

MORNINGTON ISLAND ARTS & CRAFTS CENTRE
GUNUNA, MORNINGTON ISLAND

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Mornington Island Arts & Craft, Woomera Aboriginal Corporation

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Woomera Aboriginal Corporation is based at Gununa, Mornington Island and is the home of both Mornington Island Arts & Crafts & the Mornington Island Dancers.

This catalogue includes some background information on the Corporation and the Mornington Island Dancers which have a long history of touring and conducting workshops: regionally, nationally and internationally for over 30 years.

The focus of this publication is to profile the artists working with Mornington Island Arts & Crafts and the recent exciting progress in the continuing work of the transferral of body 'paint up' designs used in traditional Lardil dance, to canvas. It is important to note that many of the artists are former and/or current dancers as detailed in the interviews with them. The publication also includes their artworks and an essay by Simon Turner titled "Jidmaa Thuwathu - Rainbow Serpent Rising" and introduces the following artists:

Arnold Watt
Billy Kooraubabba
Bradley Wilson
Darryl Williams
Emily Evans
Gordon Watt
Joelene Roughsey
John Williams
Joseph Watt
Lance Gavenor
Jonathon Toby
Lex Toby
Lindsay Roughsey
Melvile Escott
Reggie Robertson
Renee Wilson
Sally Gabori
Wayne Williams

MORNINGTON ISLAND
ARTS & CRAFT

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Woomera Aboriginal Corporation was founded in 1973 and incorporated in 1983. The Corporation has taken the name 'woomera' as its meaning refers to the 'spear-thrower' that gives extra strength to the hunter in pursuit of his goals and reflects the way we give ourselves strength to pursue our mission and goals for the community.

MISSION

O To create a thriving cultural life at Mornington Island

GOALS

O PARTICIPATION
To increase the participation of Mornington Island People in arts and cultural activities

O NEW WORK, ACCESS AND INNOVATION
To produce new artistic work to create employment opportunities and ensure the reputation of local artists

O RECLAMATION AND MAINTENANCE OF ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE
To develop artistic skills that will ensure cultural integrity and ongoing community development

O EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE AND CONTROL
To develop skills that will increase good practice and self-management of the community's artistic and cultural life

O ARTISTIC EXCELLENCE
To develop artistic works that demonstrate excellence to national and international audiences



Gununa,
Mornington Island

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MORNINGTON ISLAND DANCERS

Cultural programs, touring and workshops are organised on an annual basis. Funding support from the Australia Council and Arts Queensland has given the Woomera Aboriginal Corporation the financial base for the touring programs of the Mornington Island Dancers which have covered every region of Australia and over twenty overseas performance tours and projects.

In addition to the planned annual touring program, the Mornington Islander Dancers are strongly placed to take advantage of offers and opportunities from national and international festivals with short lead times for performance work.

Mornington Island Dancers
Phone: 07 4745 7360
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TOURING HISTORY: 1973-2005
International Tours: Italy, France, Germany, Luxemberg, Southwest USA, United Kingdom, New Zealand, India, Japan, Sweden, Belgium, New Guinea, Germany
International Festivals: Los Angeles, FOPA Port Moresby, Suva,Palau, WOMAD Aukland, CIOFF Tokyo, CIOFF Schoten, CIOFF Ratvik, London, UNICEF Berlin, Dresden, Stuttgart, Turin
Major National Arts Festivals: Adelaide International Festival, Canberra, Melbourne International Festival, Sydney, Darwin, Townsville, Qld Biennial Festival of Music, Womadelaide, Ballet 82,
Major Indigenous Festivals: Laura, Yipparinya, Sydney Dreaming, Perth, Canberra World Indigenous Peoples Festival
Folk Festivals: Port Fairy Music Festival Victoria, National Canberra, Brisbane
Regional Schools Tours: 1974-2004 all states and all regions of Australia
Regional Culture Exchange Projects: Central Australia, Kimberley, Pilbara, Arhnemland, Cape York, Nullabour, Northwest Qld.,
Collaborations: (co-touring): Dance North, Ngardiji Dancers, Doomadgee Dancers, Borroloola Dancers
Collaborations: (education): Department of Education SA (curriculum development), Learning Australia
Partnerships in creative development: Dance North (Townsville), Norpa (Lismore), Butter Factory (Cooroy), NAISDA(Sydney), Aboriginal Dance Theatre Redfern, Sydney Dreaming, Taundi College(Adelaide)
Film: Shadow Sister, Dance On Your Land

MORNINGTON ISLAND ARTS & CRAFT CENTRE

OUR FAMILY

In 2005 we held a series of Professional Development workshops with Simon Turner of the Woolloongabba Art Gallery to develop our body paint designs onto canvas. In the previous two years we had slowly rebuilt our reputation as wholesalers of high quality authentic handcraft. We had always been noted for our unique story paintings but they were never sort after by the mainstream indigenous art market. It had always been the plan to develop the centre as a community facility available for use by members of the community wanting to experience visual art and craft activities.

It is this family outlook that I have tried to encourage as we have grown. When Simon visited for the workshops this was further emphasised as the group grew larger and more artists joined our family. Discussions were held on how important it was to work together as a group to achieve their individual goals and how they could help each other, inspire each other and join in each other's successes.

Our family has grown quickly and in the last 2 months we have had others join. The Aged Person's Hostel (APH) now brings some of their residents for painting 2 days per week. One of these residents and newest family member is Lindsay Roughsey, older brother to the late Dick Roughsey and an accomplished artist in his own right. His first visit to the art centre he was confined to a wheelchair was unable to communicate or put brush to canvas.

After two visits he was sitting upright painting with assistance. After three visits he was painting unassisted. In May 2005 there was a knock at the backdoor. I opened it and in walked Lindsay Roughsey he sat down asked me for his canvas and paints and proceeded to get back to work. When he is here painting our senior artists, old men in their own right behave like they are school kids again laughing and joking with him dancing and showing so much joy in seeing him with them painting.

This is the family I refer too at our art centre. Painting unites them, painting strengthens them and gives them purpose. Painting is how they communicate their pride and knowledge of their culture and how they will hand this knowledge onto the next generation.

Another new family member from the APH is Sally Gabori. She has spent her whole life weaving and making grass string and rope and making craft such as dilly bags and fishnets. As a young woman she repaired and maintained the fish traps on her homeland at Bentinck Island.

On Sally's second visit to our art centre she tried painting. From there she has quickly blossomed into an artist who loves to paint about country, fish, the fish traps she worked to maintain and the story places of her homeland.

Our third family member from the APH is Jonathon Toby. Jonathon suffered a very serious accident as a young man and almost lost his life. He was left unable to care for himself and has spent most of the last 20 years in Charters Towers growing up painting the stories of Mornington Island and visiting now and then to stay in touch with family.

Jonathon has recently returned to live on the island full time and now paints with us at the Art Centre. It is wonderful to have him around as he always has a smile on his face and loves to paint and be part of our family.

The MIAAC artgang is more than group of artists, it's a contemporary family that is growing and teaching our community by example, that using our cultural strengths and traditions, we can navigate a path and direction for our communities future.

Brett Evans
Art Centre Coordinator



Page opposite details of paintings, workshop 1 © the artists, MIAAC 2005



"I'm the third eldest of my four brothers and three sisters in my family. I grew up going fishing and spearing with my other young mates and friends, we used to go bush and hunting for those wild berries and little goannas. I loved my schooling, I used to do school work on the front of my page and on the back of my book was where I did my drawings of animals and comic book characters. I learnt my culture from my old people, I learnt a bit from my father and the rest from my uncle.

I left school when I was fifteen, went to the mainland working on cattle stations, around 1955. I was a yardman, milking cows, feeding chooks looking after the animals. I used to make cream and butter from any extra cows milk. In 1959 I returned to Mornington Island, I saw my family then went back again to the mainland. I was moving backwards and forwards all the time. I came back finally and got married in 1967, I've got three boys and one girl, and she gave me my three grandchildren. I saw my father making paintings, painted boomerangs and shields he made. In 1968 I started painting alongside Goobala, Spider, and dear old Percy Trezise, he came here and then that's when we started doing bark paintings. I've kept painting from that time till now. I like painting with three ways, landscapes, body painting, and story painting on bark. I still like to make spears, fighting sticks, boomerangs and lovedolls. I used to work on my own and had no one to talk with in the day, now there's more artists starting up in the art centre. It makes me happy to see more artists painting culture painting, our way, working with me."

Arnold Watt



Dingo 2005
137 x 91 cm



Roughsey Brothers 2004
50 x 40 cm



"My country is where the unseen people live, short people. I was born in my home of Bararrkiya. I have six brothers and four sisters all from the same mother and father. When I was young, I went to school in the dormitory and the weekends we would go hunting. One old fella was hard on us, he's dead now that poor old fella. We were separated into boy's dorm and girl's dorm. I finished school when I was 16, that's the time I went to work.

I did fencing and yard building, they were my first two jobs. I was twenty-four when I went with other men and women from Mornington Island to dance at the opening of the Sydney Opera House in 1973. We danced in front of lots of people but we were not afraid. The place was covered in people.

I danced for Mornington Island from 1973 right up till 1990. I have been around Australia and overseas with our dancing. Good people and good places we visited for many years. Since the 1990's I have been a songman, now I lead the dancers I sing for the young men and women.

Now I'm painting, it beats sitting at home watching TV. A mans got something to do. We have a good group, all the old men and younger men and women are joining in, one big family."

Gordon Watt



Leg markings 2005
61 x 121 cm



Leg markings 2005
137 x 121 cm

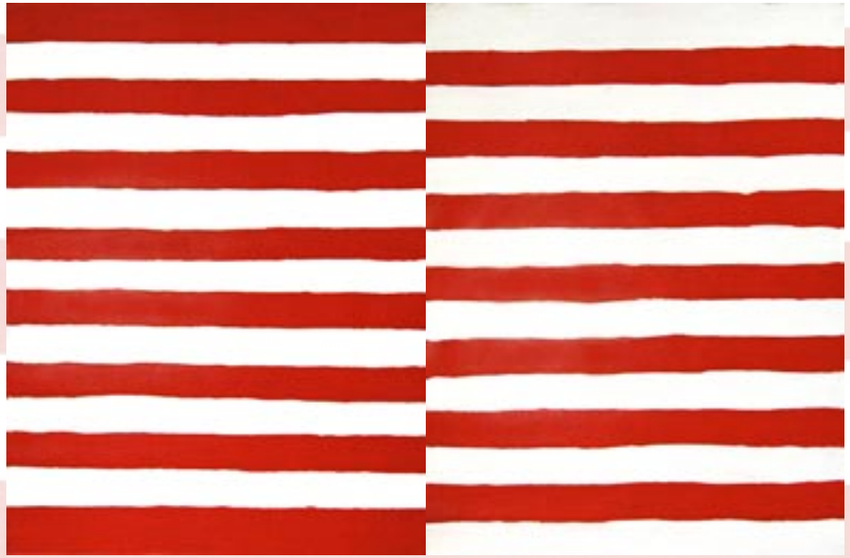


“I was put in a dormitory as a child, that’s where I went to school. No good those dormitory days that old McCarthy used to flog us boys, flog us around. I was twelve when I went to Palm Island to be a carpenter for one year. I came back, worked and went to a cattle station in Queensland. I was driving cattle, training horse and ringing, cooking and mustering.

I first saw Arnold Watt and the Roughsey brothers painting, I was about fifteen then. We used to go hunting a lot, fishing, spear dugong, spear turtle. I went to the Opera House in 1973, dancing. I’ve been all around Australia dancing. I never went overseas I stayed in Australia. I still dance with the dancers, I dance here on the island for culture. All the places I’ve been dancing.

I have one son and lots of grandchildren, the Roughsey girls, a lot of little grand children Watt’s as well. I like painting, painting all the time. I like working with the old men, my brothers and my grand daughter Jolene’s paints with me in the art centre. I like bright red and white and black, they are my favourite, yellow too. Rock Cod and Dingo, big stories for me, in that dog story they used that red ochre, we can catch women with that ochre. Emu is up in my mothers country, that’s where that dingo finished.”

Joseph Watt



Dibirdi man 2005
121 x 182 cm

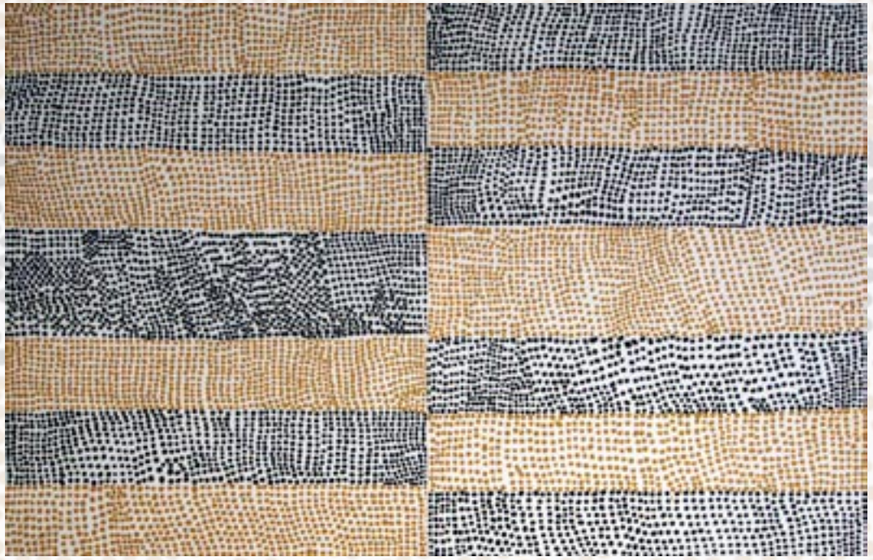


“I was born at your McCarthur station in the Northern Territory. I don’t know what my father looked like even his name, he passed when I was very small. John Kooraububba, he claimed me as his son, he was my fathers youngest brother. He grow me up, he was a grumpy old thing. My mother from here, Gununa. My father he was at Doomadgee when he meet my mother. Then they went to the territory for ceremony and corroboree, all the people from Bourketown went too. They walked no motorcar, they used to exercise every day, I’ve been walking through that country once as well.

I used to chase fish and go hunting when I was young. Take the fish back and feed all the old people. I used to go to corroboree, they called it Yonguloo. I worked when I was a young man, worked Cresswell Downs. I was ringing, then went to Booraloola then, Talbert station, I did ringing there too, rough country, too much hills, you go up and down up and down, like a rodeo. Then I went to Woolagran station. I stayed there, good manager and stockmen, they didn’t want to let me go, I was there for nine and a half years. Then when the big race came to Bourketown we all went to the race.

Now I’m old man I start for painting at the art centre. I paint up all the time in ceremony. First time I paint like this, only in ceremony before this.”

Billy Kooraubabba



Barramundi markings 2005
121 x 182 cm



“When I was young, I used to go around playing with my little mates for a while, then I would I have to get home, no taps ran in those days, we used to carry buckets and drums of water back to the house. When I was a young man we used to do ringing, my father was a head stockman on Mornington Island. I used to go and help him out then I got the idea. I was old enough, so I left school to go and work with him. My first cattle station was Augusta Downs, the second station was Amarandle cattle station, third station was Thorton Downs, for twenty years I worked on stations. I used to dance in the community but I never went out travelling around. I’ve painted all the way through my life, since I was at school right till today. I think back to how I started, I’d been sketching with a pencil, then I moved to a brush later in life. I’ve done a lot of artwork, I think about what I have done in my time. My artis in private homes, I might meet up with those people one day, go to their house to see my work still hanging.

For a long time I was frightened to paint our body art, the sacred, but we are the old men, we have to make decisions and it is alright for us, to make a new economy. This is really our own painting, no one has this way. We got our law and it stays with us, that’s our identity, we keep that, cause it was handed down by the old people, the traditional elders. They handed that law to us, we have to hand this law down to our younger ones now, so it can still be carried out, so they know their identity, who they are and where they come from.”

Melville Escott



“My parents were brought to Mornington Island by the government of the day. I was born at the mission, many years ago now. Mission life was alright but hard too. The missionaries took us from our parents and made us stay in dormitories. Me and my school friend, we broke out one time, we went home to my fathers and mothers place. They punished us for running away, we were made to stay on Saturday and do gardening and only went free on Sunday. We used to learn via correspondence, we used slate, adding up, multiplication, english and writing. I worked in a factory on Denham Island, we used to take the fish from the trawlers, we would put them on ice and pack those fish for the people on the mainland. When I was fifteen, I was driving cattle in my mother’s country. I was a stockman on all those big stations, plus two sheep stations, ringing as well. Went to the Sydney Opera house in 1973. When the curtains opened, the old men started singing and we came out from either side of the stage and formed one line in the middle of the stage. We weren’t nervous, we were proud to be dancing. I did one solo dance that was an owl dance. This yellow light came down on me and I began to dance. I’ve also made corroboree in Canberra for some government bloke. He took us walking around that big white house there during the day and we performed at night.I used to wear the designs my grandfather taught me, no one can break that. If someone copied mine, they might break my grandfathers law and they might loose their life. This is true what my grand father taught me. “Don’t paint up their way, you have your own way.” They say, I used to watch my uncle when I was four or five years old, then I got a little piece of bark. My uncle, Larry Gavenor said to me, you can’t paint like me, you have to paint your own way. I used to paint, spears, boomerangs and bark paintings, I did this to keep going for law. When we made that paint up book, there are a lot of my stories, my designs in that book. I like what everyone is doing, everyone is doing their own painting, we work away together in the art centre.”

Reggie Robertson



Dance hat 2005
61 x 121 cm



Blue hole 2005
61 x 137 cm



Leg & arm design
53 x 137 cm

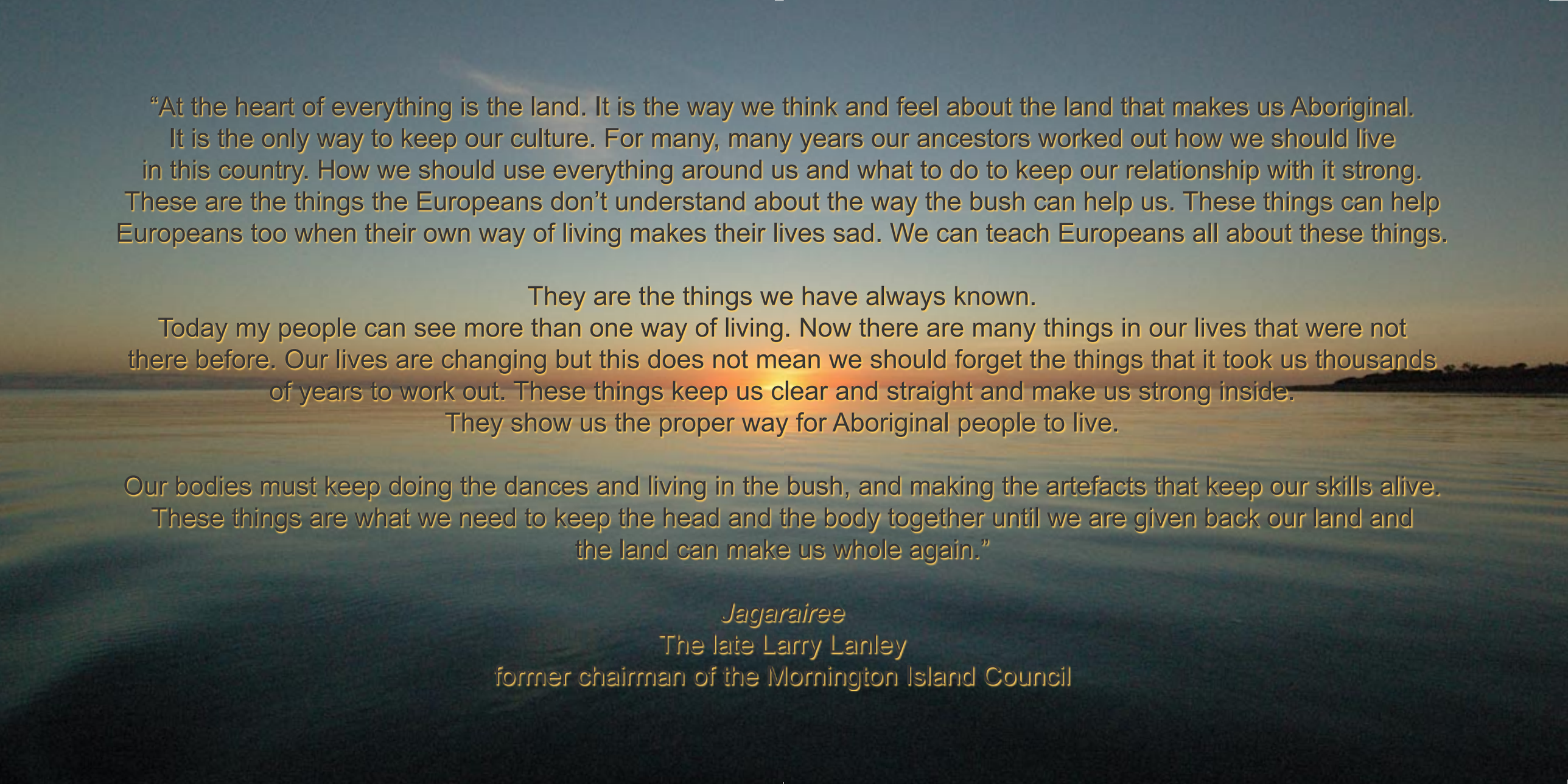


Headband 2005
91 x 137 cm



Lightning headband 2005
121 x 137 cm





“At the heart of everything is the land. It is the way we think and feel about the land that makes us Aboriginal. It is the only way to keep our culture. For many, many years our ancestors worked out how we should live in this country. How we should use everything around us and what to do to keep our relationship with it strong. These are the things the Europeans don’t understand about the way the bush can help us. These things can help Europeans too when their own way of living makes their lives sad. We can teach Europeans all about these things.

They are the things we have always known.
Today my people can see more than one way of living. Now there are many things in our lives that were not there before. Our lives are changing but this does not mean we should forget the things that it took us thousands of years to work out. These things keep us clear and straight and make us strong inside.
They show us the proper way for Aboriginal people to live.

Our bodies must keep doing the dances and living in the bush, and making the artefacts that keep our skills alive. These things are what we need to keep the head and the body together until we are given back our land and the land can make us whole again.”

Jagarairee
The late Larry Lanley
former chairman of the Mornington Island Council



“I’m the oldest of four brothers and two sisters. When I was very young I remember my family went to Brookdale station, my brother was born there. My family came back to Gununa, tour home. I do remember being young and going night hunting for turtle. We would go out with Dugong brothers, they are my father’s brothers, in a little boat and with a little motor. I did all my schooling here on Mornington Island, we learned about our culture from Larry Lanley and old Spider Roughsey, they would teach us in school. We would dance and they would tell stories, our stories. I used to go walkabout with my uncle Goobala, Dick Roughsey a lot when I was young, till I was fifteen. First pay I ever got was $15.00 for working at the turtle farm, the pay was no good but working with those old men, they have all passed away, my grandfather Fred Jarrod, uncle Kelly Bumbegee, Henry Peters my grandfather, one old fella from Bentinck Island, Darwin Mudingarti. I learned from listening all those old men.

I first started dancing in the early 1970’s, first Melbourne then all over Australia, We started overseas touring in 1992. We went to England, Italy and France. I danced till 1996 when I had my last tour with the dancers. I started painting at school when I was young. Around fourteen and fifteen I used to help old Lindsay cutting barks. I like this new way of getting culture through to people, making them see our stories and body paint. I paint about stories from my country, about Thuwathu the rainbow serpent and other stories of the water rat, crane, sea hawk, fish and saltwater hunting.”

Darryl Williams



Thuwathu resting place 2005
61 x 137 cm



Barwoo 2005
61 x 121 cm



“I was born on Brookdale Station, my father and mother worked there. My father was doing cattle work and my mother worked at a kitchen job, washing and cooking. My parents brought me back to the island and then went back to work, while my aunties and uncles raised me and I started going to school. I used to dance a lot, liked hunting and camping when I was young. I remember going away for my first dance trip when I was twelve years old, we went to Sydney, big city. In my twenty’s I was still travelling with the dance troop, I’ve been to New Guinea a couple of times, America, India, England. It was good travelling round sharing our culture, especially sharing with the American Indians, good to see others dance, a lot of different cultures, makes me feel stronger about mine.

I’m living in my country carrying on from my father, three fathers I’ve got. There was three old brothers from my country, old Gully, William and Henry Peters, in those days mission days, my father Colin he didn’t want that Peters name so he took Williams, that’s why I’m Williams, after my Fathers name William Peters. This was the time when the Presbyterian Church came to the island. Now I’ve got two boys and my wife, we all live at our outstation at Birri. Birri means place of many underground waters. We are showing our body painting, its something to share with our younger people and other people. We keep our body painting, its handed down from our fathers, its good to keep it going, I like painting, I’m a culture man. All this came from the old people way back in the dreaming.”

Jonny Williams



Ribs of Thuwathu 2005
91 x 121 cm



Water Spouts 2005
91 x 137 cm



“When I was young I learned how to spear fish, I was always sitting listening to the old people talking, listening to those old men. We used to go camping out bush and stayed away from the mission.

I didn’t like school, they used to come looking for me. My mother used to tell me stories of the dormitory, how she would cry for her parents. They used to find me at the end of the day sleeping under the benches. I liked sports days, I used to make deals with the teachers. I used to like learning from my grandmother and grandfather, learning to sing all the songs they kept in their heads.

In 1984 I first travelled to Italy to dance. We danced the north and south of Italy. I’ve now danced in Germany, Western Samoa and around Australia. I have four brothers and two sisters. I’m in the middle. I think my new work is coming out. I like painting, I don’t have a favourite, I like it all, trying different things, that’s my support and inspiration. I like having stories, today and yesterday’s stories, I like chances to sing along with songs from country in Lardil. I have five boys and three girls. I have my wife and we have three boys and a girl coming. I like doing my body painting, I like using my day to make paintings about my grand parents teachings and my country of Birri.”

Wayne Williams



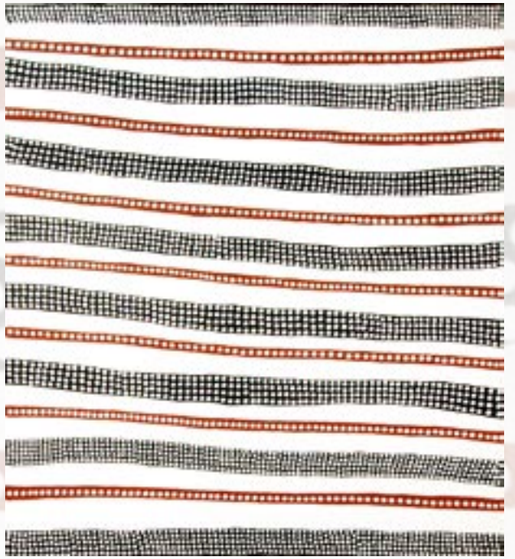
“My parents met here at the mission, in the mission days when they came out from the bush. The missionaries forced them to marry. I’m the youngest of three brothers and four sisters. I was born in Cloncurry in the north western Queensland. I grew up playing with other young kids hunting and fishing, I was free when I was a child. I used to like riding horses as a schoolboy and going out bush ringing. I went to school, that was sometimes good, sometimes bad. I used to run away, stay away for a couple of weeks, never really used to get on with the teachers. After school I went away with Johnny Williams to Sydney to ballet school, it was good, hard dances, but I learned a lot about dancing. I also learnt how the outside world lives, city life. In 1977 I came back to Mornington Island and started dancing for Woomera Aboriginal Corporation, Mornington Island Dancers. 1990 was the last tour I did with the dancers, I toured all over Australia dancing for schools and concerts, I once danced for the Royal Easter Show in Sydney, that was with five other men from Mornington Island.

When I was a schoolboy I used to paint, then I forgot about it for a while. We used to do culture at school that’s how I learned to paint. After dancing I went back to painting. Its good painting when you feel like doing something, it makes your mind work. I love doing traditional paintings and story time paintings as well. I like having good company at the art centre with the other painters. I like to see what other painters are doing, to see other styles, cause we all have our own ways.”

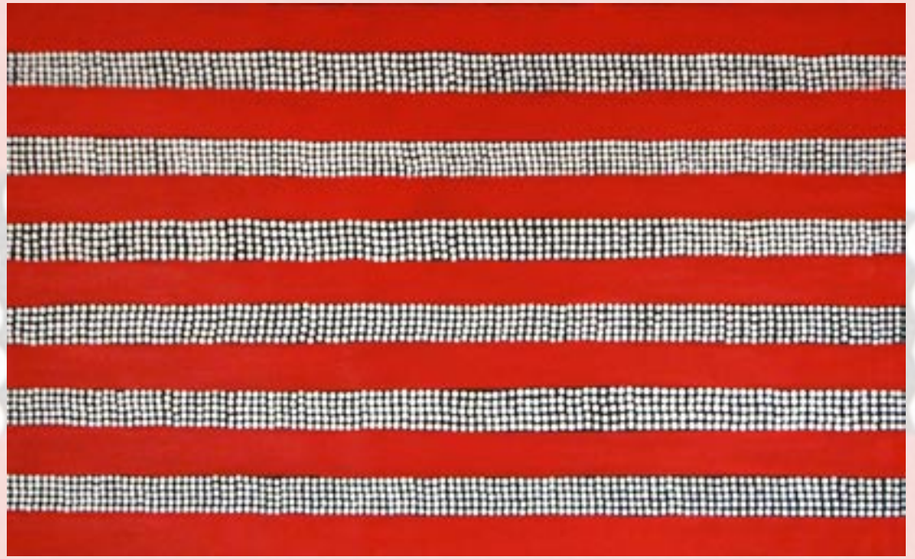
Lance Gavnenor



Thuwathu leg markings 2005
61 x 121 cm



Birri headband 2005
121 x 137 cm



Tiger shark 2005
137 x 91 cm



Lex Toby is the youngest of three brothers and two sisters. He grew up like many children on Mornington Island going to school and fishing and hunting, playing Rugby League and learning from the old people.

For over ten years Lex Toby has been a leading dancer of the Mornington Island Dancers touring to states around Australia.

Lex had dabbled with painting over the years and was invited to attend the first workshops held in February this year. During this period he was instrumental in producing a brilliant new look from an old technique. Thickly painted works of bush fires and sunsets using gum leaf techniques opened doors to new adventures for Lex.

Brett Evans, for ***Lex Toby***



Bushfire 2005
91 x 137 cm



Sunset 2005
91 x 137 cm



Jonathon Toby grew up on his island home of Gununa. He tragically suffered in a very serious accident as a young man and almost lost his life. He was left unable to care for himself and has spent most of the last twenty years in Charters Towers growing up painting the stories of Mornington Island and visiting now and then to stay in touch with family.

Jonathon has recently returned to live on the island full time and now paints with us at the Art Centre. It is wonderful see Jonathon's participate as he always wears a big smile on his face and loves to paint and be part of the MIAAC artgang.

Brett Evans, for ***Jonathon Toby***



Chest painting 2005
137 x 61 cm

JIDMAA THUWATHU – Rainbow Serpent Rising

Mornington Island, Gununa to its owners, has made art, danced and sung, for generations and generations and continue today. For why would anyone want to stop something as visually sophisticated, and splendid, that's filled with uplifting and heroic verse and a dance that makes the earth tremor. A landscape surrounded by water, filled with life and a sunset that could warm the coldest of any heart.

Maybe only artists really appreciate art, like Batterbee before him, the late Percy Trezise was a man who sat down with some men like, Goobala Dick Roughsey, his older brother Spider Lindsay Roughsey and Arnold Watt to paint.

Roughsey was a forerunner for his people and a pioneer of Gununa bark painting. It was not simply his art but his work as an author that educated many Australian children in the 1970's including myself. Why his story has yet to be dusted off is a sign of a unilateral history, a history selectively remembered since squatters moved their sheep across the Tweed. It is more than likely that, Goobala's Rainbow Serpent has become one of the most recognised Indigenous stories in our collective psyche. His tales of the Flying Fox Brothers, the Quinkins and the Giant Devil Dingo are histories, a bedtime history for children all over our country.

His slender fluent brushwork, ochry aesthetics and totemic imagery were not the only languages that Goobalathaldin had become accustomed to in his storytelling. The pictorial imagery of contemporary Gununa life was among one of Roughsey's favourite subjects. He captured, a rich history of his people by painting the social acts of their contemporary lives, from women playing netball to hunting and corroboree.

After thirty years of stomping the ground of other peoples country, many of the acclaimed Mornington Island Dancers have returned to where Dick and his brothers once sat under a tree painting. The attempt by many senior men, songmen and dancers to initiate a contemporary and vibrant dialogue with painting, is recognition of a spirit that missionaries could not extinguish from their youth. One that has not buckled throughout an adolescence and adult life under a constant pressure of a dominant culture and the constraints of an imposed democratic system, where justice is regarded as a legal matter.

Melville Escot is an old man now, he walks at a gentle pace and has a reflective pause between sentences. He is a man who makes you want to listen, cause there are many miles in his voice and a wisdom that echoes in his accent. During the project, over tea and biscuits he remarked.

"For a long time I was frightened to paint our body art, the sacred, but we are the old men, we have to make decisions and it is alright for us, to make a new economy. This is really our own painting, no one has this way. We got our law and it stays with us, that's our identity, we keep that, cause it was handed down by the old people, the traditional elders. They handed that law to us, we have to hand this law down to our younger ones now, so it can still be carried out, so they know their identity, who they are and where they come from."

The influence senior men like Melville, Reggie Robertson, Billy Kooraubabba, Gordon, Joseph and Arnold Watt have, as social directors ensures their families and community, are inevitably the greatest beneficiaries of their work. With four generations of Lardil artists contributing in a daily dialogue, influence ranging from school children through to other senior men of the community is evident. An art centre is a place of possibilities and an internal vehicle for the artist as much as it is a chance to travel any ocean.

However, to see these old men turn into glowing young men dancing in the presence of their boss and most senior man Spider Lindsay Roughsey is a performance to behold. Old Spider has found a reason to get up in the morning, pick up a paintbrush, begin painting again, begin walking again and continue to chat up any woman who is caught in the web of his external charm. Sally Gabori is a very old lady and a young artist. After relinquishing a prohibition on painting, Sally began to describe the fish traps of her Bentinck Island, a job she continued till her early thirties before being brought to Mornington Island. Her language has emerged through her palette and the mileage that painting offers. Sally's dialogue is of the oldest of languages, her mind, a place of so many memories.

A generation of men in their forties and fifties are behind an energetic attendance and interaction with the senior and most senior. For it is these men who are next in line to earn the responsibility of learning all there is to know in an old mans mind. Lance Gavenor's Tiger Shark is a bold dynamic produced from an intense concentration and methodical pace on the canvas. The Williams brothers of Birri, Darryl, John and Wayne, hold their country with solid beliefs and have begun to realise the benefits of a consistent painting practice. Whether canvas needs to be shipped up on the back of a boat to Birri or Wayne or Darryl is in the shed with Lance, this sub group of men represents much hope for the future aesthetics in Gununa painting.

Younger artists like Jolene Roughsey, Emily Evans, Renee and Bradley Wilson have followed in the wake of progress laid down by their fathers, grand fathers and uncles. With a confidence inherent through gaining a voice of cultural expression, these younger painters have taken a mature and committed approach to developing and extending the range of their newfound voices.

Gununa not only has a rich art history but a bright future. Mornington Island's artists have rallied around a chance and turned it into an opportunity, which they have run with till they hit the wall, a gallery wall. In many ways the results of their professional development workshops are recognition of how important these designs and stories are to their custodians. Designs they have carried on their bodies to countries around the world and to audiences from school children to heads of states are actively being used again as a metaphor of cultural identity, a symbol of the strength of Lardil cultures and the desire these artist's have to paint up country.

Simon Turner
Woolloongabba Art Gallery



Lindsay Roughsey is one of the last remaining elders who was born on his family's country and raised on his country learning to hunt and gather and the laws and kinship relationships that guide the Lardil in their day today life.

As a child he experienced the coming of the missionaries and their attempt to smother their language and customs. Throughout his life he has been an elder statesman for his people, a brilliant artist, dancer and songman.

Always immaculately groomed with his ever-present red rag headband he is an imposing figure with a devilish smile. I had the pleasure of him giving me a language name " Wurruku" in 1984 when I became friends with his younger brother Dick and his wife Elsie.

Recently he has started coming to the art centre for painting. On his first visit I almost cried to see this once proud man confined to a wheelchair unable to communicate and unable to hold a brush or make mark on canvas.

Slowly over the next few weeks he grew stronger, more alert and started painting, at first aided, then unaided. He now walks in the front door of the art centre, some things are worth living for and he likes regularly holding conversations with fellow artists and female visitors to the art centre.

Brett Evans, for ***Lindsay Roughsey***



Moon & Rainbow series 2005
40 x 30 cm



Moon & Rainbow series 2005
30 x 40 cm



Moon & Rainbow series 2005
40 x 30 cm



"I have two brothers and three sisters, I'm third eldest. I was born a Kelly, that's my mother's grandfathers name but grew up a Roughsey. When I was young before school I used to play with friends we used to walk around looking for bush fruits, my favourite was blackberry, they are found near the swamps. My grandfather was Timmy Roughsey, he was Dick Roughsey's younger brother. He used to be a traditional elder, he could sing all the songs, dance, paint up, he was a law man. We used to go to Kenthawu, there is a little outstation there, my father used to stay out there and work there, looking after the place. I used to run away from school, we used to go and play outside. Sometimes school was good. I first started dancing when I was still at school. We used to have dance class, the old men would come to school to teach the young people how to dance. I went to three different boarding schools, Darwin, Townsville and Cairns. My mum and dad used to move around a lot so I went to a few schools. I used to do art at home, making paintings like my grandfathers. I have been coming to the art centre for two years now. I like painting, just doing it. I like sitting with family painting, like the old men. I still going fishing, still love to catch those Barramundi. I like hanging out with my grand parents because they tell us stories, show you a good way for life. I look after my sister's children, my nieces and nephews, they are enough kids for me at the moment. I am going to be an artist, that's the one thing I want to be. I'm always going to live here, on my island home. I worry for my family, always look after family. My favourite colours are red ochre, black, yellow, just traditional colouring. One day I want to have my own place."

Jolene Roughsey



Headband 2005
86 x 142 cm



Leg marking 2005
121 x 61 cm



"I've got six sisters and three brothers, I'm the fourth. When growing up I moved around a lot, up to Weipa back down to Mornington Island, back up again. I grew up with hunting, fishing, sitting down learning from old men. That's how we learn when we are young. I loved school definitely, learning different things but not maths, I got a lot out of English. As I started growing up, I played ruby league, we all planned a strong side over here, rugby league is the main one for us. I finished off in grade nine, started work in grade ten, up in Weipa, I worked as a plumber and labourer for a year then came home. I worked here as a carpenter then a plane operator. I continued my apprenticeship for three more years.

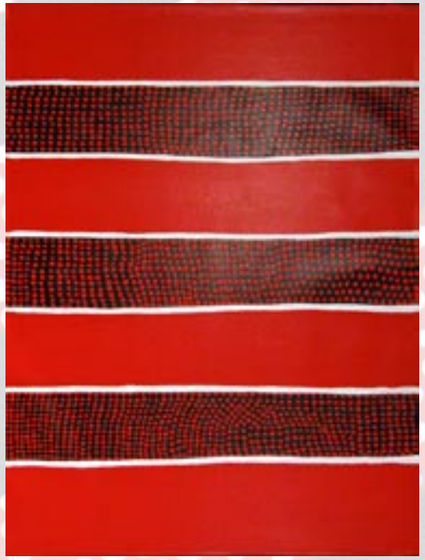
In art, I've found an interest, I mucked around at home, trying to make a painting. When I had finished it, my cousins said you should see Brett at the art centre. Then I really got into it and got to where I am now.

I've got my own young family, two boys and my girl. My painting, is to show how I express my culture, my identity. I put it in a way for everyone to understand my place, my community. Painting's opened my eyes to my own family, to my grandfathers, it's giving me a chance to explore. That's what it means to me, bringing me back to my culture. I express myself through my painting, that's who I am."

Bradley Wilson



Thambe chest markings 2, 2005
91 x 121 cm



Thambe body stripes 2005
91 x 121 cm



"I'm the eldest of five brothers and a sister. When I was young we used to run around a lot, playing games with friends. I liked school in the beginning, when I was younger, when I was in my teens that's when I didn't like school. I mainly enjoyed art and english but liked after school more, when I would go swimming and fishing off the jetty.

I was sixteen when I first started dancing, really I first started at school in culture class, we would also go out looking for bush tucker. I first toured to Melbourne to the Moomba festival. It was my first time in a big city, a cold city. I performed for three years with the Mornington Island Dancers. I went with my uncle to Japan as well, people there looked like ants from up in the apartment buildings.

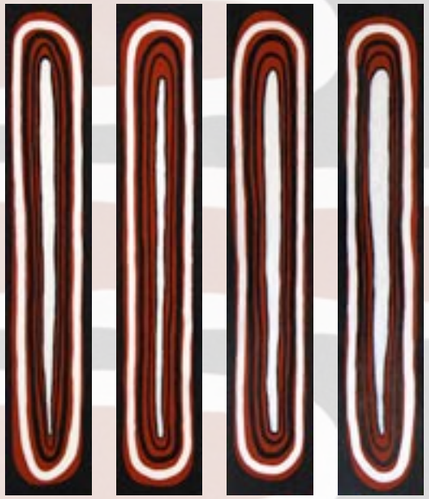
When I was nineteen I became a mother, this happened again when I was twenty-two. My sons name is Murrawu and my daughter's name is Yalul. I want to become an artist. I think more or less if what comes out of you, comes out the way you want it to, on the canvas, then that's a good painting. I like to put my ideas on canvas. I look at my designs and how I can interpret it on canvas.

Its really good using computers, I like looking for information and learning. Everyday you can learn on the computer, I think I can make art on the computer."

Renee Wilson



Thambe leg markings 2005
137 x 121 cm



Four familes 2005
30 x 160 cm x 4



"I've got four brothers and one sister, I'm the second eldest. We always used to go fishing and camping when I was growing up. Mum and Dad would take us out bush, out to our country. School was good when we were young, we learnt dancing in culture class, that was fun.

After I finished school, I worked on CDEP for the Mornington Island Council. My eldest daughter, Rebecca, I had when I was nineteen. I got married in 2002 to my husband Brett Evans. I now have two more kids, my son Kaya and daughter Dana. Raising kids is like full time work, they keep me running around all the time.

I grew up watching old Goobala, that's short for Dick Roughsey, We used to watch him paint a lot, me, my brothers and sisters. My father used to paint and taught me a little bit. In 2003 he passed away, so that's why I started in the art centre following on from my father and keeping my families stories going in my painting. I like painting, it is gives me peace. I've painted Balibal, the Spotted Stingray, Wurruku the Sharp Nose Brown Shark and Ngaalu the Sulphur Crested Cockatoo. I like to relax with painting, I enjoy the quiet time I get when I paint."

Emily Evans



Detail Balibal, spotted stingray 2005
137 x 91 cm



"Sally Gabori is a senior woman of the Kaiadilt tribe from the South Wellesley Islands, in the Southern Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland. She speaks the Kayardild language. Her tribal name is Mirdidingkingathi juwarnda. Juwarnda means 'dolphin', which is her totemic sign, and Mirdidingkingathi means 'born at Mirdidingki', in her country on the south side of Bentinck Island. She was born around 1924 and lived a completely traditional life, with practically no contact with non-Kaiadilt people, fishing and gathering shellfish and vegetable foods, and maintaining the stonefish walls around the shores of Bentinck Island.

This changed in the early 1940s, when missionaries transported the entire Kaiadilt population from their tribal lands to the mission on Mornington Island. She then lived on Mornington until the late 1980s, when the Kaiadilt began to re-establish themselves on their ancestral lands, building a number of outstations on Bentinck Island. Mother and grandmother to a large family, and the living repository of a wealth of tribal lore, she now lives on Mornington Island. Throughout her life she has been an accomplished producer of traditional handicrafts made from bush products such as pandanus fibres and hibiscus bark woven into string."

Nicholas Rollo David Evans, for ***Sally Gabori***



Storyplace, King Alfred's country 2005
61 x 83 cm



Storyplace, My Granfather's country 2005
121 x 91 cm



woolloongabba art gallery

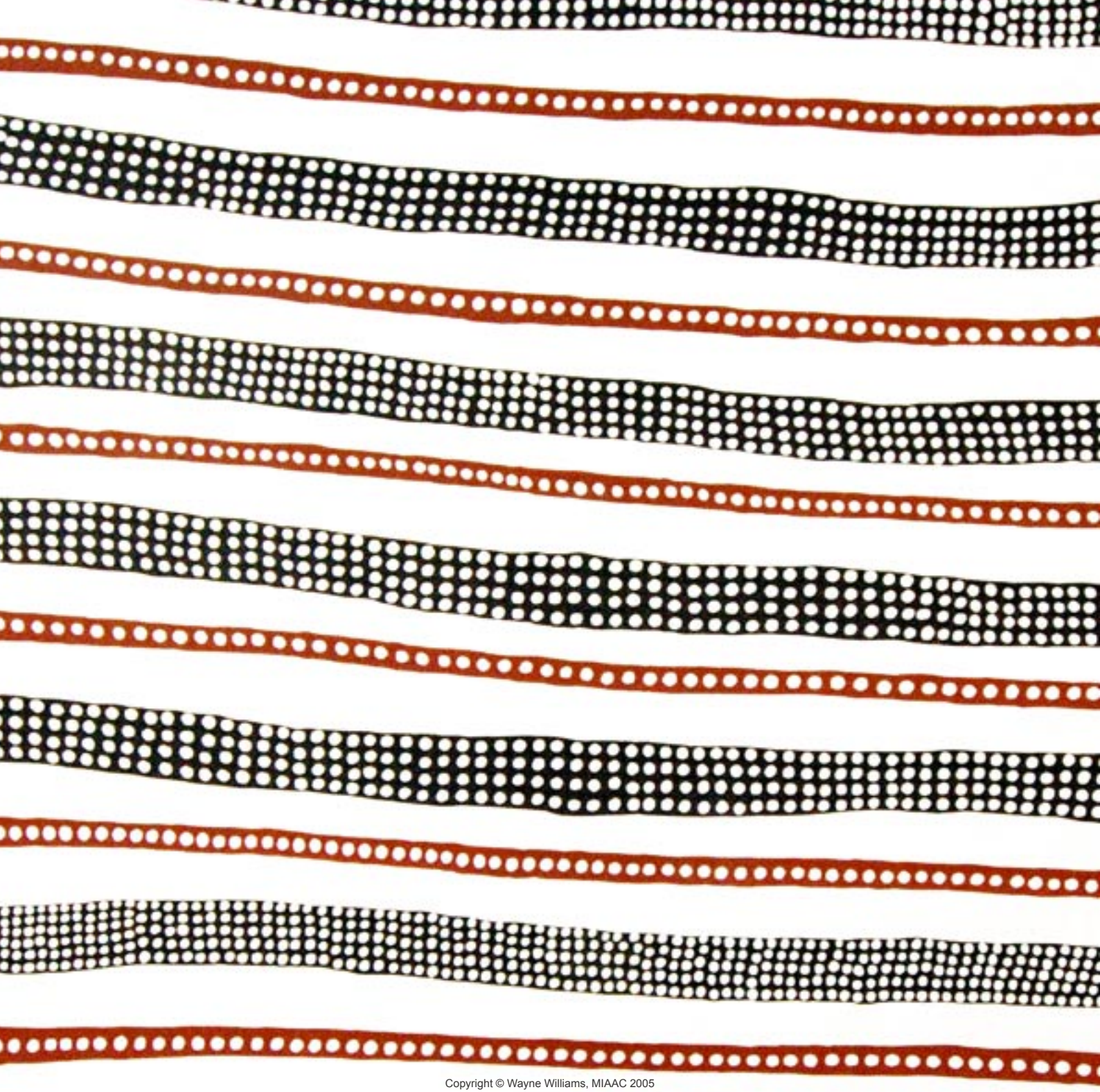
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