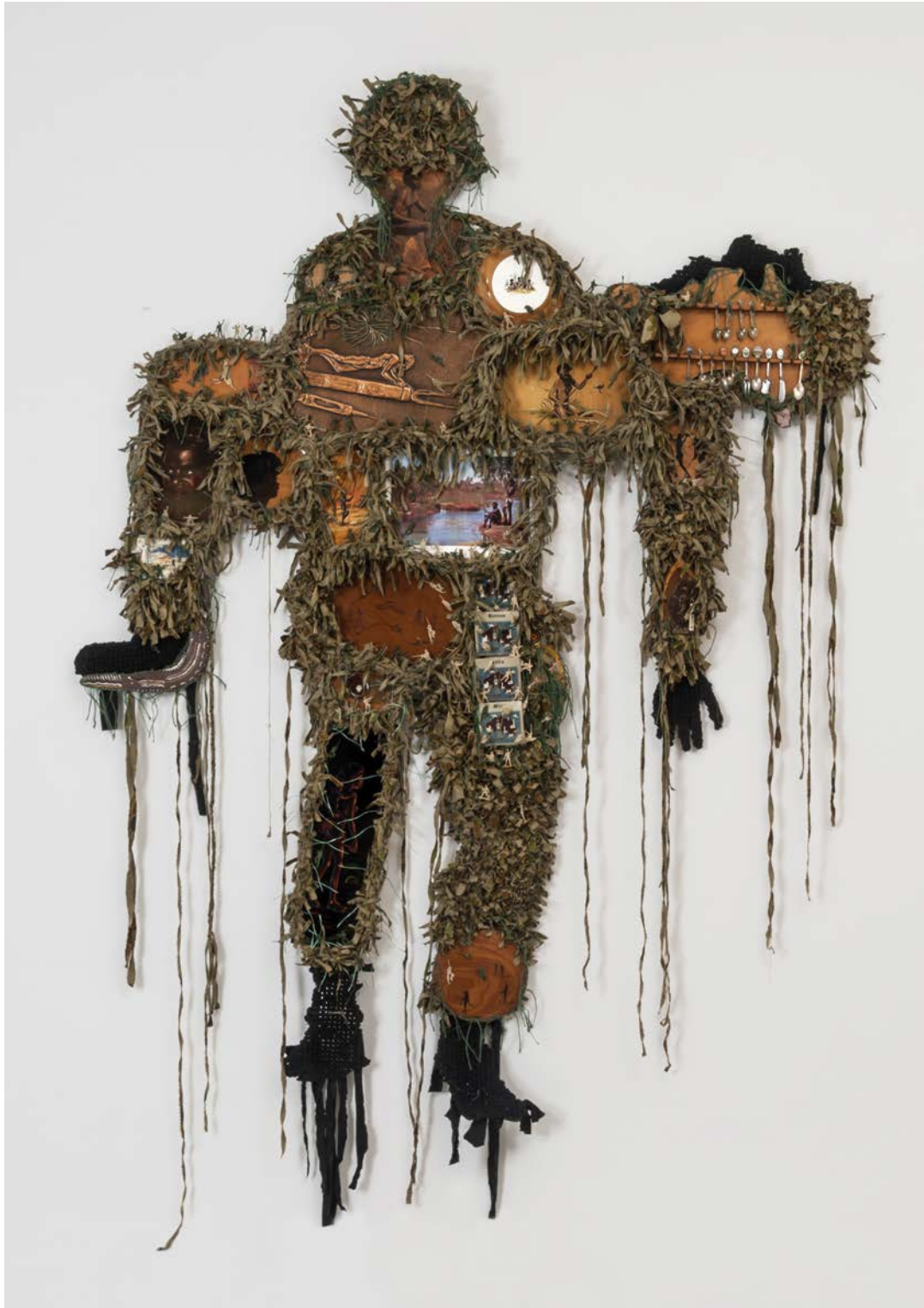
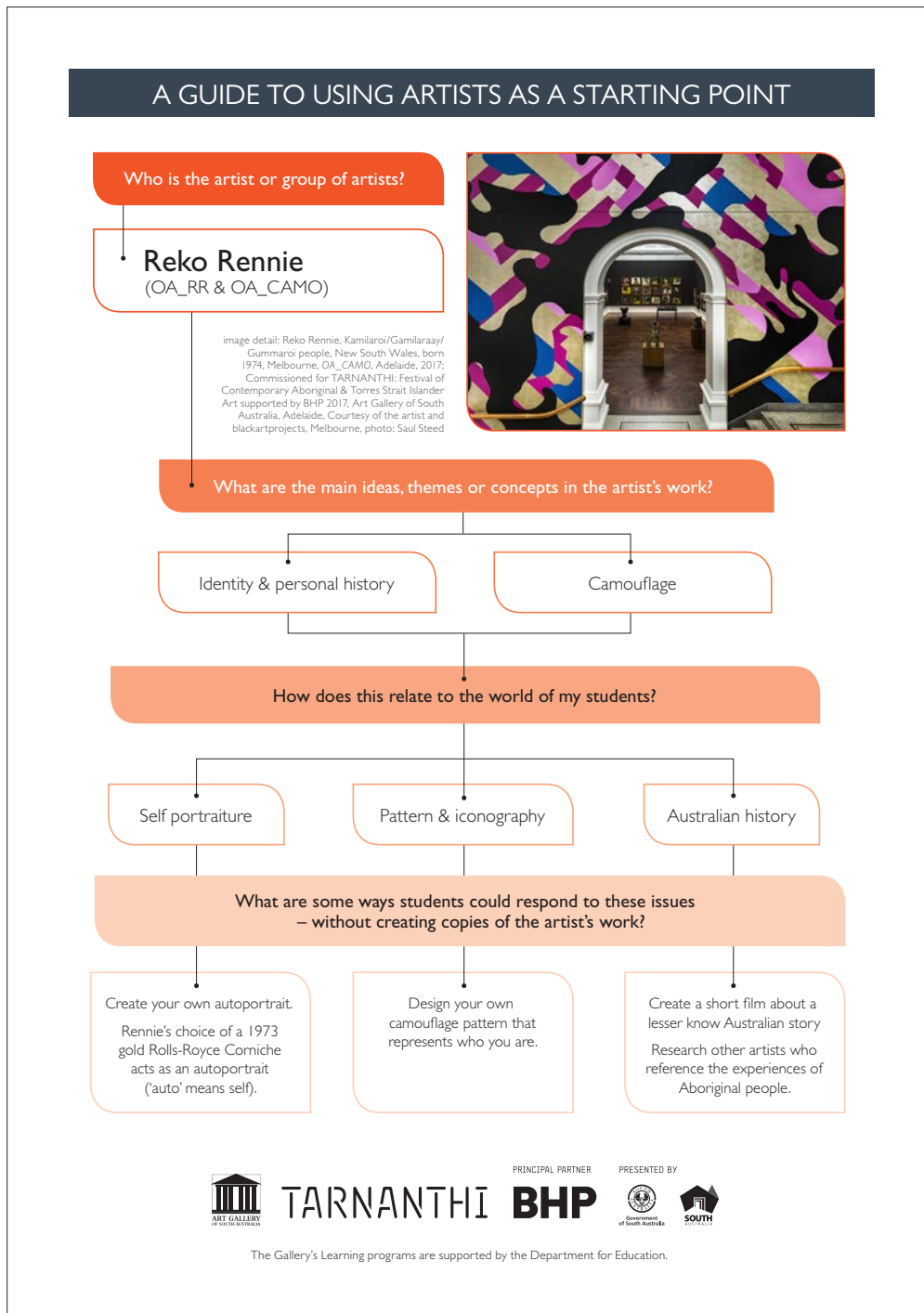


image: Tony Albert, Girramay/Kuku Yalandji people, Queensland, born 1981, Townsville, Queensland, *Universal Soldier*, 2014, assemblage of reworked objects, fabric and twine, 273.0 x 190.5 x 5.5 cm (dimensions variable); Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2015, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artist and Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney.

24. HOW DO I TEACH MY STUDENTS ABOUT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ARTISTS WITHOUT COPYING OR APPROPRIATING AN ARTIST'S WORK?

Expose your students to a variety of artists from around Australia by visiting galleries or festivals regularly. Use artists as a starting point to teach students about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture. Invite artists into your classroom – this can be achieved by connecting with local artists or simply include artist videos at the beginning of your lessons. Before planning a unit of work determine the main ideas, themes or concepts in the artists' work.

How could these concepts connect with your students personally, socially, environmentally or physically? What are some ways your students could respond to these ideas without creating copies of the artists' work? See 'A Guide to using artists as a starting point' or the Art Gallery of South Australia's interpretive resources for some ideas.



25. HOW CAN I LEARN MORE ABOUT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ART AND CULTURE?

We suggest the following resources on Aboriginal art and culture:

ART CENTRES

Aboriginal Artists and Art Centres of Central Australia
<https://www.anangukuarts.com.au>

APY Art Centre Collective, South Australia
<https://apyartcentrecollective.squarespace.com>

Aboriginal Art Centre Hub Western Australia
<http://www.aachwa.com.au/old/>

Association of Northern, Kimberley and Arnhem Land Artists
<http://ankaaa.org.au>

Desart Northern Territory
<http://desart.com.au>

Indigenous Art Centre Alliance, Queensland and Torres Strait Islands
<https://iaca.com.au>

Indigenous Art Centre Alliance
<https://iaca.com.au>

FESTIVALS, EVENTS AND ANNUAL EXHIBITIONS

Cairns Indigenous Art Fair
www.ciaf.com.au

Darwin Aboriginal Art Fair
www.darwinaboriginalartfair.com.au/about/

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art Awards
www.magnt.net.au/natsiaa

National Art Triennial
www.nga.gov.au/defyingempire/

TARNANTHI Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art
www.tarnanthi.com.au/

GENERAL

AIATSIS
<http://lryb.aiatsis.gov.au/>

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property
www.aitb.com.au/information-sheets/entry/indigenous-cultural-and-intellectual-property-icip

Reconciliation Australia
<https://www.reconciliation.org.au/>

Reconciliation SA
<http://www.reconciliationsa.org.au/for-schools/education-packs>

EDUCATION RESOURCES

Art Gallery of New South Wales Education Resources:
www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/resources/exhibition-kits/home-aboriginal-art-nsw/

Art Gallery of South Australia Interpretive Resources
www.artgallery.sa.gov.au/agsa/home/Learning/InterpretiveResources/index.jsp

Narragunnawali
Narragunnawali forms the core business of Reconciliation Australia. Reconciliation Australia is an independent, national not-for-profit organisation promoting reconciliation by building stronger relationships, respect and trust between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
www.narragunnawali.org.au/curriculum-resources

National Gallery of Australia Educational Resources
www.nga.gov.au/Education/indigenous.cfm

GALLERIES

Art Gallery of New South Wales (AGNSW) Collections:
www.artgallery.nsw.gov.au/collection/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-art/

Japingka Gallery, Western Australia
<https://japingkaaboriginalart.com/education/>

Museum of Contemporary Art
<https://www.mca.com.au/learn/learning-resources/>

National Gallery of Australia
<https://nga.gov.au/collections/atsi/>

National Gallery of Victoria
www.ngv.vic.gov.au/explore/collection/curatorial/indigenous-art/

National Museum Australia
www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/utopia_the_genius_of_emily_kame_kngwarreye/emily_kame_kngwarreye

Queensland Gallery of Modern Art
www.qagoma.qld.gov.au/learn/collection/indigenous-australia

RESOURCES

ARTICLES

Nick Mitzevich, InDaily, 2015, 'May the (art) force be with you,'
<https://indaily.com.au/opinion/2015/10/09/may-the-art-force-be-with-you/>

Christine Nicholls, The Conversation, 2014, 'Dreamtime and the Dreaming – an Introduction'
<https://theconversation.com/dreamtime-and-the-dreaming-an-introduction-20833>

BOOKS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art in the Collection of the National Gallery of Victoria. Published by the National Gallery of Victoria

Bardon, G. Papunya Tula: At of the Western Desert, McPhee Gribble/Penguin, Melbourne, 1991

Caruana W, Aboriginal Art, Thames and Husdon, London, 2012

Cumpston N & Paton B, Desert Country, Art Gallery of South Australia, 2010

Cumpston, N, TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, 2015

Cumpston, N, TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Art, 2017

Johnson, V. 'Lives of the Papunya Tula Artists', National Library of Australia, 2008

Jones, P. 'Behind the Doors: An Art History from Yuendumu', South Australian Museum, 2014

McCulloch, S & McCulloch Childs, E. 'Contemporary Aboriginal Art: The Contemporary Guide', McCulloch and McCulloch Australian Art Books, Melbourne, 2009

McLean, I, Rattling Spears: A History of Indigenous Australian Art, Reaktion Books, London, 2016.

Morphy, H, Aboriginal Art, Phaidon, London, 1998

McLean, I, How Aborigines Invented the ideal of contemporary art, Power Publishing, Melbourne, 2001

National Museum of Australia, Encounters: Revealing Stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Objects from the British Museum, 2015

Pascoe, B, The Little Red Yellow Black Book, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 2009

Perkins, H, Art + soul: a journey into the world of Aboriginal art, Miegunyah Press, Melbourne 2010

Perkins H, West M, Willsted T, One Sun One Moon, Prestel Publishers, Sydney, 2007

Ryan, J, Indigenous Australian art: in the National Gallery of Victoria, NGV, 2002



Valerie Stafford, Anmatyerre people, Northern Territory, born 1963, Coniston Station, Northern Territory, Roxanne Sharpe, Luritja people, Northern Territory, born 1985, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Rhonda Sharpe, Luritja people, Northern Territory, born 1977, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Dulcie Sharpe, Luritja people, Northern Territory, born 1957, Hamilton Downs Station, Northern Territory, Rosabella Ryder, Arrernte people, Northern Territory, born 1975, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Marlene Rubuntja, Arrernte people, Northern Territory, born 1961, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Dulcie Raggett, Luritja people, Northern Territory, born 1970, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Roxanne Petrick, Eastern Arrernte/Alyawarr people, Northern Territory, born 1986, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Trudy Inkamala, Arrernte/Luritja people, Northern Territory, born 1940, Hamilton Downs Station, Northern Territory, *Every face has a story, every story has a face: Kulilal.*, 2016, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, mixed media, dyed blankets, polyester wadding, embroidery thread, twigs, 228.0 x 120.0 x 100.0 cm (overall installation); Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Yarrenynte Arterre Artists.

RESOURCES

FILMS AND TV

ABC, Art + Soul, series 1–3, 2010–2017

ABC, Cleverman (TV Series), 2018

SBS, National Indigenous Television channel

Australian Rules, 2002

Beneath Clouds, 2002

The Tracker, 2002

Rabbit Proof Fence, 2002

Ten Canoes, 2006

Samson and Delilah, 2009

The Sapphires, 2012

Utopia, 2013



image: Richard Bell, Kamilaroi/Kooma, northern Riverine region, Jiman/Gurang Gurang, north east region, Queensland, born 1953, Charleville, Queensland, *The Sign Says It*, 2017, Brisbane, synthetic polymer paint on linen, 200.0 x 200.0 cm; Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, © Courtesy the artist and Milani Gallery.

This resource has been produced in collaboration with the Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection of University of Virginia and the Art Gallery of South Australia and supported by the Department for Education.



image: Sammy Dodd, Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1946, Winpiranganyi, South Australia, Alec Baker, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1932, Shirley Well, South Australia, Eric Kunmanara Barney, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1973, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Freda Brady, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1961, Amata Community, South Australia, Moses Brady, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1993, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Michael Bruno, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia/Luritja people Northern Territory, born 1994, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Angela Burton, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1966, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Cisco Burton, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1963, near Wingellina, South Australia, Kunmanara (Hector) Burton, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1937, near Pipalyatjara, South Australia, died 2017, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Noel Burton, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1994, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Pepai Jangala Carroll, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia/Luritja people, Northern Territory, born 1950, Haasts Bluff, Northern Territory, Mr Wangin, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born c.1939, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Mary Katatjuku Pan, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born c.1944, Rocket Bore, South Australia, Margaret Ngilan Dodd, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1946, Sandy Bore, South Australia, Kunmanara Pompey, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1952, Gap Well, South Australia, died 2018, Port Augusta, South Australia, Taylor Wanyima Cooper, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1940, Malara, a waterhole east of Pipalyatjara, South Australia, Adrian Riley, Walpiri people, Northern Territory, born 1961, west of Ali Curung, Northern Territory, William Tjapaltjarri Sandy, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1951, Tanu Well, South Australia, Priscilla Singer, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1968, Indulkana, South Australia, Keith Stevens, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1940, Granite Downs Station, South Australia, Lydon Stevens, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1967, Cundeelee, Western Australia, Kunmanara (Tiger) Palpatja, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born c.1920, Piltati, South Australia, died 2012, Amata, South Australia, Lyndon Tjangala, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1994, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, David Pearson, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born c.1964, Indulkana, South Australia, Ginger Wikilyiri, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1930, Kunumata, South Australia, Mick Wikilyiri, Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1938, Rocket Bore, Northern Territory, Mumu Mike Williams, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1952, between Kenmore Park and Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Anwar Young, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1994, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Carol Young, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1972, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Frank Young, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1949, near Artuti, South Australia, Kamurin Young, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1994, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Marcus Young, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1998, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Roma Young, Ngaanyatjarra people, Western Australia/Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1952, Warburton, Western Australia, Yaritji Young, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born c.1956, out bush near the creek Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Bernard Tjalkuri, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born c.1930, Waltja rockhole, South Australia, Adrian Intjalki, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1943, Mimili, South Australia, Jimmy Donegan, Ngaanyatjarra people, Western Australia/Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1940, Yapan near Ngatuntjarra bore, Western Australia, Maureen Douglas, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1966, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Kunmanara (Ronnie) Douglas, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1949, Umbeara, Northern Territory, died 2017, Amata, South Australia, Stanley Douglas, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1944, Kulgera, Northern Territory, Arnie Frank, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1960, Yanyarinyi (Kenmore Park), South Australia, Aaron Riley, Walpiri people, Northern Territory, born 1974, Ali Curung, Northern Territory, Kunmanara (Gordon) Ingkatji, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born c.1930, Titu, South Australia, died 2016, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Vincent Namatjira, Western Arnernte people, Northern Territory, born 1983, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Rupert Jack, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1951, Mimili, South Australia, Willy Kaika Burton, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1941, near Wingellina, Western Australia, Nyurpaya Kaika Burton, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1940, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Mark Morris, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1975, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Witjiti George, Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1938, Lambina/Granite Downs Station, South Australia, Peter Mungkuri, Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1946, Fregon, South Australia, Naomi Kantjuriny, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1944, Amata, South Australia, Kevin Morris, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1984, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Errol Morris, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1965, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Willy Muntjanti Martin, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1950, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Graham Kulyuru, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1939, Kuyntjanu, South Australia, Iluwanti Ungkutjutu Ken, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1944, Watarru, South Australia, Ray Ken, Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1940, Amaruna, South Australia, Freddy Ken, Pitjantjatjara people, South Australia, born 1951, Pukatja (Ernabella), South Australia, Brenton Ken, Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara people, South Australia, born 1944, Willi Willi, south west of Amata, South Australia, *Kulata Tjuta*, 2017, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, South Australia, wood, spinifex resin, kangaroo tendon, plus 6 channel DVD, (dimensions variable); Acquisition through TARNANTHI: Festival of Contemporary Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art supported by BHP 2017, Art Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, Courtesy the artists